

Nixon reportedly 'lonely in exile'

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif. (AP) — Two women given a brief glimpse into the private world of Richard Nixon say the former president is lonely in exile — “like Napoleon at Elba” but was surprisingly “very up” during taping for a series of television interviews.

“I think he wants to finally tell America his side of Watergate — whether anyone believes him or not,” said Arline Genis, a 43-year-old interior decorator, who with Sandy Blake designed the set for the interviews conducted by television host David Frost.

“I think people expect and hope that Nixon will be down,” said Ms. Genis. “But he wasn’t that way at all. He was very up. And very interested in all facets of the program. I think he’s up because he has a project.”

But Nixon “is a very lonely man,” she added. “He can’t go anywhere. He can’t

make statements on government policies like other ex-presidents.”

The interviews with Nixon, who resigned amid the Watergate scandal, will be broadcast by independent stations in four segments beginning May 4. Frost’s company reportedly paid Nixon \$1 million, but “this is not only a monetary thing to him, I believe, but a catharsis,” Ms. Genis said.

Ms. Genis and Ms. Blake, both of whom prefer that designation, said they tried to provide a “homey ambience” to the set. The taping was done at a Laguna Beach home rather than Nixon’s San Clemente estate because Coast Guard radar near the estate would have interfered with the recording.

None of Nixon’s own furniture was included, but “every single item on the set had to be cleared with him before it was used,” said Ms. Blake, also 43.

The two women visited the Nixon residence in preparing for the interviews.

“He is now a prisoner in his own home,” said Ms. Blake. “He is surrounded by security.”

Ms. Genis said Nixon’s quarters include small offices that are empty and an aide “tells you that’s where Ehrlichman had his office ... that’s where John Dean sat. It’s just otherworldish.”

“The biggest technical problem we had were the bookcases,” said Ms. Genis. “The titles were very important. We had to handpick all books in camera range. We were told that it would be very embarrassing if someone blew up the titles behind Nixon and found ‘All the President’s Men,’ for example.

“The Frost people specifically wanted books on the history of the United States, poetry, classics, law. Nixon sent us part of his collection.”

Furnishing the set was somewhat of a problem, Ms. Blake said, because “you couldn’t exactly take Richard Nixon to the Furniture Mart to see which chair he would like.”