

5/18/73

Dear Bud,

In the few minutes before your face shines on the tube, a report and a request.

If Jim has not told you, I was in New York last week, mostly to try to collect some of what is overdue me. In a couple of places I made a bit of progress on my own. Apparently the long silence from the lawyer I had was because he was disbarred for a very human, warm but improper thing he did. In two areas where he is familiar, a friend is trying to pick up some of the pieces for me.

I did not have time for much looking around for a market for a Watergate book. As you probably realize from the message Jim gave you, I consider that I have enough of what has not been reported to give me new material. I would also handle it as nobody else of whom I know would. I think this makes a responsible book possible. That is quite separate from publication. Prospects there are not really good at this moment. For the most part, responsible publishers fear that the Bantam "special" will skim the market's cream. They assumed the "special" before news of it leaked. The only other book of which I know that I would regard as a substantial work will be by Bob and Carl, a hardback for Simon and Schuster. The rest are the merchantable crap. In them, if not in all, McCord and his former associates will emerge as villains, if my estimate of what is coming is correct. This is not the case with the book I have started without a home for it. A friend is seeking that home for me.

Besides, the way the system works, people like the McCords must be presented as evil as possible for those with greater guilt to be presented with less than they should bear. Thus you found the liberals rather than the conservatives probing for ways of sheltering Nixon as soon as he could not be separated.

You know me well enough to know that I will not write what I do not believe and will not do what I think is wrong. So, I tell you that not only do I not intend to present these men as villains, with one exception (not McCord), but I seek McCord's help, to the degree that he can provide it without in any way endangering any of his legal rights, to this end. I do not think there is or can be any conflict, but you and he should judge that. Aside from this, all I would now ask of him has to do with biographical data, again not probing, the regular stuff. In part this is because I have the feeling that he fit least in those seven. If he is aware of any inaccurate reporting of the arrests, I'd welcome correction. I do not plan for that or the crime itself to be the big thing in this book, but they can't be ignored. I want to treat them in as little space as is possible while giving a full enough account.

For now, this, really, is all. There may be one other thing for the future, after I have the draft of the book completed. I believe that all these men really believe that what they were doing was a patriotic thing. I have no doubt of this at all. I might want to be able to present their views of this in an appendix, in their own words. I mean by this without editing, what they really thought. What this can mean for them is that without cross-examination and separated from the details of the crime, they will have a chance to record their own self-justifications. I do not know how many if any will assent to this, but I plan to make the offer. You have not been with me on my investigations when I interview. Invariably I put the control of the tape recorder in the hands or under the control of the interviewee. After all these years, there has been no single complaint.

If McCord is willing but has doubts, he is welcome to come up and read what I have written, so he can see the kind of book I plan. As of today I've roughed out the opening, made a longer start in the Hunt part, and have several letters explaining what I have in mind to the friend who is trying for me.

Here the clock caught me at 10 a.m.

It occurs to me that despite the evaluations you may get of the impression McCord conveyed, you might find use for another. He came across as a solid man telling the truth, anxious to tell the truth and not to make even a slight mistake, and I think there is little doubt he was so ~~accepted~~ accepted. Some of his mannerisms, without the design, helped convey this. He took time to think and looked like he was thinking, not cooking something up. To be precise as he could, he referred back to his prepared statement. He was respectful without being sycophantic. And at no point did he seem to be holding anything back.

After the end of the session, I switched from NBC to CBS, back and forth, to get their reaction. This comparison you might not get. Because of its excited and atypical nature, I spent most of the time on NBC. You should understand, to appreciate what follows, that I know Carl Stern somewhat, know him to have a conservative approach (not in the political but in the professional sense) and know he is a lawyer. He was less excited than Douglas Kiker, who could not restrain his appearance or his words. After Kiker describes the Caulfield references as "dynamite", Stern said C has but two choices, both without question assuming the complete and unquestionable honesty or McCord's testimony. This, however, is not the case, as a lawyer more than most should know. C could deny McC's testimony or he could take the fifth. When a cautious man like Carl Stern, who is a lawyer to boot, fluffs these two other possibilities, I suggest that he, showing it less, was inwardly as excited as Kiker was.

I taped this session and plan to tape the afternoon, should you or McC want it and not have made the arrangements. It is a direct rather than a mike taping, from radio, NPR, while I looked at TV. The quality should be pretty good.

There was one thing in particular in his testimony that satisfies me on the relevance of what I discussed in confidence with Jim.

When at the end of the interviews he was asked about the girl, his response was so reserved that it left the question and the answer incomprehensible to most who heard it. However, comprehensibility was not the important thing, particularly not to viewers. In the end it will be more effective and more an accurate characterization of the man, if as I think I do understand his character, and will be part of a very persuasive impression that in everything he understates. Viewers should have gotten the idea that this was first a very personal thing and second, he was not about to exploit it.

For some reason McC's voice was not clear on TV in the p.m. After it was all over, having had a phone call that interrupted my viewing, I went back to that place to listen. I think the direct radio tape is clearer than the TV broadcast.

That call, by the way, was from a reporter who is generally tough-minded. He had what I regard as an irresponsible question at this time. I repeat this because it tells me that with the recent developments, the press is stretching for crazy stuff. You would, I think, be well advised to be even more circumspect than you have been.

Hastily,