

Md. Rep. Mills Shot to Death; Notes Found

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EASTON, Md., May 24—U.S. Rep. William O. Mills (R-Md.) died of a shotgun blast this morning—an apparent suicide—one day after it was disclosed that he had failed to report a \$25,000 contribution to his 1971 congressional campaign from an undisclosed fund of President Nixon's re-election finance committee.

Mills, 48, was found at 7:05 a.m. dead of a shotgun wound in the chest. His body was lying in front of a barn near Rte. 50 here where Mills stabled some saddle horses. A 12-gauge shotgun was lying at his feet.

Police and a spokesman for the Federal Bureau of Investigation termed the death an apparent suicide. An investigation is continuing and a final determination of the cause of death awaits an autopsy and medical examiner's report.

A note pinned to the congressman's body was paraphrased by officials close to the investigation as saying, "I've done nothing wrong but there is no way I can prove it. This is the only way out."

Other reliable officials reported another note, addressed from Mills to his constituents in Maryland's sprawling Eastern Shore First Congressional District, "alludes to an impending scandal." These sources did not elaborate.

This note was said to be among six notes that investigators found in Mills' house on Hawks Hill Road in the Clifton subdivision near here. These sources reported that the notes, apparently written by Mills, were addressed to members of his family.

The contents of these notes could not be learned. Police and other investigators refused repeatedly to confirm or deny the existence of the notes or their contents.

It was not known whether the paraphrased allusions in the notes referred to the unreported \$25,000 contribution, or to any other undisclosed allegation of impropriety involving this money or any other matter.

This contribution first was disclosed by the federal General Accounting Office on Saturday. On Wednes-

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WILLIAM O. MILLS
... shotgun blast

MILLS, From A1

day The Washington Post reported to state campaign officials, an apparent violation of Maryland law.

Talbot County State's Attorney William S. Horne said that the press release that Mills distributed after the disclosures and that he read to a radio station here late Wednesday night was found in a pocket of his jacket at the slaying scene.

"I wish to assure everyone that I have done nothing improper," the release said in part.

The U.S. Congress passed a "resolution of sorrow" for Mills' family this afternoon after learning of the death, then adjourned early as a further token of respect.

A congressional delegation including all the other seven U.S. congressmen from Maryland was appointed to attend the Mills funeral here Saturday.

The death scene just east of busy Rte. 50 the route to the Atlantic beaches from Washington, was the front of a large, modern cement-block barn where Mills and others kept their horses.

The barn is about three miles north of the small subdivision where Mills lived with his wife and two children in a \$40,000 brick house, some 78 miles by road from Washington.

A state trooper was stationed outside the home this morning and only friends were being admitted.

Walter Radcliffe Soulsman, the farmhand who found Mills yesterday, said, "He was lying on his back

with a 12-gauge shotgun at his feet."

Soulsman said he went to the barn before 7 a.m., parked his pickup truck and went around to the back of the barn to check the planting of some soybeans. He said he saw no one at that time.

While behind the barn, Soulsman said he heard a single shot but didn't think anything of it because "I'm accustomed to hearing shots."

However, when he came back to get into his truck, Soulsman said he saw what he recognized as the Mills car with congressional license tags. Then he saw the body.

He said Mills had been shot in the chest.

Officials reported that Mills apparently rested the shotgun against his chest and fired it by pressing the trigger with a length of pipe.

Officials said the body was taken to the Easton Memorial Hospital where Mills was pronounced dead at 7:55 a.m. by Dr. Frank Drews.

The body was then taken to Baltimore where Dr. Ronald N. Kornblum, the state's deputy chief medical examiner, performed an autopsy.

Dr. Kornblum reported that Mills died of a shotgun wound in the chest and that there was no other evidence of injury on the body.

Kornblum said that a further official statement on the cause and manner of death could not be made until after other toxicological

studies, examination of clothing and "neutron activation studies of the hand" were performed.

After news reporters and television cameramen flooded this small town, officials shut themselves behind closed doors and declined to make any but sketchy announcements.

Just before noon four of the officials—Talbot County State's Attorney William Horne, his assistant S. S. Campen, State Police Lt. John R. Kaiser and FBI agent Robert Lanphear — held a brief press conference.

Horne read a short statement, saying, "At the present time, it appears that the cause of death was the result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the chest, although the investigation in the matter is continuing."

Throughout the day, however, no evidence was disclosed to reporters that would indicate officials suspected any foul play.

Twice during the day, Thomas Farrow, the FBI chief for the Maryland region, said that all indications point to suicide. He said the FBI would officially enter the case if any evidence were found indicating that Mills' death was the result of an assault by another person.

Friends of Mills here said he would frequently stop off at the horse barn to feed his horses before heading off on the 78-mile trip to Washington, a trip he made almost daily.

Friends said they were not sure how many horses Mills owned but that he used to come and ride them from time to time, although he has done so less since going to Congress.

Friends and political acquaintances of Mills in this small Talbot County seat and in Annapolis and Washington said that Mills had been disturbed that his image might be damaged by the disclosures in the press.

"He was an extremely conscientious and sensitive man and he did become concerned about the effect of the publicity on his family and friends," said U.S. Rep. Marjorie Holt (R-Md.), whom Mills had befriended and helped to get adjusted in Congress since her election last November.

Mrs. Holt said that she talked with Mills on the floor of the House on Wed-

nesday and that he expressed concern about the adverse publicity.

James Allison, a partner in the campaign consulting firm of Allison and Treleaven, Inc., which worked for Mills in 1971, said today that Mills telephoned him Tuesday night "and he seemed upset about what Gov. (Marvin) Mandel and the Democrats would make of this whole thing. I'd say he was upset but not really emotionally upset."

In Annapolis, Gov. Mandel said news of the death was "a total shock. I have known Bills Mills a long time. Even though of different parties, we were close personal friends. I think it's a real tragedy."

An aide to the governor said the law provides that the governor shall proclaim a special primary and election to choose a successor.

The primary shall be at least 35 days after the date of the proclamation and the general election at least 35 days after that, according to the aide.

Observers said that Mills, an affable, portly man, did much of the heavy and significant work in Morton's congressional office in the years from 1962 to 1971 when he was Morton's aide.

Allison added that Mills was "a cool and collected guy."

Interior Secretary Morton said he talked to his old aide and companion since the press disclosures this week and that, "He didn't seem very perturbed about the whole thing. I'd say he was concerned but not disturbed by it."

Morton said that Mills felt the implication in the press disclosures was that money "might have gone into his own pocket and this wasn't true. I doubt if he ever knew how much money was involved or how it was spent."

George W. Dietrich, station manager of WEMD radio here, said Mills called him at 10 p.m. Wednesday night and dictated his prepared statement on the \$25,000. His voice seemed strong and firm, Dietrich said, but he felt that the congressman "seemed tired."

Also contributing to this account were Washington Post Staff Writers Richard M. Cohen, Karlyn Barker, Herbert H. Denton and Bill Richards.