

A HOUSE MEMBER APPARENT SUICIDE

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Mills of Maryland Linked to
Political Fund Charges
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WASHINGTON, May 24 — Representative William O. Mills of Maryland, a Republican whose 1971 special election was aided by an unreported cash transfer of \$25,000 from the Nixon campaign committee, was found shot to death this morning, and the authorities called his death an apparent suicide.

Mr. Mills, a 48-year-old former telephone company executive on Maryland's Eastern Shore, was found near his home in Easton, Md., at 7:05 A.M., dead of a single 12-gauge shotgun wound in the left side of his chest. The automatic gun and a single spent shell were at his side and Talbot County State's Attorney William S. Horne said, "It appears that the cause of death was a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the chest."

State Authorities reported that Mr. Mills had left at least seven notes, including one found on his body in an Easton barn where he stabled horses. One official said that in the

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notes, Mr. Mills said "he had done nothing wrong but said he couldn't prove it, and so there was no other way out."

Mr. Mills was reported to have had no serious domestic or personal problems. But one former associate said that he had been "depressed" since the death in an automobile accident in 1972 of three of his Congressional aides, including his former campaign treasurer, Col. James L. Webster.

'Mood' Was Affected

The announcement early this year that Mr. Mills's political mentor and predecessor in the Eastern Shore House seat, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, was suffering from cancer was also said to have "affected his mood."

The apparent suicide followed by five days the disclosure by the General Accounting office that Mr. Mills's 1971 campaign was aided by an unreported \$25,000 cash transfer from the Finance Committee to Re-elect the President.

The Washington Post reported yesterday that neither Mr. Mills nor his 1971 campaign treasurer, who has since died, had reported receiving the funds under Maryland's state campaign finance law.

The Post said that 24 hours before the Mills shooting that this was "in apparent violation of state law." But Willard Morris, the Maryland administrator of election laws, said in Annapolis today that there may have been no state violation.

The Mills election in 1971 was in May, and Mr. Morris said that he was checking to see whether the \$25,000 transaction might have been exempt from Maryland disclosure requirements then in effect. The Maryland law was amended in July, 1971, to require fuller reporting, he said.

Mr. Mills ran in a special election that year in Maryland's First Congressional District for the seat then being vacated by Mr. Morton.

Mr. Mills was successful in that election and was re-elected in 1972.

National Help Sought

Talking to newsmen today, Mr. Morton readily acknowledged that he had "initiated" the "perfectly proper and above-board" \$25,000 transfer to Mr. Mills's campaign.

By vacating the First District seat in a nonelection year, Mr. Morton said, he left his former administrative assistant in a financial vacuum, with no local funds accumulated for a Republican House campaign.

So, Mr. Morton said, he sought national Republican help. He asked former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, a Nixon campaign leader, for a \$25,000 "loan" to Mr. Mills. Mr. Mills also received outright payments — reported in Maryland election records — of \$5,000 and \$2,000 from other national Republican campaign committees supporting members of Congress, apparently through Mr. Morton's intercession.

The \$25,000 "loan" — a word that a Morton aide said later today the Secretary had "used

loosely" — was never intended to be repaid in cash. Mr. Morton said that he had agreed with Mr. Mitchell to "repay" it by making extra fund-raising speaking appearances for the Nixon campaign in 1972 and also by soliciting wealthy friends to make larger-than-usual contributions.

Reconstructing the shooting, Maryland authorities said that Mr. Mills drove early this morning to the nearby stable from his home in the center of Easton.

According to the police, a shot was heard at about 7 A.M. by Walter R. Soulsman, a caretaker at the Mullberry Hill Farm Stables where Mr. Mills kept his horses and where he frequently made early morning visits. Mr. Soulsman found Mr. Mills moments later lying face up near the barn door, the police said, and Mr. Mills was pronounced dead at Easton Memorial Hospital at 7:55 A.M.

The House of Representatives recessed later in the day in respect for Mr. Mills. He was a native of Bethlehem, Md., a small Eastern Shore community, and a combat veteran of the Army in World War II. After the war, he managed small Eastern Shore offices for the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co. before joining Mr. Morton's Congressional staff in 1962.

Mr. Mills was an Elk and a Rotarian.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Norma Lee Mills; a daughter, Mrs. Lawrence Haley, 24, and a son, William O. Mills Jr., 16, all of Easton.

Recruiting by White House Held Unaffected by Scandal

WASHINGTON, May 24 (AP) — The White House reported today that despite the Watergate scandal it was "having no trouble recruiting people" for government jobs.

In fact, the deputy Presidential press secretary, Gerald L. Warren, said, the White House is "still getting more offers of assistance than we can handle" and from what he called high-caliber persons.

Mr. Warren said that the percentage of unfilled posts on executive levels in the administration was 9.2 per cent, with only 48 vacancies among a total of 520 positions. He put the percentage for sub-Cabinet posts at 14.5 per cent, or 29 vacancies in 200 posts.

As far as Ambassadors are concerned, he said, "We are a little bit behind on that." He listed the vacancy rate at about 11 per cent with 13 vacant positions of a total of 115 posts.



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William O. Mills