

Agnew to write frank, open memoir

NEW YORK (AP) — Spiro T. Agnew says he plans to write "a memoir, a very frank and open memoir, about what took place" prior to his no-contest plea to tax charges and his resignation from the vice presidency.

Agnew, who has refused to publicly discuss the case since leaving office nearly three years ago, voiced his plans in an interview taped two weeks ago in Los Angeles for "The Merv Griffin Show" to be aired here May 13.

Agnew 57, declined to say what he intends to write, citing a "trial that's coming up in Maryland this year." He didn't say what the trial concerned or whether he is directly involved.

However, Gov. Marvin Mandel is on trial charged under the federal racketeering statutes in connection with the same grand jury investigation that toppled Agnew.

"It's absolutely necessary that I wait for the outcome of this trial before I tell this rather astounding story, and I'm going to tell it in my own words ... that's why I've been so close-mouthed about it," he said.

Agnew, who has privately said Nixon

put him under tremendous pressure to resign, said he has not seen Nixon since leaving office.

Asked if he'd talked with Nixon by phone Agnew said, "Again, that's part of the story (the pending memoir). But I haven't seen him and I have no desire to see him."

He didn't elaborate on why he didn't want to see Nixon.

Agnew said he didn't think Nixon's unofficial visit to mainland China last February "was political. I don't think he thought he could try to come back.

"I think he might have been reaching for something to bring back the good time in his life, to associate in his mind that he was doing something that was important and good."

He said he disagreed "100 per cent with that trip to China," but could understand Nixon's desire to make it.

"After having been villified to such an extent that he had, and I'm not sure he deserved that kind of villification entirely ... I don't think it (the trip) was wrong to the extent it's been built into."

He said he believed Nixon "had been reeling from so many blows, he looked

for something to restore his dignity and he thought the China trip would do it."

Agnew said he had no "involvement at all or knowledge of the Watergate situation. I didn't understand the undercurrents that affected my own case as well as I did later on after the entire Watergate matter came out ... and consequently, I was not able to make the judgments that I might have made had I been aware of what was going to take place ..."

Agnew, now head of a consulting firm in Maryland, resigned the vice presidency on Oct. 10, 1973. The same day he pleaded no contest to a federal felony charge of evading \$13,551 in income tax in 1967. He was convicted, fined \$10,000 and placed on three years probation.

He insisted he was innocent but said he had decided the plea "was the only way to quickly resolve the situation."

Federal prosecutors portrayed Agnew as a politician who cooperated with and encouraged a tradition of illegal shakedowns and bribes from Maryland contractors while governor of Maryland and vice president.