

WXPost

JUL 8 1973

The Selling Of the Watergate

By JOYCE ILLIG

THE WORLD WILL KNOW next month if convicted conspirator James McCord's book *Watergate Sanctions* lives up to the promise of its five-page working outline.

According to the outline, under the section heading "Use of the Power of the Government in behalf of its Powerful and Political friends—and against those friend's [sic] enemies—repayment for political favors and campaign contributions," McCord will discuss:

- "Howard Hughes versus Hank Greenspun," publisher of the *Las Vegas Sun*, and "Hughes' political contributions." McCord said in a telephone interview June 30 that this will include "the offer of Howard Hughes' aircraft to assist in a break-in of the Hank Greenspun safe out in Las Vegas" and "a lot of [other] subjects that I have talked about [before the Senate investigating committee and the grand jury]."

- "The Vesco case" and "Vesco's political contributions."

- "The ITT case" and "ITT's political contributions."

- "Charles Colson and the Springing of Jimmy Hoffa from Federal Prison—the objective: Teamsters support for Nixon."

- "Howard Hughes and Richard Nixon."

One chapter is entitled "Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia Revisited — the beginnings, the overt acts, how close we came." Under that heading McCord has written:

- "Richard Nixon's 1937 Purges of 1973."

JOYCE ILLIG, a journalist based in New York, has made a specialty of the book publishing scene.

- "Wiretapping and spying on his own closest friends in the White House family."

- "National Intelligence: Tell me what I want to hear. Don't tell me the way it is—Courting National Disaster from Without."

- "The Federal Investigators: As a Political Arm of the White House—a Police State from Within." Under this subheading McCord lists "the Arnholdt [sic] Smith case in San Diego: Jack Caulfield again," "Howard Hughes," and "The Watergate Case and Pat Gray." (C. Arnholdt Smith, a Nixon friend and campaign contributor, is the subject of an SEC civil suit filed May 31 in San Diego. He is selling the San Diego Padres to a group of Washington businessmen for \$12 million.)

McCord said in the interview that he'll also write about his "working relationship" with John and Martha Mitchell, about John W. Dean III, and about "the things that I experienced in facing the cover-up situations and the pressure that was brought to bear." According to his publisher Edward Uhlan, owner of Exposition Press, the manuscript is written except for two chapters: "One is on Dean and the kicker will be Mitchell."

Whether James McCord supplies the substance to make his book as startling as its outline remains to be seen. But certainly he signed on June 25 one of the most astonishing book contracts yet to come out of the Watergate affair. Instead of putting away a \$60,000 advance (which one publisher offered last fall for a Watergate book), McCord is putting up \$10,000 of his own money for a vanity press to publish his story. How that came about is a story in itself.

In September 1972, six months before he sent his famous letter to Judge Sirica, McCord started to write his book and talk to publishers. On June 6, 1973, he agreed orally to pay Exposition to publish it, primarily because "the manuscript would not be changed. There'd be no angles, no gimmicks. They would come out with the coherent story of the Watergate operation from the time of its inception through the actual time we were caught at the DNC, and then the aftermath—everything that happened in the cover-up, the trial itself, the

complete sequence of events as I knew it," McCord said.

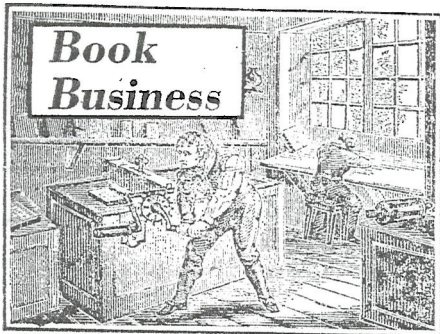
Uhlan says, when McCord first contacted him in September, "I told him, you know with a book like this you could wind up with holes in your head. And McCord said he knew that and he'd already made out his will, but that this country was in great danger and he was ready to take on the presidency of the United States. Considering what the climate was back in September, I told him that all I had was \$2 million worth of libel insurance and that may not be enough."

At that time the manuscript hadn't yet been written. In the following months interest in the subject increased considerably and Uhlan, thinking himself in a competitive situation, decided to offer McCord a \$25,000 advance against "the standard royalties" but, Uhlan said, McCord preferred the arrangement under which he pays Exposition \$10,000 but gets a royalty of \$4 a copy on the first 5,000 sold and \$2 a copy thereafter. (The usual royalty offered by major publishers goes from 10 to 15 per cent of the list price as the number of copies sold increases; the royalties earned are applied against the advance.) In addition, McCord will get anywhere from 60 to 90 per cent of the subsidiary rights sold by Uhlan, who is acting as McCord's literary agent at 15 per cent commission. He says he's already received a \$5000 offer for the first Japanese newspaper rights to the book but expects to get "\$10,000 or \$15,000 easily." The book is expected to be at least 320 pages and to sell for \$10.

"I was very satisfied when we finally worked up an arrangement in terms of the royalty," McCord said, "because it was a higher royalty than I would have received through the trade publishers. Of course, this is of interest because I've got some pretty expensive legal fees to take care of."

Knox Burger, a respected New York literary agent who was involved with the attempt to sell McCord's manuscript, lunched with McCord and McCord's attorney Bernard Fensterwald at Fensterwald's suggestion in Washington June 4. At the end of the lunch, Burger said Fensterwald told him to go

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ahead and see what kind of deal he could make with a major hardcover or paperback house. Aaron Asher, editor-in-chief at Holt, Rinehart and Winston, and Marc Jaffe, vice president and editorial director of Bantam Books, turned it down. Two days after that luncheon, McCord and Uhlan reached their agreement, although it was not signed until almost three weeks later.

McCord says, "Mr. Burger has nothing to do with me. He's never been my literary agent. We spoke once and somebody gave him an outline to the book but we never had any formal agreement. I'm not going to comment on what Mr. Burger says, one way or another, and I won't get engaged in any attorney-client discussions. I have a local attorney who's handling the book end of it and he's given me legal advice on proceeding with it. I've followed it and I'm very well satisfied."

It doesn't bother McCord that his publisher is a vanity press. "I have only three concerns," he said. "One, that the story come out as I have it in the manuscript—not changed. Two, that it gets out timely, and I think it will. And third, that I'm satisfied with Uhlan in the sense that he's not concerned about the political ramifications of it . . . I'd tried a couple of other publishers who turned it down because it was a politically controversial, explosive book and they didn't want to touch it for that reason. Ed had no reluctance in doing so."

Uhlan is taking care of McCord's concerns. The only editing the book will get is what Uhlan calls "literary laundry . . . If there's a split infinitive I can heal it. If a participle dangles, I can rescue it. As for getting it out

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quickly once the manuscript is finished, my people have taken their vacations already. We're ready to go seven days a week right around the clock, and I can turn out 100,000 copies five days after I give the proofs away to big manufacturing houses . . . I have enjoyed the distinction, if that is a distinction, of being the world's fastest publisher. And that's what McCord wanted," his publisher said, "speed and secrecy."

"You see," Uhlan said, "McCord's concern—and this . . . is the truth—is that 50 of his ancestors fought in the American Revolution. The Mc-

Cords have bled, fought, died and sacrificed for their country. His family came here in 1712. And when he realized what was going on, that Nixon was selling this country down the river, that's when he decided that he was not going to become a part of this and go to jail and get his money and have everything smoothed over. He just decided to put his life and his reputation and his business on the line. I have been a publisher for 36 years. I have met all types of people that write books, all sorts of dedicated believers, all sorts of nuts, all sorts of people who are zealots, but never a man like McCord, never like him." C-9

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