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Judith Campbell Exner, who has been linked to President Kennedy.

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JFK Friendship Related

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Staff Writer

SAN DIEGO, Dec. 17—Judith Campbell Exner, a comely brunette woman with a hazy past, stepped out of the shadows of the Kennedy White House era today to declare that she had a relationship with the late President of a "close, personal nature" from 1960 to 1962.

"To me he was Jack Kennedy and he was not the President," she said at one point in a 40-minute press conference here during which she was flanked by her lawyer and her chain-smoking husband, Don, under batteries of television cameras and microphones.

Mrs. Exner spoke with cool aplomb of her frequent visits to the White House with President Kennedy and of the "great many" calls—too countless to remember—from the

President to her various residences during their more than two years of acquaintanceship. She mentioned, too, the trips to meet Kennedy at such spots as Palm Beach, Fla., journeys during which, she insisted, "I paid my own way at all times."

It was the first time in all the years of rumored back-stairs romance surrounding President Kennedy that anyone has stepped forward publicly to tell of this sort of relationship with him. Asked point-blank, however, whether she had been sexually involved with the late President, Mrs. Exner declined to comment.

She said she was provoked into telling her story—of which today's appearance is clearly to be only the first installment—because of

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"leaked and distorted" Senate testimony which she said "implicate me in . . . bizarre assassination conspiracies between the underworld and government entities."

The congressional testimony, which was first reported in *The Washington Post* last Nov. 16, linked Mrs. Exner, then using the name Judith Campbell, in close and concurrent relationships with President Kennedy and with underworld figures Sam Giancana and John Rosselli.

Giancana was killed last June prior to a scheduled appearance before the Senate intelligence committee, which was investigating CIA schemes to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro with the aid of the American underworld. The committee was trying to determine whether the President could have learned from Exner about a CIA-underground plot to kill Castro.

"Until now I have refused numerous offers to publish the facts concerning my relationships with Jack Kennedy, Sam Giancana and Johnny Rosselli," Exner recited from the typed and mimeographed statement prepared in consultation with her attorney, Bryan Monaghan of San Diego.

But leaks by the Senate committee as well as "distortions" of former Kennedy White House aides Evelyn Lincoln and Kenneth O'Donnell, she said, "have forced me to reveal the truth so as to lay to rest the wild-eyed speculation which now exists."

She would have more to say later, Exner promised, at a date and in a form yet to be determined. Was it a book or a statement now being auctioned off in the publishing mills, her press interrogators persisted. Nothing has been decided yet, she replied several times.

The full facts, she said, "have been transcribed, documented and placed in a secure storage; they will be released at a proper time and in a proper manner."

"However, I can at this time emphatically state that my relationship with Jack Kennedy was of a close, personal nature and did not involve conspiratorial shenanigans of any kind."

Exner's name and relationship with the late President began to figure in the Senate intelligence committee investigation of CIA assassination attempts against foreign leaders during an examination of telephone logs in the Kennedy archives, according to Senate committee sources. Members of the minority staff discovered records of frequent phone calls from Exner, then using the name of her first husband, film actor William Campbell, to the White House.

Subsequently the committee staff discovered that the FBI late in 1960 and early in 1961 stumbled upon efforts by the Central Intelligence Agency to enlist crime entrepreneurs Giancana and Rosselli in attempts to shoot or poison Castro. A number of U.S. underworld figures were hoping at the time to regain control of once-flourishing gambling, drug and prostitution enterprises in Cuba ended by Castro's assumption of



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Judith Exner speaking at San Diego press conference with her husband, Dan, left, and attorney, Bryan Monaghan.

power in 1959.

"My relationship with Sam Giancana and my friendship with Johnny Rosselli were of a personal nature and in no way related to or affected my relationship with Jack Kennedy nor did I discuss either of them with the other," Exner insisted.

The Senate committee apparently accepted her testimony and that of Rosselli that she was unaware of the Castro assassination schemes because she was never informed of them.

The committee report alluded in summary form to the episode mentioning Exner only as "the President's friend," without reference to her gender.

"We were not interested in investigating the sex life of John F. Kennedy," one senior member of the intelligence committee told The Washington Post when first questioned about the Campbell incident last Nov. 14. "The committee was unanimous on that point. Some of the Republican members even questioned whether any reference should be made at all to the incident."

Exner's relationship to Giancana and Rosselli was reported in March, 1962, to Hoover by an FBI subordinate in a memo which described Judy Campbell as a "girlfriend of hoodlums." The memo to Hoover alluded to frequent telephone traffic between the President and Judith Campbell, according to files of the Senate committee. The committee investigators logged 70 calls from Campbell to the White House between March 29, 1961, and March, 1962.

Hoover lunched privately with President Kennedy on March 22, 1962, and it is assumed that the Campbell matter came up, although there is no record of the discussion.

Nonetheless, Exner's calls began to be declined by the White House after the Kennedy-Hoover lunch, officials' logs indicated. Judith Exner said today her last conversation was late in 1962, long after the Kennedy-Hoover meeting, and that it was amicable.

She gave this history of her relationship with the President:

"I originally met Jack Kennedy in early February, 1960, in Las Vegas. We were introduced by a mutual friend. I was introduced to Sam Giancana by the same friend at a party in Miami Beach in late March, 1960. . . . Johnny Rosselli and I were introduced by Sam Giancana sometime after March, 1960.

"Jack Kennedy and I last talked in late 1962," she continued. "My last conversation with Sam Giancana was approximately late 1964."

Asked if singer Frank Sinatra introduced her to Kennedy and Giancana, she

refused to comment. She did, however, describe Sinatra as a friend she has known for years.

Exner denied published assertions that she telephoned President Kennedy in the White House from the Chicago home of Giancana.

During the period in which "I was involved with Jack Kennedy," she said, the FBI carried out a "top priority investigation of me which resulted in substantial harassment. . . . Their investigation was prying, insidious and sounded more like a scandal sheet than a governmental investigation."

Judith Campbell Exner, who declined to give her age but appears to be about 40, described herself today as a "happily married housewife" but made it clear that she was not yet ready for a return to obscurity. Her husband is a professional golfer.

In closing off the press conference her attorney, Monaghan, announced that Exner would grant no more interviews and "would very much appreciate her privacy"—until further notice.