

Nixon Presidential Returned Materials Collection
White House Special Files (WHSF)



Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
National Archives and Records Administration

Processed by Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, Yorba Linda, California, 2007

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Nixon Presidential Returned Materials Collection: White House Special Files (WHSF)

Creator: Office of the White House Special Files unit

Extent: 72 boxes, approximately 32 linear feet.

Repository: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
18001 Yorba Linda Boulevard
Yorba Linda, California 92886

Abstract: The Nixon Presidential Returned Materials Collection: White House Special Files, consist of materials designated by archivists of the National Archives and Records Administration's Nixon Presidential Materials Project as political or personal. These materials were returned to the Nixon estate beginning in April of 1994.

Administrative Information

Access: Open, exceptions for Personal Privacy

Publication Rights: The Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation has deeded all copyrights which it has in the materials to the United States of America and those materials are in the public domain. Copyright restrictions may exist for commercial materials included in the collection.

Preferred Citation: Folder title. Box #. Nixon Presidential Returned Materials Collection: White House Special Files (WHSF). Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation, Yorba Linda, CA.

Administrative History

In 1972, members of the Nixon White House staff created the White House Special Files unit to physically secure political and administrative materials perceived to be sensitive, personal materials relating or belonging to Richard Nixon, and documents containing the President's handwriting. These materials were removed from the White House Central Files: Subject Files, Staff Member and Office Files (SMOFs), and Alphabetical Name Files and placed into the newly created White House Special Files collection. Materials meeting the above criteria created after the September 1972 transfer were automatically placed into the White House Special Files collection. Upon the resignation of Richard Nixon in August, 1974, the Special Files were placed into the custody of the National Archives and Records Services (NARS). In December, 1974, President Gerald Ford signed the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act (PRMPA), laying out guidelines for the handling of the Nixon White House materials.

In 1987, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff placed a notice of intention to open the first installment of the White House Special Files in the Federal Register, as mandated by 36 CFR, Part 1275, produced in 1986. Materials deemed personal or political by National Archives and Records Administration archivists were withdrawn during the review process and returned to Richard Nixon, as required by the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act and 36 CFR, Part 1275. A portion of the materials slated for release in 1987 were contested by former President Richard Nixon, and the contested portion was re-reviewed by the Presidential Materials Review Board (please see the finding aid for Nixon Presidential Returned Materials: White House Special Files: Contested Materials for further information). Those materials from the first installment not returned for political or personal distinctions and those materials not contested by Richard Nixon were released on May 4, 1987, by the Nixon Presidential Materials Project of the National Archives and Records Administration.

The aforementioned returned materials arrived at the private Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation beginning in April 1994. In October 2006, an agreement between the Nixon Foundation's Executive Director and the Director of the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff was made regarding the processing and release of the Nixon Estate's Returned White House Special Files. In the fall of 2006, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff of the National Archives and Records Administration reviewed all documents within the Returned White House Special Files for personal privacy.

Scope and Content Summary

The White House Special Files materials were removed from the White House Central Files: Subject Files, Staff Member and Office Files (SMOFs), and Alphabetical Name Files in September 1972, to secure perceived sensitive political and administrative materials, personal materials relating or belonging to Richard Nixon, and documents containing the President's handwriting. From September 1972 to August 1974, any of the aforementioned materials were automatically placed into the newly created White House Special Files collection.

The White House Special Files consist of three sections designated by the White House Central Files office: the Subject Files, the Staff Member and Office Files (SMOFs), and the Alphabetical Name File (for more background on this collection, please see the finding aid for the Nixon Presidential Returned Materials Collection: White House Central Files). The majority of the Returned Materials of the White House Special Files are from the SMOF section.

The negotiated agreement of 1979 between Richard Nixon and the National Archives, and 36 CFR, Part 1275 (produced in 1986), which described the procedures National Archives and Records Administration personnel used to process the Nixon materials, defined the types of documents that were considered "returnable" to the former President, i.e. materials of a strictly political and/or personal nature. These materials were withdrawn under the "G" restriction code ("Withdrawn and Returned private and personal material") defined by the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act.

The materials within the White House Special Files returned to the Nixon Estate fall under two distinct categories. Materials defined as political include historical materials which relate to political activities of Richard Nixon and his staff but do not pertain to the carrying out of duties of the President as defined by constitutional or statutory authorities. The White House Special Files returned to former President Richard Nixon are records relating to various campaigns. For example, materials within the Special Files SMOF of President Nixon's White House Chief of Staff, H.R. Haldeman, include documents from Nixon's 1960 Presidential campaign and 1962 Gubernatorial campaign. These materials also include publications, strategy memorandums and correspondence regarding the 1968, 1970, and 1972 campaigns. Included within this collection are materials relating to the involvement of White House staff members in the activities of the Republican National Committee, and the status of Richard Nixon as the head of the Republican Party.

Materials defined as personal include personal information regarding President Richard Nixon, his wife Patricia Nixon, his daughters Tricia Nixon Cox and Julie Nixon Eisenhower, and his sons-in-law Edward Cox and David Eisenhower. These materials may include any interpersonal correspondence, memoranda regarding any member of Richard Nixon's family, and family financial

information. Materials related to the creation of a future Presidential Library appear in this collection. Any materials comprising a clear invasion of privacy of any member of the White House staff, including correspondence, private financial information, or personnel issues also fell under this distinction.

In the fall of 2006, the Nixon Presidential Materials Staff of the National Archives and Records Administration reviewed all documents within the Returned White House Special Files for personal privacy only.

***Preservation photocopies of the Nixon Presidential Returned Materials Collection: White House Special Files are available for research at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. In the fall of 2007, this collection will also be available in digital form via the Richard Nixon Library and Museum website. Due to preservation concerns, the originals of the Returned White House Special Files are not available to researchers.**