

How Nixon Is Selling His Book

By Bob Greene
Special to the Chronicle

This is wonderful. Remember all of those hundreds of thousands of sympathy letters that were sent to Richard Nixon in San Clemente after he had left the White House? The letters from citizens telling the former President that they felt sorry for him and hoped he was feeling all right?

Well, it turns out that Nixon didn't throw the letters away. He saved each and every one of them.

And now he is having his book publisher get in touch with every person who wrote to him, and offer to sell those people autographed copies of his forthcoming autobiography for up to \$250 a copy.

"Dear Friend," the letter from Grosset and Dunlap publishers begins. "During the darkest hours of 'Watergate,' when President Nixon was being tried by the press, you had the courage to stand up for him.

"While many cried 'impeach him,' you were thoughtful enough to wonder if there were not another side to the Nixon story than that portrayed by Woodward and Bernstein, the liberal press and, more recently, by David Frost's carefully cut and edited TV specials.

"That other side, the full, undistorted story

of Mr. Nixon's entire political career, is being published this spring. This historic book is entitled 'Memoirs,' and because you were one of his loyal supporters in his time of greatest need, Mr. Nixon has agreed to personally autograph a copy of his autobiography especially for you, in a limited edition which will not be available in bookstores."

The letter then makes the pitch:

• \$50 a copy, plus \$5 for postage and handling, for a "Deluxe Edition, hand signed 'Richard M. Nixon' on the flyleaf . . . President Nixon will personally sign these copies. The autographed, Limited Deluxe Edition will be specially bound and slipcased to further distinguish it from the regular bookstore edition."

• \$250 a copy, plus \$5 for postage and handling, for a "Presentation Edition, each copy hand signed and numbered on the flyleaf. This edition is bound in genuine leather with a design pressed into the cover in 22 karat gold. The pages are edged in gold, with endsheets and ribbon bookmark in satin-like cloth. Each volume of the Presentation Edition will be accompanied by a numbered publisher's 'Certificate of Authenticity,' issued to the specific purchaser, bearing the purchaser's name, and attesting to the fact that the volume was personally signed by President Nixon."

Why would anyone want to spend \$250 for

the same words he could buy at a lower price in a bookstore?

"You are privileged to be among a very few who can own an autographed copy of 'Memoirs,'" the letter says. "Copies inscribed with the former President's signature will obviously be coveted collectors' items . . . I'm writing to you on Mr. Nixon's behalf because he wants very much to let you know how much your support has meant to him. Surely a copy of his book, personally signed by him, will be one of your most cherished possessions."

Harold Roth, president of Grosset and Dunlap, said that the letters are being sent to "the complete list of people who wrote to San Clemente after President Nixon left office. Mr. Nixon kept every letter."

The publishing executive said that "morality dictates" that his company keep its promise, and that no matter how many expensive autographed volumes are ordered, Nixon will hand-sign them all.

Asked about Nixon's former practice of having automatic machines put his signature on virtually all White House correspondence, Roth said:

"No. He will sign these himself."

Nixon's book will sell for an unusually high price in regular, unautographed bookstore

editions. The cover price will be \$19.95 in the United States, \$22.50 in Canada.

"Actually, the fact is that it's inexpensive," Roth said. "It's 1200 pages, 500,000 words. That's three times the size of a Haldeman book, which sells for \$12.95."

Nixon's book will be a Book of the Month Club featured alternate. Foreign rights have been sold in ten countries. The New York Times will serialize the book for newspaper syndication.

And what will the book be about?

"Mr. Nixon makes no effort in 'Memoirs' to comfort his friends or convert his foes," the Grosset and Dunlap letter says. "The facts themselves are so compelling that as you read you will find yourself holding your breath from page to page. For centuries to come, scholars, historians and psychologists will turn to 'Memoirs' as the one account that is indispensable to a balanced understanding of the Nixon years. Whether you consider yourself liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, you will be gripped from first page to last. And it must be an implacable Nixon-hater indeed who can read the final 50 pages without moisture in his eyes."

Publication of the Nixon book is scheduled for May.