

The 'Missing' Foreign Gifts To the Nixons

By Maxine Cheshire
Washington Post

Washington

On Aug. 11, 1974, two days after President Nixon's resignation, his wife Pat notified the White House Gifts Unit that she intended to "retain" one particular gift presented to her by the Shah of Iran on his second state visit to Washington in 1972.

The gift was described by the Gifts Unit as "a very fine hand-painted miniature portrait of the President done on ivory . . . 18-karat gold oval frame on easel back surrounded with golden leaves and branches, many 'blossoms' of single and clustered turquoise and sapphire stones."

The miniature is one of a number of valuable items that the State Department has listed as "missing" from the General Services Administration's collection of the identifiable foreign gifts presented to Nixon and his wife and daughters by heads of state and lesser foreign dignitaries during his six years in office.

The "missing" gifts may be in the GSA collection but lost because of poor record-keeping. But in some cases, State Department and GSA officials say, the gifts are believed to be in the custody of the Nixons. Such custody would be a violation of the law regulating the gifts.

Those "missing" gifts are the primary reason that U.S. Chief of Protocol Evan Dobeles is scheduled to go before U.S. District Judge Aubrey Robinson Wednesday and

Back Page Col. 5

From Page 1

ask the court's permission to examine 200 packing crates of Nixon materials now stored with the General Services Administration.

Under the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act of 1966, any gift worth more than \$50 belongs to the government and is supposed to be turned over to the chief of protocol for disposition as public property.

One of Dobeles' predecessors, Republican Henry Catto Jr., in late 1974 compiled a list of "missing" Nixon gifts. He recommended in a report that the Ford administration audit the GSA collection and recover whatever gifts were missing.

Catto and his legal advisers were blocked from taking any action on the gifts because three years ago the General Services Administration took the position that the packing crates and all records pertaining to them were impounded in the battle over the Nixon tapes and documents and other "presidential materials."

There are at least a dozen Iranian gifts in the "missing" category. Included is "a magnificent carpet from Isfahan (15 feet by 18 feet)" given by the Shah in 1969.

Many other now-missing gifts came from the current Iranian ambassador to the U.S., Ardeshir Zahedi. According to incomplete records now in the possession of the State Department, Zahedi always remembered the Nixons at Christmas and New Year's, on their birthdays and anniversaries and with get-well gifts.

Missing, according to the State Department, are "a magnificent clock," a "beautiful inscribed tray," "golden tapestry-like material," "an ornate gold box," "a gold Swiss vest watch" and two matching "his-and-hers" watches set into gold coins.

Missing also is a "pale green glass art object" given to Mrs. Nixon in 1970 by Mme. Chiang Kai-shek of Taiwan. It is described as "entwined with berry branch and a little bird perched on its tiny lid" and displayed on a "carved black stand."

According to a White House Gifts Unit notation, the gift from Mme. Chiang was turned over to Mrs. Nixon on Jan. 26, 1971.

Other gifts the State Department describes as "not currently deposited with the GSA or not shown (on any records) as being deposited" include:

- An oil painting given to Nixon by the Soviet minister of culture, Yekaterina Furtseva. Entitled "Russian Winter" and painted by Boris Shchervakov, the painting is listed as having been taken to San Clemente on March 3, 1975.

- An Indian silver box with overall floral repousse given to Mrs. Nixon by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India.

- A gold necklace and bracelet from Dr. Kofi A. Busia, a Ghanaian teacher and politician.

- An undescribed bracelet from the mayor of Tehran which Gifts Unit records show as having been "returned to Mrs. Nixon at her request" in 1972.

- A large gold cigaret box given to Mrs. Nixon by Guiseppe Saragat, an Italian Social Democratic leader in 1969. A notation reads: "Mrs. Nixon remembers it being in the President's EOB (Executive Office Building) office, but a search there produced nothing."

- A gold pin for Mrs. Nixon from Nicaraguan President Somoza.

- A royal Irish silver strawberry bowl given to the President and First Lady by Irish diplomat William Warnock.

- A 22-karat gold filigree bracelet, one of a pair given to the Nixon daughters, Julie and Tricia, by Indonesian President T.N.J. Suharto. The other bracelet is listed as being stored with the GSA in crate No. 117.

- A "beautiful bracelet," one of a pair presented in 1969 to the Nixon daughters by Salvadora So-

moza, a relative of Nicaragua's president. The other bracelet is listed as being stored with the GSA in crate 117.

- Two gold basket-weave compacts with diamond clasps given to the Nixon daughters by former West German Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger.

According to GSA records, there would appear to be 2000 Nixon foreign gifts worth an estimated \$2 million in the GSA collection stored at the National Archives.

But those records, according to a Catto staffer who worked on them, are "a shambles." They were found to be "incomplete and inconsistent," the young Foreign Service officer told Catto in a written report.