

Senate Aides Study Talk By Rebozo and Abplanalp

NYTimes

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

APR 8 1974

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 7—Investigators for the Senate Watergate Committee have established that Charles G. Rebozo, the Presidential confidant, flew to the Catskill fishing retreat of Robert H. Abplanalp, President Nixon's millionaire friend, about a week before a controversial \$100,000 campaign contribution was returned last year, well-placed sources said today.

The sources said that the committee investigators considered the previously undisclosed Rebozo-Abplanalp meeting significant because they now believe that Mr. 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 industrialist.

Mr. Rebozo subsequently confirmed the meeting with Mr. Abplanalp during a closed-door interrogation by investigators,

one source said, but testified that "he just flew up for lunch." Mr. 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, President Nixon's former personal attorney, secretly testified before the committee last month that Mr. Rebozo sought him out in April, 1973, for a White House meeting.

At the time, Mr. Kalmbach reportedly testified, Mr. Rebozo said that he was seeking his advice at the request of the "big man," President Nixon, and that he had distributed the \$100,000 Hughes contributions to Mr. Nixon's two brothers and his personal secretary, among

Continued on Page 27, Column 2

Continued From Page 1, Col. 7

others.

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

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

Sources close to the committee said that the Senate inves-

tigating team, led by Terry F. Lenzner, a former Assistant United States Attorney who specialized in organized crime, now theorize that Mr. Rebozo sought out Mr. Kalmbach in the White House last April to induce him to raise the \$100,000 needed to replace and return the contribution.

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

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

The source was referring to Mr. Kalmbach's self-acknowledged role in 1972 and 1973

as a conduit for the hush money payments allegedly authorized by high White House aides for the original members of the team involved in the break-in on June 17, 1972, at offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate complex here.

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

Mr. Kalmbach, a lawyer from Newport Beach, Calif., was quoted by The Associated Press today as refusing to confirm or deny the published accounts of his conversation with Mr.

Rebozo, but other sources close to Mr. Kalmbach have confirmed the essentials of their White House meeting.

Mr. Rebozo has repeatedly said that he kept Mr. Hughes's \$100,000 contributions, 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, denied receiving any cash. Mr. Nixon told The Associated Press today that he was "outraged and extremely angered" by the reports.

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

for comment.

It could not be learned how much specific information was allegedly provided by Mr. Rebozo to Mr. Kalmbach during their conversation, but sources close to the inquiry acknowledged today that the Senate investigators "have not cracked through yet." One source said that Mr. Lenzner and his associates "need more detailed information."

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

Mr. Nixon publicly praised Mr. Rebozo last Oct. 26 for not touching the \$100,000 for three

years before returning it and added, "I think that is a pretty good indication that he is a totally honest man, which he is."

Mr. Rebozo has acknowledged having difficulty in returning the \$100,000, after he decided to do so early last year. Senate investigators had determined previously 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 Mr. Griffin, Mr. Abplanalp's attorney and business associate.

The Times's sources would not definitely say how the committee investigators had traced Mr. Rebozo's visit to the Catskills last June—within a week

or so of the cash delivery by Mr. Griffin. One source pointedly noted, however, that the committee had subpoenaed all of Mr. Rebozo's telephone records, leaving the inference that his visit was traced through long-distance toll calls.

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

Mr. 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 Mr. Abplanalp's involvement, he said, "my only comment is that it's another Senate Watergate committee fantasy. They're unbelievable," he said of the committee investigators. "It's an unbelievable fantasy."