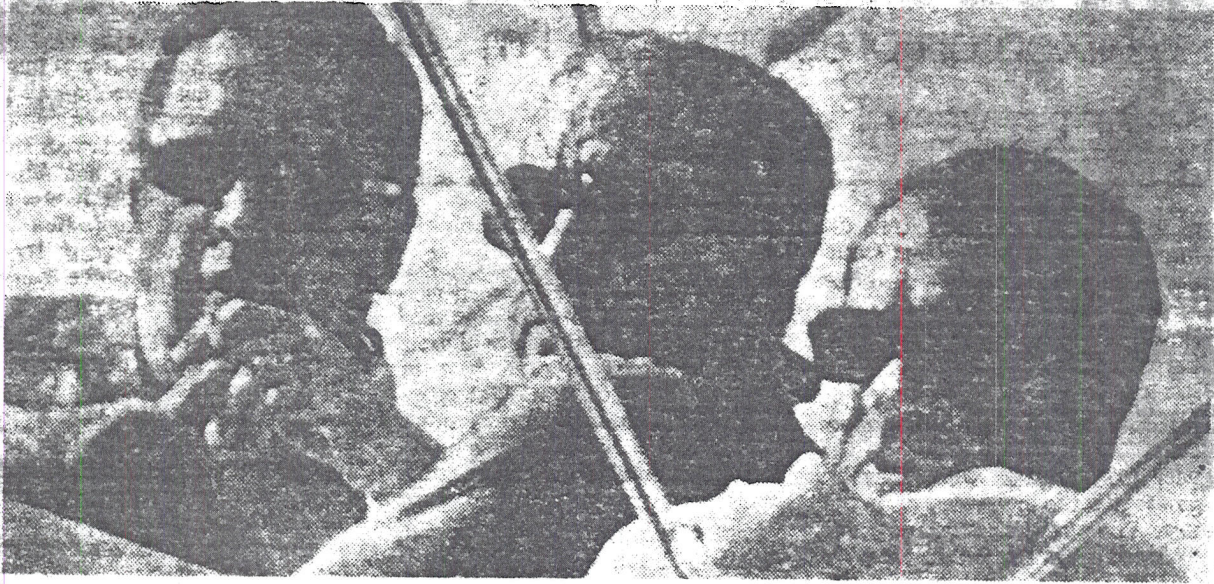


Nixon crony's new gadget



Robert Abplanalp, left, BeBe Rebozo and Richard Nixon take a break on Biscayne Bay in 1973

Aerosol king is back with cleaner spray

WALKER CAY, The Bahamas — Affable Robert Abplanalp is a college dropout, the only son of Swiss immigrants. But 28 years ago he developed a valve that launched the aerosol spray industry and made him the undisputed, multimillionaire aerosol king.

Walker Cay is his island. So is the one next to it, and the next one and the one after that. They string along the northwestern end of the Bahamas chain. Only the 100-acre Walker Cay is developed, with a \$40-a-night hotel, a small landing strip and a 75-slip marina.

Someday soon he intends to build a longer strip that will bring commercial jets to this exclusive yachtsmen's hideaway. He envisions a high-rise hotel, spas and a tennis complex.

But for now he is talking sprays. Bob Abplanalp, at age 55, is about to launch another multimillion-dollar industry.

Just as a government-ordered phaseout of fluorocarbon propellants threatens to make his first valve obsolete, he has developed a new spray system that will make fluorocarbon propellants obsolete.

Abplanalp's first invention made him a millionaire at age 28. But it wasn't until the 1970s that he reached the public spotlight, placed there by his friendship with President Richard Nixon.

Those were strange, public days for Abplanalp. Although gregarious and approachable, he is more inclined to shoot pool all night with one of his construction workers than to seek out chic friends with big names. He and his wife Josie have shunned the national and international social scene. They still socialize with old neighborhood friends in Bronxville, N.Y.

That's the way he would have kept it — quiet, private. But overnight his name became recognizable, if not pronounceable, to millions of Americans as "Nixon's other friend," along with Charles "Bebe" Rebozo, who sometimes visits at Abplanalp's island retreat.

Abplanalp had been Nixon's friend long before the

to Kennedy. I told him I'd support him if he ran again. He never forgot it."

Abplanalp restructured one of his islands, Grand Cay, at his own expense, to make it safe for regular presidential visits. He bought a house in Key Biscayne, Fla., that helped form a compound around Nixon's Florida White House.

He paid Nixon \$1,249,000 for 23 acres surrounding the Nixon home in San Clemente. Nixon bought 29 acres in 1969 with the help of a \$625,000 loan from Abplanalp.

Long before Watergate, Abplanalp confided to friends his distrust of Nixon's "palace guard." "One of these days those guys are going to do him in," he predicted. Watergate stunned him, left him still loyal but disillusioned. His face clouds as he tours the two-story hillside house on Grand Cay where Nixon stayed, a house filled with Nixon memorabilia.

The Nixon days took him away from much of his engineering work. He returned to the drawing board after Watergate. "Maybe it was a form of therapy, going back into the business with both feet after Watergate," he said.

The new valve should bring bigger profits to Abplanalp's Precision Valve Corp. The company said

the system, "Aquasol," uses hydrocarbons to propel water-based products from the can. Many more products can be packaged as aerosols because the propellant no longer has to be soluble in the product. The new system will not only satisfy environmentalists worried about fluorocarbons destroying the earth's ozone, but will, he says, be cheaper to produce.

Abplanalp has not seen the Nixons since January when "we all had dinner together. Pat looks wonderful, seems almost fully recovered from the stroke. We talk on the phone a few times a month. He's working hard on his book. He has always been an incredibly hard

worker. And he's playing a little golf, something he didn't do much of before, but the doctor says it is essential because of the phlebitis. Actually he's playing good golf. He's breaking 80."

The world around Abplanalp seems to be looking up. He is happy about the new aquasol valve. This time his name made headlines because of his own achievement.

"Not one of the accounts I read mentioned, as they always did before, that I was 'Nixon's other friend.'"

S.F. EXAM

9-6-77