

Richard M. Nixon: Out of the

By Maxine Cheshire

A movie based on the life of Richard M. Nixon as he sees it?

A television special starring Richard M. Nixon?

An unidentified man, photographed by Newsweek as he strolled the grounds of San Clemente with the former President on his 62d birthday, turns out to be Frank Wells, head of Warner Communications' film and TV division.

Wells, along with executives of the company's book division, spent two hours with Mr. Nixon on Jan. 9, talking about his future.

The group included William Sarnoff, chairman of Warner Paperback Library, and Mr. Nixon's literary agent, Irving (Swifty) Lazar.

It is the Warner Paperback Library which has agreed to pay Mr. Nixon \$2.5 million for book rights to his memoirs.

That original deal, worked out by Lazar, included no motion picture or television rights. But that was discussed by Mr. Nixon and Wells on Jan. 9 and is now viewed as a distinct possibility by Lazar.

"Stranger things have happened," Lazar said last week after Wells' identity was con-

firmed. "If he (Nixon) writes the kind of books he says he is going to write, it could be miraculous. If he will level and tell what really happened . . . and he says he will . . . it could change the climate toward him."

Lazar's optimism is reinforced by Sarnoff, who says that Mr. Nixon persuaded him that he intends to write "a candid memoir."

Mr. Nixon still has many loyal supporters in the film industry.

One of the first things he did when his visitors arrived was take them into the dining room to see a Hollywood set designer's idea of a Christmas tree. Still up more than two

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weeks after Dec. 25, the tree was a gift from movie mogul Jack Warner, whose Warner Brothers is now a part of Warner Communications.

Lazar and Sarnoff did not accompany Mr. Nixon and Wells as they walked along the grassy mound where their picture was taken with a telescopic lens by photographer Tony Korody. He had kept a 28-day vigil on the beach below before being rewarded with a glimpse of the former President.

The picture was sold all over the world, but it had to move without any caption identification for Wells.

Korody himself did not see what happened after he started

shooting pictures, but other observers, watching from a different angle, reported to him afterward that Mr. Nixon fell twice while trying to get out of camera range and had to be helped up a slippery grassy incline by Secret Service agents.

Mr. Nixon has already started putting down thoughts about his presidency, according to Lazar. But he is shying away from the use of a tape recorder. Everything is being written out in longhand.

Neither Lazar nor Sarnoff feels that Mr. Nixon will be handicapped or delayed in the book project by his lack of access to tapes and files of his administration, which are still

impounded here under court order in a custody battle with Congress.

That assertion is bound to dismay Mr. Nixon's lawyer, Herbert J. Miller, who has been arguing that his client cannot fulfill the terms of his lucrative book contract without these records.

"He doesn't depend on that stuff (and can go ahead) if he never gets it," Lazar insisted. A dusty historical record is "just the kind of book we don't want him to write," said Lazar. "That's the kind other Presidents have written in the past. We want him to write a best-seller."