

Return to the

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Dear Harold:

It seems our letters crossed. As you can see from mine, what I have been doing is contacting the pertinent people re the interview, the article, the support down-the-road, etc. As laid out in the letter you've just received. And also not getting in the way while you and Jim did all the work, as you say, in getting the papers--now filed, I hope--for McRae, Haile, and all concerned. Has Bud done anything in that regard? No, eh.

As I've said, I suppose it is the order in which editors think, but they remain wedded to the notion of a Ray interview first on the plausible ground that that will create interest in follow-up articles, etc. Quite frankly, I don't think they know how much you and Jim have been exposed in various media (the Public Radio broadcast, Rosenbaum's Voice piece, the AP review, etc.) which is probably good since they have a horror of being beaten, especially since the lead time is so great. But, after the Ray talk, I know they'll be gung-ho (thanks for telling Ron R. the genesis of that) for the whole story. But consider it from our viewpoint. First, we'd like a good solid interview with Jimmy along the lines you and I have discussed at length. Then, says I, we all can do the Big Piece that tells it all, after the trial or whenever is cool.

(I want to stop right here, interrupt, and say I sure as hell don't think you're a nut. Obsessed, ~~maybe~~, but about the right things. I mean, ~~nuts~~ don't accomplish things in courts of law where a rationality, however strained, eventually wins through. So . . . I like getting your letters. They stimulate me and help me see what's really going on, and with whom, and who's working.) To go on, the project is for sure not abandoned in my mind. It just waits on Jimmy and you and Jim and your joint relationships. If Jimmy can't or won't be talked to (which is remarkably inconsistent with Paul and Snyder's opportunities), then that's it--then I've got to do with the story what I can, and ~~what~~ you can help me with. But what that is, I don't know simply because I'm a simple-minded son of a bitch and I'm still hanging on the interview. If that's impossible, then maybe we can put together the whole story as we have talked it out. Of course, that would mean a break for you with Bud (if you were acknowledged to have a part in it) and I sure don't want to ~~be~~ part of that unless you will it, and until you will it, and until it is immaterial to Jimmy. (since maybe, I hope, by then he'll be shed of the King charges).

Harold, I guess you want now an outline or what the proposed interview will cover? I will get that off to you within a day under separate cover--no specific questions, but the fairly specific lines. I hope it will satisfy you, Jim, and Bud that my intentions are clear and fair. (Despite my being pissed that Bud thought I or Playboy was buying you or Jimmy or Jim--my offer to pay Nashville expenses and research-help is mine, not Hefner's, and it comes out of my pocket). Anyway you will see that I've not yet abandoned a damned thing.

When you all have had a chance to review the proposed interview, I hope you'll let me know what the interview chances are (soon). Like you all, I've got several things hanging--I'd cheerfully let them hang to do the Ray story because I believe in it (how often does one have a chance really to do something? You, I know, have had many, but not me), but if Jimmy stays gagged, then I'll have to leave it for the time being (in favor of the ^{12/10} article)

One thing crosses my mind, namely, Bud's letter to me which flatly states there will be no interview at this time. I'll go ahead with the outline as if I have not received that, but I will not send it to Bud until you say it's OK. Why should I when he's already said, no interview?

Finally, Harold, for now, my thanks for the good defense of our plan in the letter to Jimmy. What you said was quite fair and accurate. The Playboy piece would, I know, help Jimmy's cause--and the circulation is vast. Not just here, but overseas. The only addendum to what you wrote Jimmy which I would make is in the area of "public domain." You're right that all of us bought Ray's transcript. But in the interview we would want at least altered responses, i.e. different, more ample language, only because a lot of those quotes are around in the media and also because I, for one, would like Jimmy's "interview self" to be as smooth and seamless and logical as possible. Understand I am not saying Jimmy's answers would vary--they shouldn't. But that we might well elicit more formal, fuller, more "organic" responses which work to the total end of the interview. Hell, you know what I mean! There's a difference between court-room responses and the friendly interview which seeks to establish the tone of the man as much as his specific responses.

I'll stop now and get the outline in shape for you. Hope to hear from you soon what my fate in all this is.

Best,

Jim

P.S. Hell, I wish you and I could just arrange this with Jim, make sure Jimmy is fully protected, and go to Nashville and do it while there's irons in the fire.

P.P.S. Would you like to lecture here on various matters -- Ray, the Kennedys, Watergate, etc. -- if I can set it up and get you some good \$? Let me know -- we could probably do it in the Spring.