

# Nixon's Autograph

By Michael Unger  
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**R**ICHARD NIXON is signing autographs again. For a while, he wasn't.

But be careful, several of the nation's leading autograph collectors and dealers are warning. Nixon's signature on a letter is most likely a phony, they say, penned by a secretary or imprinted by a machine called the Auto Pen. And even his signature on numbered copies of his earlier *Six Crises* were stamped on, they say.

This and other incidental intelligence for the growing ranks of autograph hounds is contained in *The Pen and Quill* magazine, which is issued every two months or so from a post office box in Rockville Centre, L.I., by the Universal Autograph Collectors Club. With more than 650 members, the club is one of the world's largest associations of autograph collectors and dealers, says its president since 1968, Herman M. Darvick, editor of the magazine.

Darvick's announcement that Nixon is signing autographs again came in the latest issue of *The Pen and Quill*. His advice for the would-be Nixon autograph collector: "Write a nice letter, enclose return postage — just a stamp, not an envelope — and send it to La Casa Pacifica, San Clemente, Calif. 92672."

However, Darvick said he was waiting to see whether Nixon's signatures would be the real thing on the two autographed editions of the former president's recently published memoirs. "They say he's personally signing them now," Darvick said. "The \$250 edition of the book is limited to 2500 copies. The \$50 copies were supposed to be limited, too. It will be easy to tell if it's an Auto Pen. It's impossible to write your name the exact same

Sincerely,



**A presidential signature that may or may not have been written by a machine**

way twice, but with the Auto Pen it's exactly the same all the time."

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**N**OTED MANHATTAN collector and dealer Charles Hamilton, a regular contributor to Darvick's magazine, said, "I am somewhat dubious about whether Nixon actually is signing autographs himself; when he was president, he used 14 different Auto Pen patterns. Even his letters to people like Herbert Hoover were signed 'Dick' or 'RN' with an Auto Pen. His important letters were signed for him by Rose Mary Woods, his

# or a Machine's

secretary. She signed his name to anything of great importance, otherwise, he just used an Auto Pen machine."

An aide to Nixon at his San Clemente home, Colonel Jack Brennan, said the former president had used an Auto Pen in the past, but that Nixon had personally hand-signed his signature on every copy of all 14,000 autographed editions of his memoirs.

"Every morning he did a couple hundred signatures over a period of seven or eight weeks. He could do 300 an hour, and he did one big batch of 5000" in one shot, Brennan said. Nixon signed the end papers before their insertion into the bound volumes, Brennan explained.

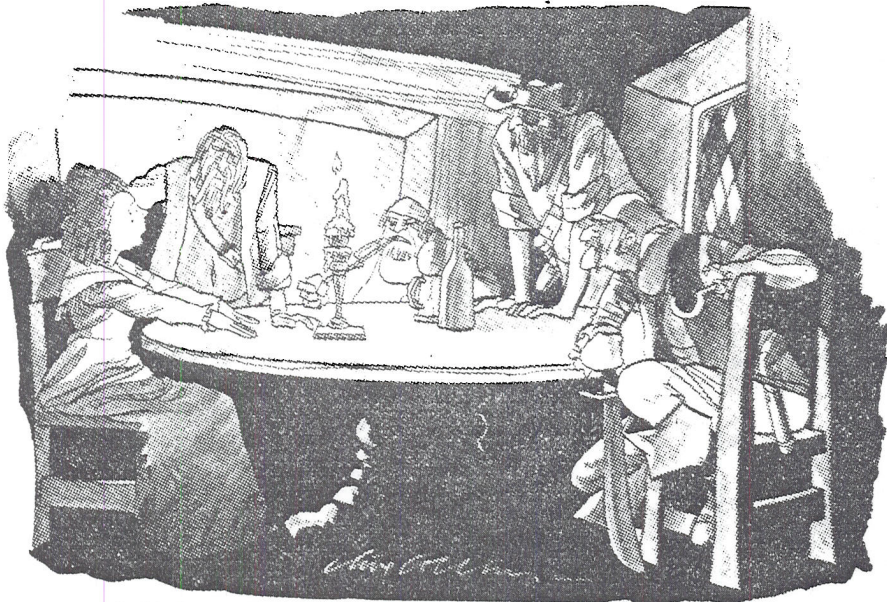
Brennan said Hamilton was inaccurate concerning Nixon's autograph-signing habits, but conceded Nixon may not have personally signed his *Six Crises* volumes. Brennan said there was no Auto Pen at San Clemente and that

"we're 2.5 million letters behind now," so that the chances of a would-be collector obtaining an autographed note from Nixon are slim at this time.

Harold Roth, president and chief executive officer of Grosset & Dunlap Inc., which published the Nixon memoirs, said all of the autographed copies "are personally hand-signed by Mr. Nixon. I personally asked him the question and asked him to confirm in writing that this was so. I have a statement in writing from him. We said if he did not, we were going to sue him. Our own reputation is at stake in this matter. He's finished signing them. We asked him to sign 14,000, which he did." Roth said the 2500 signed, numbered, leatherbound, limited \$250 editions were sold out as of last Thursday and that 9000 copies of the \$50 edition had been sold on total expected orders of 10,000. "We are sending a certificate of authenticity to everybody who buys a \$250 edition. He's signing 'Richard Nixon' on specially bound end sheets" in the front of the books, Roth said.

Actually, Hamilton said, real handwritten signed letters by Nixon are so few they are quite valuable. "The biggest price ever paid for a living person's autograph was a handwritten letter from Nixon to an Army general with whom he had spent the Christmas holidays." Hamilton sold the letter for \$6250.

Although Nixon's handwritten signature on a letter is rare, the dealer said, his autographs on souvenir programs, menus, slips of paper and the like are "very plentiful" and worth about \$25 each. What really would be valuable, he said, would be a Nixon-signed copy of his letter resigning from the presidency, the original of which is in the National Archives.



I think I've managed to get through to his parrot.