

Nixon Aids at Wreck Fatal to Three

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., July 18 (AP)—Former President Richard M. Nixon tried vainly for an hour to save the lives of three marines at a traffic accident yesterday, a base spokesman said today.

"Mr. Nixon took charge of the accident scene," said Capt. Lou Chatell. "He directed his Secret Service men to call for a medi-vac unit and he and one of his aides tried to help one marine who was still alive."

A spokesman at Mr. Nixon's home in nearby San Clemente confirmed the report and said that Mr. Nixon had stayed at the scene for an hour, directing the operation.

A spokesman at Camp Pendleton said that details of the accident were not clear, but gave the following account:

Mr. Nixon was returning with Tricia and Edward Cox, his daughter and son-in-law, from

a Marine Corps golf course when two cars collided head-on directly in front of the Nixon car on Las Pulgas Road on the base.

The Secret Service agent who was driving the Nixon car stopped, and Mr. Nixon asked him to radio for medical aid.

Two men were already dead, but Mr. Nixon and Mr. Cox, using a crowbar, tried to free a third Marine pinned in the wreckage. The third man was pronounced dead at the base hospital five hours later.

Others in Party

Also in the car with Mr. Nixon were his aide, Col. Jack Brennan, and a Navy corpsman.

The dead marines were identified as Sgt. Davis A. Vandal, 28 years old, of Oceanside; Cpl. Ramiro A. Delgado Jr., 20, of San Antonio, Tex., and Sgt. Larry W. Grise, 24, of San Clemente.

Captain Chatelle, a public information officer on Camp Pendleton, said that it was "fairly common" for Mr. Nixon to be on the base, where the golf facilities have been made available to him. In recent weeks, Captain Chatelle said, "He has been on the base for leisurely drives several times."

La Pulgas Road is an east-west artery at the northwest edge of the base some 10 miles

from Mr. Nixon's San Clemente estate, La Casa Pacifica.

Fatal accidents are routinely reported at the Marine base, but Thursday's was not. A rumor concerning Mr. Nixon's involvement reached the nearby Vietnamese refugee camp this morning. Marine spokesmen said that they could not explain why the accident had not been reported in the normal way.

Plans for Deposition

WASHINGTON, July 18 (UPI)—A lawyer for Mr. Nixon said today that the former President would make a sworn deposition late next week in his suit to regain custody of his Presidential papers and tapes.

"It's an incredibly important case from his standpoint and that of the institution of the Presidency," said R. Stan Mortenson, one Nixon's lawyers.

Two Federal judges ordered yesterday that Mr. Nixon answer questions under oath within 10 days. There was speculation, however, that he might avoid making the deposition by withdrawing an affidavit he submitted in the case in June.

Mr. Mortenson said that "at this moment there is no intention" to withdraw the affidavit, which lawyers said would provide the basis for questioning if a deposition is taken.