

Senate Probers Intrigued by Rebozo Trip

By Seymour M. Hersh
New York Times

Washington

Investigators for the Senate Watergate committee have established that presidential confidant Charles G. Rebozo flew to the Catskill mountain fishing retreat of Robert H. Abplanalp, President Nixon's millionaire friend, about one week before a controversial \$100,000 campaign contribution was returned last year, well-placed sources said yesterday.

The sources said that the committee investigators considered the previously undisclosed Rebozo - Abplanalp meeting significant because they now believe that Rebozo, at the time, was seeking a safe means of returning the \$100,000, which had been contributed in \$100 bills in 1969 and 1970 by Howard Hughes, the wealthy industrialist.

Rebozo subsequently confirmed the meeting with Abplanalp during a closed-door interrogation by investigators, one source said, but testified that "he just flew up for lunch." Abplanalp subsequently denied that there had been any discussions about the \$100,000 contribution during a committee interview, the source said.

The New York Times and the Washington Post reported, over the weekend, that Herbert W. Kalmbach, Mr. Nixon's former personal attorney, secretly testified before the committee last month that Rebozo sought him out in April, 1973, for a White House meeting.

At the time, Kalmbach reportedly testified, Rebozo said that he was seeking his advice at the request of the "big man," Mr. Nixon, and

that he had distributed the \$100,000 Hughes contributions to Nixon's two brothers and his personal secretary, among others.

William S. Frates of Miami, Rebozo's attorney, confirmed that his client had met in upstate New York with Abplanalp before the \$100,000 was returned but repeated his assertion, also made Saturday, that the \$100,000 in cash contributed by Hughes was the same money that Rebozo returned.

William E. Griffin of Yonkers, N.Y., an aide to Abplanalp, depicted the Senate committee's belief that the Abplanalp-Rebozo meeting dealt with the return of the \$100,000 as an "unbelievable fantasy." Both men were interviewed by telephone yesterday.

Sources close to the committee said that the Senate investigating team, led by Terry F. Lenzner, a former assistant U.S. attorney who specialized in organized

Back Page Col. 6

From Page 1

crime, now theorizes that Rebozo sought out Kalmbach in the White House last April in order to induce him to raise the \$100,000 needed to replace and return the contribution.

At the time, according to published accounts, Rebozo was under investigation by the Internal Revenue Service, which had learned of the \$100,000 contribution from a

Hughes employee.

"Kalmbach was the first guy Rebozo went to," said one well-placed source. "He's old reliable."

The source was referring to Kalmbach's self-acknowledged role in 1972 and 1973 as a conduit for the hush money for the original members of the Watergate break-in team.

Kalmbach rebuffed, in effect, Rebozo by urging him to tell the IRS about the distribution of the cash, the Times' sources said, Senate investigators now suspect that Rebozo—as one official said — "tried other routes, like Abplanalp."

Kalmbach was quoted by the Associated Press yesterday as refusing to confirm or deny the published accounts of his conversation with Rebozo, but other sources close to Kalmbach have confirmed the essentials of their White House meeting.

Rebozo has repeatedly said that he kept Hughes' \$100,000 contribution, which was delivered in \$50,000 allotments in 1969 and 1970, in a safety deposit box until the cash was returned last June.

Two alleged recipients of the Hughes cash, Rose Mary Woods, Mr. Nixon's secretary, and F. Donald Nixon, Mr. Nixon's older brother, both denied receiving any

More Nixon News
on Page 12

cash. Donald Nixon told the Associated Press yesterday that he was "outraged and extremely angered" by the reports.

The other alleged recipient of the Hughes cash, Edward C. Nixon, Nixon's younger brother, would not be reached for comment.

Kalmbach's reported account of the meeting not only directly contradicts the sworn testimony of Rebozo, but also contradicts the President's own account of the handling of the \$100,000 contribution from the Hughes corporation.

Rebozo has acknowledged having difficulty in returning the \$100,000, after he decided to do so early last year. Senate investigators previously had determined

that the cash was returned to a Hughes representative in a New York bank last June 27. The delivery was made, according to the Senate testimony, by William Griffin, Abplanalp's attorney and business associate.

The Times' sources would not definitely say how the committee investigators had traced Rebozo's visit to the Catskills last June — within a week or so of the cash delivery by Griffin. One source pointedly noted, however, that the committee has subpoenaed all of Rebozo's telephone records, leaving the inference that his visit was traced through long-distance toll calls.

The Times' sources described Griffin as a potentially key witness.

Griffin, reached by telephone at his home, confirmed that he delivered the \$100,000 in cash to the New York bank last June. Asked about the Senate committee's theory about Abplanalp's involvement, he said, "My only comment is that it's another Senate Watergate committee fantasy."

Frates, also reached by telephone at his home, said he planned to visit today with key members of the Watergate committee to complain about what he termed "the twisting and perversion of every aspect" of his client's closed-door testimony.

Frates acknowledged that Rebozo did meet with Kalmbach in the White House last April "and talked to him about the \$100,000, just as he was talking to several people about taking it back." He repeated Rebozo's assertion, however, that the cash supplied by the Hughes corporation was the same cash that was returned.