

Nixon's Still Trying



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RICHARD NIXON, that lonely, suspicious former President who fought so hard for public approval and was rebuffed so often, is still grimly determined to regain the respect of his countrymen.

At his San Clemente exile, he is totally absorbed in his last battle for public esteem. He is pouring his heart into his memoirs and preparing for a marathon television appearance with David Frost.

But the autobiography is going so painstakingly slow that he offered Frost \$100,000 to postpone the filming of the television interviews for two months.

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THE TWO MEN, with producer Marvin Minoff sitting in, discussed the delay at San Clemente. Nixon said he would like to hold up the filming, scheduled for January, until he caught up on his memoirs. He blamed the slowdown on the difficulty he has encountered consulting his tapes and papers, which are tied up in Washington by the courts.

"Look," said Nixon, "I'll give you back \$100,000 if you'll postpone the time. I can't do it while I'm working on the book this way."

Frost is paying Nixon an estimated \$600,000 for the TV deal. Although Frost was upset over holding up the interviews, he agreed to a two-month postponement and generously rejected the \$100,000.

When Frost wrote out a check for the first payment, incidentally, the old money-minded Nixon emerged for a

moment. He quibbled with his agent, Irving "Swifty" Lazar, over who should get the check.

Both Frost and Lazar explained that the agent always receives the payment and distributes the money. "I never heard of that," grumped Nixon. He cooled down, however, after Lazar promised to deliver Nixon's share within 24 hours after the check was deposited.

The former President stands to collect an additional more than \$2 million from Warner Books for his memoirs. He now hopes to complete the manuscript by next December 21.

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UNDER THE new agreement with Frost, Nixon will submit to 24 hours of questioning in front of the cameras. The filming will begin in March, however, instead of January.

It's the desire to restore his name more than the money that is driving Nixon, his friends say. This dogged, dauntless man, desperately wants to be remembered favorably.

They say this deeply private Nixon will reveal himself at last in the painstaking memoirs and the seven hours on the TV tube.

But his critics are skeptical. They suspect he will try to duplicate his celebrated 1952 performance, a TV appeal to the nation during which he invoked every emotional gimmick from his little dog "Checkers" to his wife's cloth coat. They expect to see the same old Nixon, as evasive and artificial and self-serving as ever.