

These Generous Pals of Nixon's

By Don Bacon
Newsweek News Service

KEY BISCAIYNE — Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo and Robert Abplanalp — two wealthy, act-alike friends of President Nixon's who hung close to him when he was down before—have been at the President's side since the Watergate scandal erupted.

Both men befriended Nixon after his 1960 presidential loss to John F. Kennedy and remained close to him when he was politically down-and-out. When he finally won the presidency in 1968, Nixon kept both as very special friends and confidants.

No Profits

Although there is no indication either Rebozo or Abplanalp has sought to profit in any way from their unique association, both have enjoyed almost unlimited and unparalleled access to the President and both have been privy to his innermost thoughts.

The 60 year old Rebozo especially has been at Nixon's side much of the time since the Watergate troubles began to envelop the White House. Leaving his Florida home and multiple business enterprises on a moment's notice, Rebozo has been slipping into Washington on cat's feet to spend weekends with Nixon.

Like Rebozo, Abplanalp is an unassuming, rags-to-riches millionaire, who has been generous to a fault in helping Nixon stretch his \$200,000 a year presidential salary. When Nixon had difficulty meeting his steep mortgage payments on the Western White House property, Abplanalp stepped in to buy some of the surplus land, thus wiping out Nixon's original \$650,000 loan while, apparently, allowing Nixon to retain control over the surplus land's ultimate use.

Key Biscayne

Abplanalp was also revealed as the owner of one of the five houses in the so-called Nixon compound at

Key Biscayne, which has been substantially improved and maintained by the General Services Administration since 1969. The Abplanalp house is leased to the government for White House support use.

Rebozo also owns a home in the Key Biscayne compound, in which he lives — the only private citizen residing inside a presidential facility.

Rebozo also has been generous in helping the Nixon family. Earlier this year he purchased a \$125,000 home in a Washington suburb and turned it over to Nixon's daughter and son-in-law, Julie and David Eisenhower. The young Eisenhowers, according to the White House, will pay Rebozo an undisclosed amount of rent when they move in.

One Weakness

Perhaps because of their wealth, generally mysterious backgrounds and close association with a president, Rebozo and Abplanalp have been subjected to hard scrutiny by investigative reporters since Nixon came to office.

Newsday, a Long Island newspaper, assigned teams of reporters to dig into Rebozo's background. They found very little to suggest he was anything but a quiet, friendly, exceptionally shrewd businessman.

Rebozo's major weakness, according to the investigating journalists, was for the friendship of famous politicians. Over the years, he has enjoyed knowing many political leaders, including Lyndon B. Johnson and former Sen. George Smathers, among others. He wore for many years a wristwatch given to him by Lady Bird Johnson.

Abplanalp, 51 years old, a former machine shop operator who perfected the valve that made aerosol cans economical, has been less conspicuous in acquiring friends than has Rebozo. Although he contributed substantially to Nixon's first presidential campaign the two did not

meet until 1963, after Abplanalp had engaged the Nixon law firm to handle his legal business.

The Topics

The unanswered question about the Nixon and Rebozo-Abplanalp relationship, of course, is: what do they talk about during those long informal visits here, and in Grand Cay, Washington, Camp David and San Clemente?

No one knows, really, because none of the three participants has ever discussed the friendship or the nature of their conversations. Among the attributes Nixon finds outstanding in the pair is their complete discretion and their aversion to the press.

Friends of Rebozo and Abplanalp believe, however, that their conversations with the President are almost wholly limited to non-political matters, such as sports and business. And, importantly, it is believed, both know the value of not talking at all, when the President is in no mood to talk.

Nixon's friends believe he gets from the relationship a few treasured hours of relaxation and diversion from his official duties. He also has the comfort of knowing he has at least two friends who ask nothing from him except the opportunity to assist him any way they can.



BEBE REBOZO



ROBERT ABPLANALP

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