

Julie Nixon Opens a Can of Autograph Worms

IMAGINE: YOU'RE AN ENTHUSED Richard Nixon admirer who has gathered a collection of his letters, signed photographs and such. Still not satiated, you include similar material from his wife, Pat. Thirsting for more, you branch out and include the Nixon's two children, Tricia and Julie.

In amassing this collection, you've also become adept at separating the good from the bad. You can tell the autopens from the secretarials and the preprints from the out-and-out forgeries.

But, wait a sec...these Autopen signatures of Julie Nixon don't really look much like her authentic signature. If you didn't know better, you'd almost think they look more like...Tricia Nixon's handwriting! But that can't be. It just cannot.

An Autopen master matrix is made when the person whose signature is to be reproduced sits down at the Autopen machine and signs a master form using a pen that's attached to the mechanical arm of the machine. The machine then records every subtle motion of the signing process and transfers it onto a master disc. This disc, which looks like a half-melted boomerang, gets placed into the Autopen machine much like a record album that's put into a record player.

So, what's the deal? A recent letter from Julie Nixon Eisenhower to one of our cus-



Julie and Tricia's similar signatures on the Nixon family Christmas card.



tomers sheds some light on a practice of the Nixon pre-White House people. The letter reads:

The family Christmas card was sent out in Dec. '67. The signatures are all Auto-pen because it was a huge, pre-election mailing. My sister signed for me because I was at Smith College and there was no time to get my signature before the mailing deadline!

Wow! This casually-mentioned bombshell could have caused much confusion and misidentification of material for those collecting the Nixon family. The fact that collectors may have been comparing their Julie Nixon signatures against an Autopen matrix not in her own hand is a whole new twist on the Autopen dilemma.

Autograph material of presidential children is seldom collected, unless they themselves became president, which has happened only twice in our nation's history, or achieved some cult status (JFK Jr.) or other renown (Robert Todd Lincoln). The majority of presidential offspring are readily available and quite affordable, but their handwriting and Autopen examples are not found in most autograph reference books.

Compare the signatures of Julie and Tricia Nixon on the Christmas card in question. Admittedly, with no last name

present, and only five and six letters apiece, this is a completely inadequate handwriting sample to study. If Julie herself hadn't admitted this Autopen signature wasn't originally made by her, it's not outside the realm of possibility that these two signatures could have been made by two different people. Knowing that wasn't the case, the many similarities are obvious.

Still, Julie Nixon's revelation opens up more questions than it answers. Did the Autopen signatures made by Tricia Nixon for herself and her sister include the last name, even though it wasn't used on the Christmas card? Did Tricia make more than one signature of Julie for Autopen usage? Was the phony Julie Nixon Autopen signature utilized on a wide array of letters, photographs and souvenir items? Did Julie Nixon ever make a bona fide Autopen signature herself?

These and more questions remain unanswered. Further research, comparison and sample-gathering need be done, but the research is compelling to the serious autograph collector. Send in copies of Julie and Tricia Nixon material you may have for a follow-up report.

WILLIAM L. BUTTS owns *Main Street Fine Books & Manuscripts, Ltd. (ABBA)* in Galena, Ill. He can be reached at 815-777-3749 or william.butts@autographmagazine.com.

New Joshua,
The family Christmas card was sent out in Dec. '67. The signatures are all auto-pen because it was a huge, pre-election mailing.
My sister signed for me because I was at Smith College and there was no time to get my signature before the mailing deadline!
Good luck with your collecting hobby.
Julie Nixon
9/28/07

A letter by Julie Nixon Eisenhower explaining that her Autopen was created by her sister.