

Canceling 'Nixon Letters'

By Maxine Cheshire

Branding them as forgeries, former President Richard M. Nixon's lawyers have blocked sale or publication of a batch of purported "love letters" of his which came on the market recently.

The matter is being referred to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a spokesman says, adding: "Mr. Nixon has indicated his willingness to cooperate in any way if the FBI decides to investigate."

One Nixon attorney, Stan Mortenson, says that forged letters could involve possible mail or wire fraud violations.

The letters surfaced earlier this month when New York literary agent Scott Meredith called a press conference and announced that he was in possession of several dozen handwritten letters that appeared to have been penned by Nixon.

Meredith refused to identify either to whom the letters had been written

or to name the woman client he was representing.

Meredith told reporters that four handwriting experts had authenticated the letters. But at least one person familiar with Nixon's handwriting has examined photostats of two of the letters and remains unconvinced.

Former White House legal counsel John W. Dean III said last week that "someone from one of the scandal sheets" had brought him copies of a couple of the letters in hopes that he could pronounce them genuine.

"I told them, the handwriting was interesting," Dean says. "But I wouldn't be able to swear something was my own handwriting if you brought it to me, and besides, I didn't want to get involved."

When the existence of the letters became publicly known, Nixon's lawyers acted swiftly. Meredith received more than one telegram cautioning him that they were forged.

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VIP, From C1

Meredith's response was to write back that he is taking Nixon's word that the letters are forgeries and is "withdrawing" himself from any further dealings with his still-unidentified client.

Potpourri

Calling himself the "brother-in-law" of Sen. Edward M. (Ted) Kennedy, a man using the name Clark Lane Bennett has opened a "Rent-a-Rolls-Royce" agency here. Bennett has told reporters that he is the "step-brother" of Joan Kennedy, whose maiden name

is Bennett. According to a press spokesman in Sen. Kennedy's office, Joan Kennedy's parents were divorced six years ago and her father married again. His new wife's, 28-year-old son took the Bennett name ... There was fallout all over Capitol Hill from the National Gallery of Art's spectacular fireworks display. One resident went out into his yard and retrieved a rocket cannister. It was labeled "People's Republic of China" ...

Cher is one celebrity who can't claim that she ignores what the movie fan magazines write about her. A Washington shopping in a Beverly Hills drug store this week spotted

Char, in a strapless wine-colored maternity dress, giggling at the newsstand with husband Greg Allman as they perused current stories about themselves.

Washington advertising man Ernie Johnston, who represents major movie studios here, has just won a three-year bout with the Russian Embassy. When Soviet party boss Leonid Brezhnev was here in June, 1973, Johnston rounded up a lot of Westerners for him to view at Blair House and loaned him his own 16-mm sound projector. Only this week did Johnston finally manage to get his property back, battered and much used, with frayed cords.

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