

## TIGER SKULL IN LIMBO

# 'Illegal' Gifts to Officials

## Jam Room in Foggy Bottom

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With luck, this may be the year the general finally gets his tiger skull, the ambassador collects his silver tea set and the spy master first sets foot on his Persian rugs.

The skull, the tea set and the rugs are just a few of the thousands of medals and mementoes that have been presented by foreign governments to American public servants in violation of Clause 8, Section 9, Article I of the Constitution. ("No person holding any office of profit or trust . . . shall, without the consent of the Congress, accept of any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any king, prince or foreign state.")

When a conscientious United States employe is given a token of esteem by a foreign government, he turns it over to the State Department, which wraps it in brown paper, labels it and stashes it away in a locked room in the basement at Foggy Bottom. Years later, when the

faithful servant retires and is presumably beyond the reach of bribery, State reminds Congress and a bill is passed allowing him to collect his present.

Enough follow the letter of the law to create quite a problem for State Department housekeepers.

The room in the basement is nearly full.

Congress has compounded the problem in recent years by neglecting to pass the usual blanket bill covering people who retired in the previous two or three years. The last such bill was passed in 1958, and since then the medals, cigarette lighters and inscribed watches have been piling up.

Last week, Representative Hays, Democrat of Ohio, introduced a bill to distribute the presents given to some 2,000 military and civilian personnel who have retired since the 1958 housecleaning.

One who dearly hopes the bill will pass—and soon—is Marine Corps Gen. Graves B. Erskine, who retired in 1961.

Gen. Erskine was given a

polished, beautifully decorated tiger skull by the Thai government in 1956, and he has been saving a place for it ever since in the 9-by-5-foot curio cabinet in his home at 2306 Forty-fourth street N.W.

The urgency attaches to another of the general's gifts, though—the Royal Order of King George I, which was presented to him in 1959 by Crown Prince Constantine of Greece. Constantine is now King of Greece, and Gen. Erskine has been invited to the royal wedding in Athens September 18. The Geeeks are bound to notice if he isn't wearing their medal—it has a wide ribbon across the chest—and they may ask questions.

Gen. Erskine has one consolation as he waits patiently for his locked-up souvenirs: Former Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand gave his eldest son to Gen. Erskine as a mark of esteem some years ago. The State lawyers apparently considered the gift merely symbolic, though, so when the young man visited his foster parent in 1957,

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