

Dear Jim,

Ford and the 1/27/64 transcript

12/8/74

To make a full record at one point I'll repeat what you may remember.

First, the news of immediate interest: I have sold the use of the Ford part of the new book to the National Star for a skinny \$200, mostly out of concern for your bank and partly because of the stipulation I attached in accepting their offer from Roger today: they throw in either an ad or include in the story how readers can get the book and the price. Roger has agreed and he thinks they will. If they don't, with your permission I'll decline.

From the top: they had a man in Memphis, we spoke, I heard nothing so after talking to you I phoned them in NYC and got a call-back from Nevard, an editor. He was excited but because it had taken him so long to return the call, days after he had been supposed to, I had phoned Harper's and spoken to Lewis Lapham. You know that story of nothings.

I proposed to Roger, who passed some time here, a series of three stories he saw, NOT including this Ford one because I was confident his sheet would not go for it. But when Roger read he regarded that as what it is, a major story. He persisted in it and scared the hell out of everyone at the Star. This is why they backed off and why we did not all serialization of at least three stories. (The Inquirer man also saw three minimum.)

Last I'd heard they were still running and he was still pushing. Today he phoned to tell me they've c.k'ed.

Bill Roberts,

He had taken this up with the White House, asking: Did Ford give the money to some charity and if so which; Did he use classified documents? He expected to be brushed off, in part because with a perfectly normal thing, an existing family picture, it was six weeks after publication of the story before he got it, at least two months in all.

But they did call back to tell him: No charity; and no classified documents at all, only what the Warren Commission published - with one teeny-weeny except, a sort of small error Jack Stiles had made.

Roger made notes and he is going to give them to me for archival filing, no restrictions.

This also means that the White House, if it didn't earlier, knows about our book. They have asked for no paper on the deal but I did offer it. This also makes a record of that because it is copyrighted. It is to protect them.

Now it is also interesting that one of the things they are giving Roger the run-around on is a report they got that Ford is building in Colorado. At Aspen, not Vail, where it is known that Ford has a property. He could get no answer from the WH and he knows at GSA - you guess it - Vawter, who denied promptly. Roger has the same opinion of Vawter I do.

I was able to make some suggestions on how he could check the story further so I did and he will.

Here is what happened at the Star once Roger proposed the Ford story: they suddenly had not received the book and he couldn't get anyone to read the stuff when he went there and wrote. So he was getting turned down all the time by those who professed no knowledge of the story or the record on which it is based! He persisted until he finally got someone to read it and thus the go-ahead. But the sum is an insult and is not indicative of major attention. Or they are gyping us more.

Thus also one of my reasons for stipulating how the book can be bought as part of the deal. They do sell about a million copies, to people who seek sensation.

We'll see,