

Presidential Power, Island Generator

V I P

By Maxine Cheshire

The federal government has "expanded" housing facilities for its personnel and installed an electric power generator on the privately owned Bahamian island of Grand Cay which President Nixon uses as a retreat.

The 125-acre island, which the President has visited 21 times since he took office in 1969, is owned by multimillionaire industrialist Robert Abplanalp.

Abplanalp, one of the President's closest friends, financed the purchase of Mr. Nixon's home in San Clemente, Calif.

Abplanalp also owns houses in the Key Biscayne compound which he rents to the Secret Service. But they pay no rent on Grand Cay, according to a spokesman.

The generator for Grand Cay was requested by the Secret Service, press officer Jack Warner said yesterday. It is "owned by the Air Force and is only to be used when the President is there," he said. It will be removed when he no longer visits there.

Regular power for the 125-acre island is supplied from a generator on nearby Sea Horse Cay, which Abplanalp also owns. Sea Horse Cay has both a power plant and an emergency stand-by generator for power failures. But the Secret Service "wanted its own," Warner said.

The Air Force installed the new Grand Cay generator for the Secret Service, Warner said. He was able to get information on its size, 12 kilowatts, but not its cost.

Another source, however, said such equipment costs between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

The General Services Administration is preparing to release figures next week on government expenditures on the island, along with cost information on other properties used by the Nixon family, including the house owned in Bethesda by Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo and leased to Julie and David Eisenhower.

(Government painters, carpenters, clean-up crews and gardeners were seen around the Rebozo house by neighbors and reporters before the young Eisenhowers moved in. A White House press officer explained at the time that some of the workmen had taken "annual leave" to help the couple on their own time and others were there on assignment for the Secret Service.)

See VIP, B4, Col. 1

VIP, From B1

There is a dispute between the Secret Service and Abplanalp on who paid for other recent improvements on Grand Cay.

Abplanalp's public relations director at his Precision Valve Co. in Yonkers, N.Y., Vincent Carberry, maintained yesterday that Uncle Sam had paid for "none" of the buildings on Grand Cay.

According to the Secret Service, however, the government recently paid for "materials and labor" to "expand" and "equip" living facilities which Abplanalp provided there for White House communications technicians and agents guarding the President. Added were

sleeping facilities, toilets, a kitchen and a dining hall extension.

Abplanalp did pay a "portion" of the labor costs but the bulk of the expense was federal, said Warner, who could supply no breakdown on the figures.

Both the Secret Service and Abplanalp's spokesman, Vincent Carberry, emphasized that the multimillionaire industrialist has spent large sums of his own money in making Grand Cay a "paradise" for the President's enjoyment.

A spokesman for Abplanalp, who bought the island in the mid-1960s for a reported \$250,000, said he installed a helicopter pad, built a paved road to the beach and added a second floor "presidential suite" to the

modest two-bedroom, single-story bungalow which came with the property.

The huge new master bedroom which President Nixon uses gives him a sweeping view of the ocean. There are a couple of other smaller bedrooms on that floor. Another bedroom on the ground floor has been converted to a presidential study.

Carberry said Abplanalp has also installed new docking facilities, guest housing, paths and landscaping. He also recently bought a new water purification system, but it has not yet been installed. No government funds were involved in these projects, he said.

The house, built of coral rock found on the island, stands on a bluff above Mermaid Beach, which was known for the beauty of its powdered white sand among Bahamian aficionados before Abplanalp bought it. A cabana has been constructed there for the President's use.

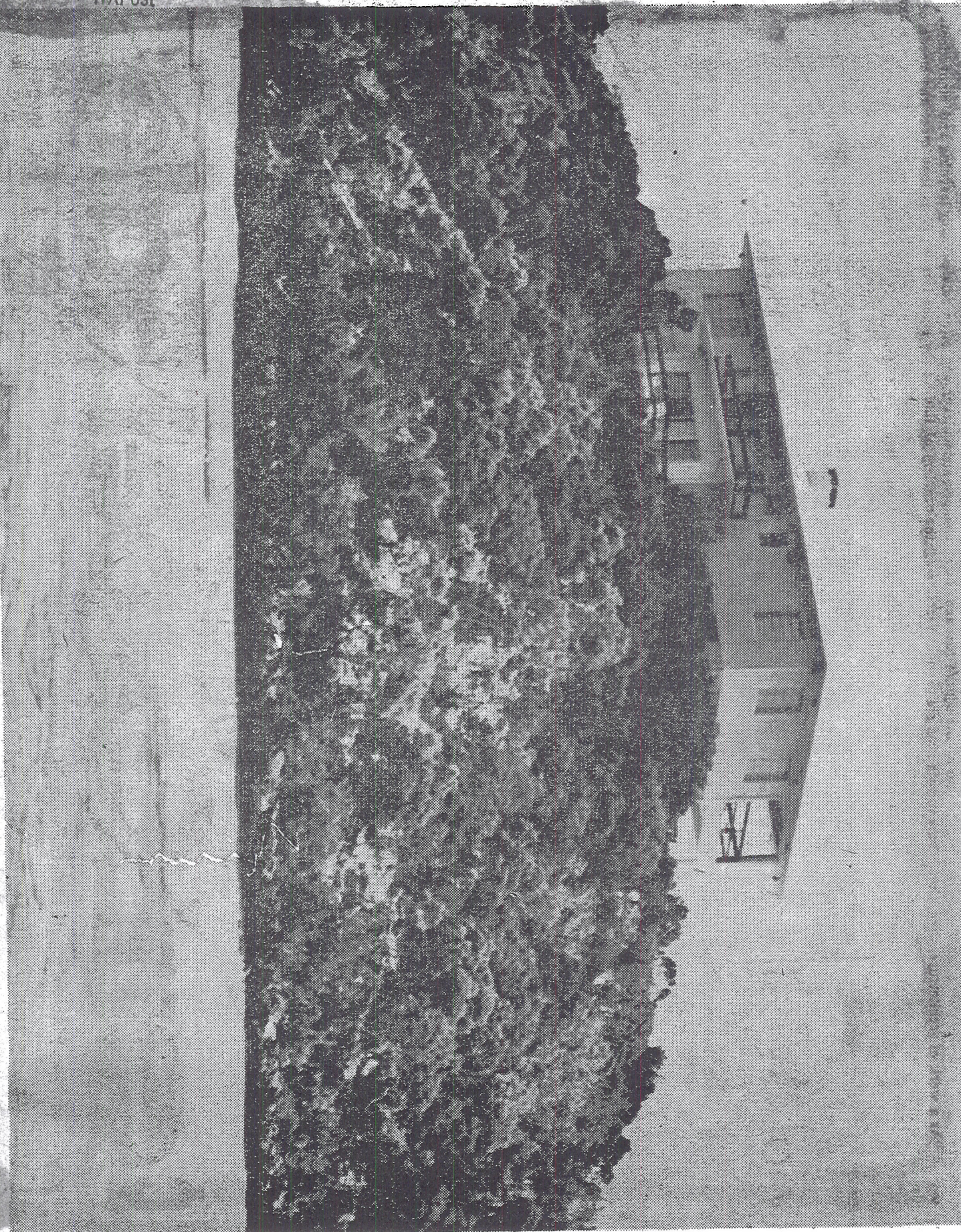
Grand Cay has always been a very private hideaway for the President. Even press secretary Ron Ziegler has never been there. Few, if any, reporters have ever seen it.

Once, the President invited Time magazine's Hugh Sidney to visit him there with his wife as a gesture of appreciation for a sympathetic story on Vietnam.

But when Sidney checked arrangements with Ziegler the next day, he was told "it's all off." The President had not "really meant it," he said.

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Robert Abplanalp's home on the island of Grand Cay, which has been visited by President Nixon 21 times since he took office in 1969.

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