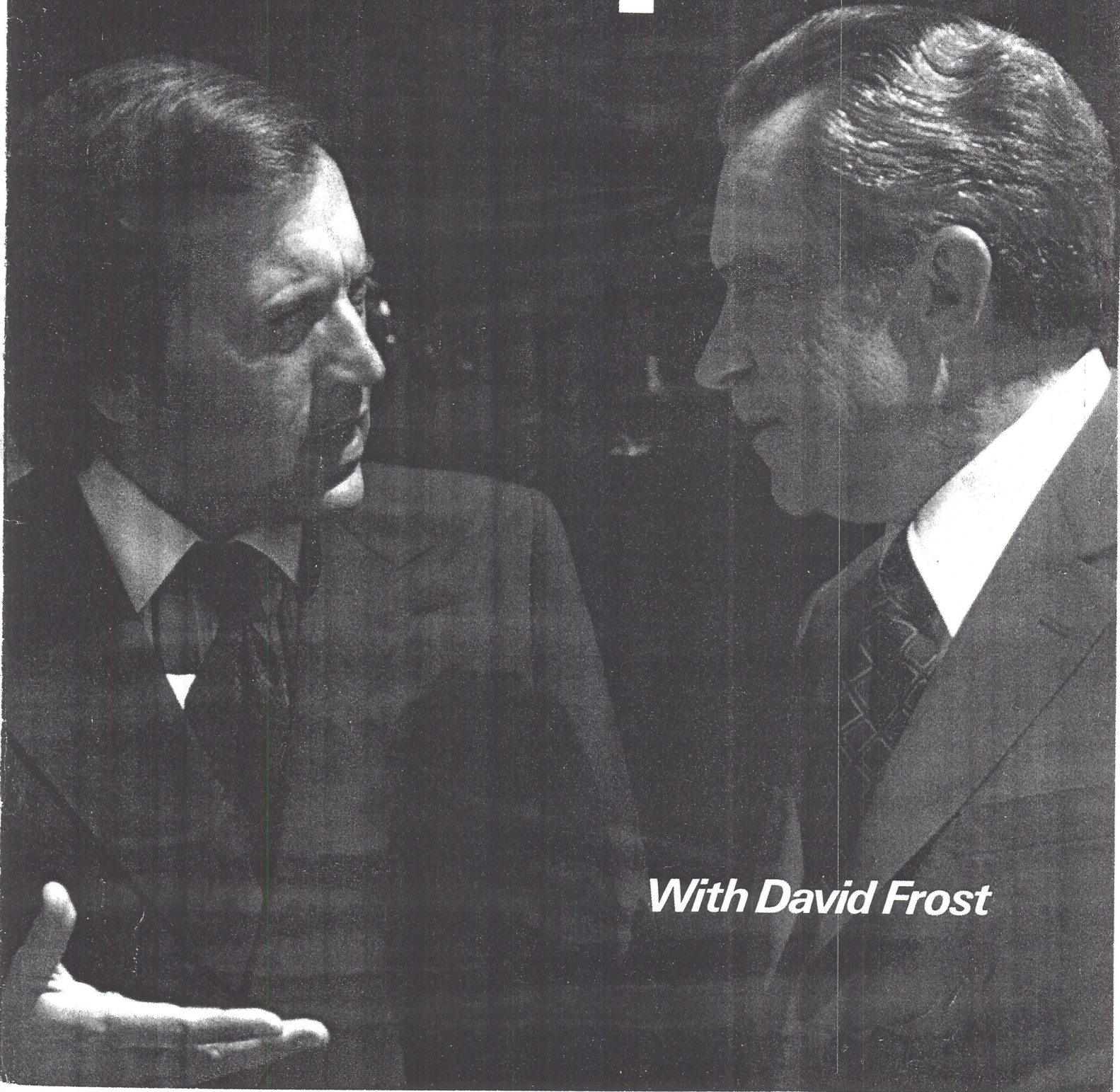


May 9, 1977 / \$1.00

File 2 May 77, date on newsstands

Newsweek

Nixon Speaks



With David Frost

Top of the Week

Nixon Speaks Page 25

Precisely 1,000 days after he left office, Richard M. Nixon goes on nationwide television this week in the first of a series of taped interviews with David Frost. An unusual blend of journalism, history and teledrama, the interviews show Nixon emotionally trying to explain his Watergate disgrace and proudly talking about his triumphs in foreign affairs. A Newsweek team led by Hal Bruno talked to people involved in the project from California to Europe. A companion piece examines Nixon's current life in San Clemente, drawing on chats the ex-President had with John J. Lindsay (right) during and after his frequent golf games. (Cover photo by Lester Sloan—Newsweek.)



The nineteenth hole: Nixon with Lindsay



Illustration for Newsweek
by Burt Silverman

Frost and Nixon fence over the cover-up: 'Cut and thrust,' with the ex-President on the defensive once again

NIXON SPEAKS

The face is somewhat changed—healthier and more relaxed—yet still hauntingly familiar with its jowly outline, darting eyes and ski-slide nose. Precisely 1,000 days after his resignation as President of the United States, Richard M. Nixon returns to nationwide television this week, talking for the first time about the scandals that drove him from office. Cool and controlled at first, Nixon soon finds himself on the defensive under tough questioning by veteran talk-show host David Frost. His eyes darken and tear, his voice quavers and his lip glistens under the hot lights. But out of the argument, the explanation and the self-justification that follow comes the clearest indication yet by the ex-President himself of his role and motives in the national nightmare called Watergate.

It is a rare combination of journalism, history and live teledrama—the first in a series of taped Nixon-Frost interviews over the next several weeks that reflects both the highs and the lows of a dishonored Presidency. At some points, Nixon talks proudly of his genuine triumphs in the field of foreign policy; he recalls instances of personal diplomacy and

drops tidbits of conversation with Mao Tse-tung, Leonid Brezhnev and other world leaders. At other points, Nixon reflects Presidentially on domestic issues from the right of privacy to the dangers of protest.

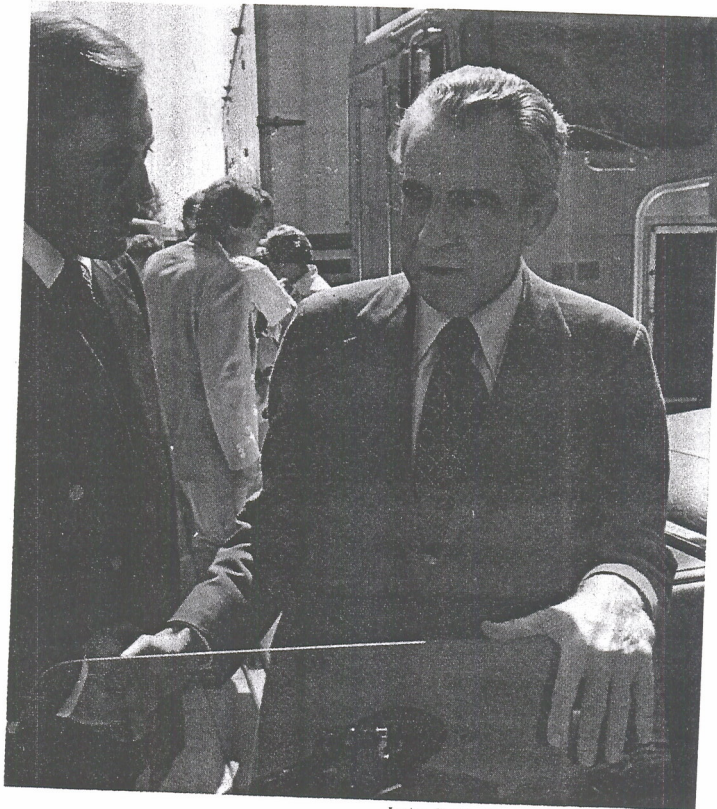
But then there is Watergate. More directly than ever, Nixon seems to concede that it was election-year politics—not national security—that prompted his efforts to cover up the break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters in June 1972. It is, claims one person involved in the production, “as close to a *mea culpa* as he is capable of.”

‘STRIVING FOR ACCEPTABILITY’

There are moments of high emotion as Frost and Nixon—both of whom prepped for months—spar with one another over the cash payments made to Watergate burglars to maintain the White House cover-up. And Nixon is likely to evoke sympathy when he talks about wife Pat’s debilitating stroke last year—and the connection he sees between it and the endless Watergate revelations. Part of an upcoming broadcast, that episode “will reduce America to tears,” predicts one

observer at the taping. Throughout the series, Nixon is anxious to make his best case—putting Watergate behind him so that the other accomplishments of his Administration can be fairly appreciated. Beyond that, the broadcasts may mark the beginning of the end of the ex-President’s exile in San Clemente (page 26). “Now he is convinced he can make a personal comeback—not politically, of course, but a personal vindication,” says one Nixon friend. “He is striving for acceptability and it is making him feel good because he thinks it is happening.”

The broadcasts may also mark a milestone for producer-interviewer Frost—an Englishman whose reputation as an obliging foil for comics and crooners on American TV raised initial doubts about his ability to pin down the ex-President. Frost pursued complex negotiations to sign Nixon—for \$600,000 plus an undisclosed percentage of profits—and put together an ad hoc chain of 147 local stations to carry the programs. He has already “more than broken even” on the \$2.5-million project, he says, and could end up with a profit of over \$1 million. Despite some media hype, Frost insists his series



Lester Sloan—Newsweek

Farewell to Frost: A step toward vindication?

really “breaks some new ground” in several areas. Others involved suggest that Nixon was obliged to talk candidly about Watergate because he wanted to have credibility on other subjects—and for his own forthcoming memoirs.

President Jimmy Carter told NEWSWEEK a fortnight ago that he expected the Nixon interviews to help “once and for all put the Watergate issue to rest.” Yet more controversy seemed inevitable. Former Watergate special prosecutor Leon Jaworski, for example, warned that he would “speak out . . . for the record” if Nixon did not give a full account of his role in Watergate and admit, at the least, to “obstruction of justice.” (Jaworski has agreed to write a “factual response” to Nixon’s first broadcast in next week’s NEWSWEEK.) A more personal reaction may come from former top Nixon aides including John Mitchell, John Ehrlichman and H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, all currently appealing their own convictions in the Watergate cover-up case to the Supreme Court (page 66). Nixon, however, does not attempt to blame his former colleagues on-camera. “In some things the interviews will increase understanding of the issues and Nixon’s reasons for doing what he did,” said a Frost staffer. “In others the debate will be closed. But in some it will start a new controversy.”

FROST FOR THE PROSECUTION

The discussion of Watergate was taped toward the end of the lengthy Frost-Nixon interviews—nearly 29 hours’ worth in eleven thrice-weekly sessions—but broadcast first because of its dramatic impact. After initially objecting to the rearrangement, Nixon told Frost: “Why be coy? Let’s get it out.” In the Watergate segment, Frost assumes an almost prose-

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atorial stance, focusing only on events and conversations in which Nixon was personally involved. They discuss a taped conversation between Nixon and Haldeman on June 20, 1972—from which eighteen and a half minutes were subsequently erased—and the now-famous “smoking gun” conversation of June 23, in which the two men agreed to have the CIA block an FBI investigation of Watergate before its connection to the Nixon reelection campaign could be uncovered. Nixon almost willingly concedes that the motive was political, but maintains that his personal knowledge of Watergate events is “very limited.”

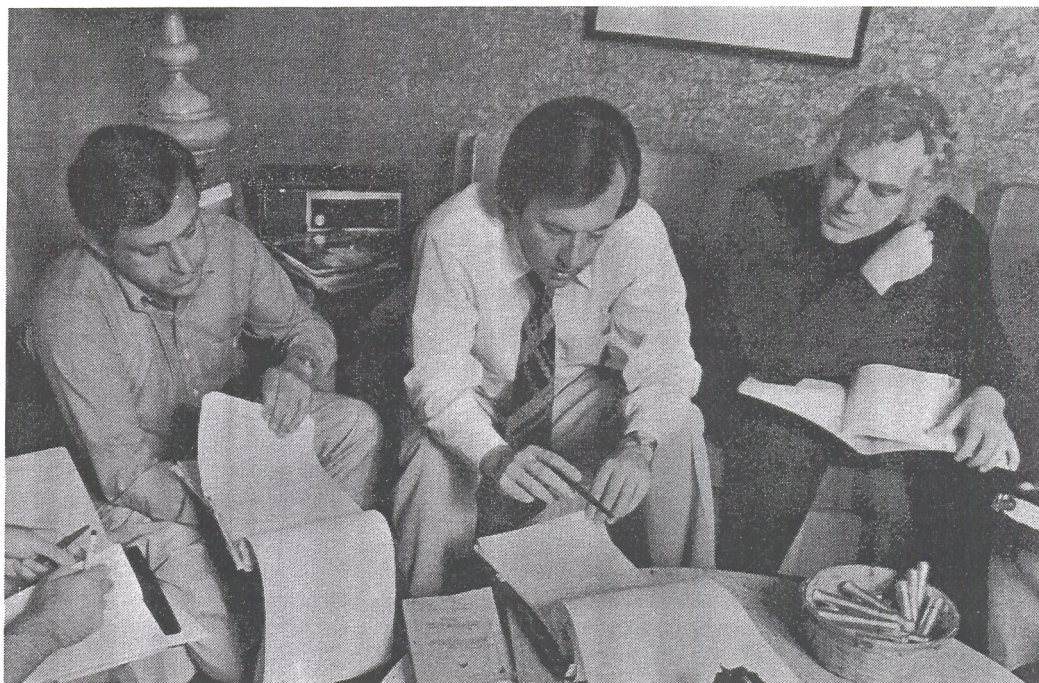
Frost follows up with questions about two previously unpublished tapes (box, page 31) of conversations between Nixon and former political tactician Charles Colson on Feb. 13 and 14, 1973; the two discuss clemency for Watergate spymaster E. Howard Hunt and freely use the word “cover-up.” (The tapes were obtained by the prosecutor’s office for use in the cover-up trial but never formally introduced as evidence.) Frost and Nixon argue over Frost’s contention that the ex-President’s actions constituted obstruction of justice. Says one witness: “It’s cut and thrust with Nixon fighting for his point of view—and not winning.”

NIXON AT A DISADVANTAGE

The atmosphere grows even more charged when they turn to the March 21, 1973, conversation in which White House counsel John Dean warned of “a cancer within, close to the Presidency.” At that time, published transcripts show, Dean also detailed the progress of the cover-up and the problem of paying hush money to the Watergate burglars. Yet in the interview this week, Nixon complains that he did not get a full report about Watergate at the time. Though he calls the recitation of events “horrors,” he stresses those parts of the conversation that serve him best. “No—it is wrong that’s for sure,” the President told Dean at one point—although the reference was only to buying the burglars off with a public grant of Presidential clemency.

Nixon and Frost both raise their voices and wave their arms, but it is clearly Nixon who is at a disadvantage—lulled, perhaps, by the gentlemanly, accepting manner displayed by Frost in most of the earlier taping sessions. There is a familiar touch of self-pity as Nixon reminds Frost that he is answering without notes, and then a characteristic Nixon counterattack: the charge that Frost is playing prosecutor and stacking the evidence. Frost parries, complimenting Nixon for his responsiveness and apologizing for the prosecutorial tone, then plunges back into his case.

He ticks off a dozen incrimi-



Lester Sloan—Newsweek

Frost huddles with Zelnick (left) and Winther: ‘Training for the championship’

nating remarks by Nixon on the March 21 tape—“You could get a million dollars. You could get it in cash”—and suddenly the former Chief Executive seems on the verge of tears, a tragic figure. His voice grows hoarse, his eyes dart and his face falls for an instant. But Nixon pulls himself together; he admits that his remarks to Dean (“You have no choice but to come up with the \$120,000, or whatever it is. Right?”) were followed by another payoff to Hunt, yet he maintains that he did not actually authorize it. Says one who watched the colloquy: “No reasonable person will be convinced.”

After a commercial, the interview picks up with a much subdued Nixon. That segment was actually taped two days after the first, during which time Nixon and his advisers apparently decid-

ed that further argument would only eat away at the credibility he was trying to build. Frost probes many of the events between March 21 and April 30, when Dean, Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Attorney General Richard Kleindienst resigned from the Administration—and Nixon went on television to expose the cover-up but deny his own personal knowledge of it. Nixon elaborates at great length, forcing Frost to pin down specifics. “He’s a strong guy used to holding the floor,” said one Frost aide. “He’s not afraid of long answers that are almost a speech.”

A PRESIDENT’S-EYE VIEW

Interviewer Frost lets that kind of elaboration run unchallenged through much of the second 90-minute broadcast—next week—on the subject of foreign policy. Here, Nixon makes some genuinely historic contributions, giving an exclusive President’s-eye view of reopening relations with China, détente with the Soviet Union, peace efforts in the Middle East and the “tilt” toward Pakistan before its war with India. He talks candidly—but not very critically—about former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. And he provides some fascinating footnotes to history. One example: Leonid Brezhnev and other Soviet VIP’s sported cuff links in the 1970s as opposed to the plain, proletarian button cuffs worn by their Kremlin predecessors in the ’50s. It is, say the Frost people, “raw material” for history.

Though it is not completely edited yet, the third show—tentatively called “War at Home and Abroad”—recaptures some of the same adversary tone that marks the Watergate segment. Frost challenges Nixon on Viet-



UPI

Celebration: Nixon with Pat on his birthday in January

nam, Cambodia and the campaign against domestic dissent. Nixon justifies the Christmas bombing of Hanoi in 1972, arguing that it was necessary to spur the peace negotiations. Frost challenges the morality of that strategy and also questions the U.S. "incursion" into Cambodia in 1970, ostensibly to wipe out a major Vietcong command post. No evidence of such a post was ever found, Frost points out.

Still more tense is the discussion of antiwar protest in the U.S. Frost questions the Nixon politics of polarization in that period—particularly the unleashing of Vice President Spiro Agnew—and the creation of the White House plumbers, the covert intelligence unit that spied on Daniel Ellsberg after his disclosure of

the Pentagon Papers, then broke into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist. Again the exchanges grow emotional, and while Nixon does not admit to any guilt, people who saw the interview report that he leaves less doubt than ever before about the extent of his knowledge and involvement in the Ellsberg case.

The tension remains high in parts of the fourth program whose working title is "The Final Days." That interview includes other alleged abuses of power and the crumbling of the Nixon Presidency. Frost also prompts Nixon to expand on his views of the news media and on the life he and Pat have led since his resignation. Nixon becomes "agitated and excited" and describes some segments of the press as "beneath contempt," recalls

one eyewitness. "In one sentence he made an indirect association of Pat's stroke with publication of 'The Final Days' [the unflattering account by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein]. He implied he held the book responsible . . ."

A fifth program, one hour long, may be added to sweep up additional material from the Frost-Nixon interviews. Included here, insiders say, would be some sharp questioning of Nixon on the American role in Chile—with Nixon again on the defensive—and on the eighteen-and-a-half-minute gap in the White House tape of June 20, 1972. Nixon insists he does not know how the tape was erased or who may have done it. The ex-President also states his views on two

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AP

**Secretary Rose Mary Woods:
The gap is still unexplained**

As the storm gathered in
late 1973: 'I'm not a crook'



UPI

**Final days at the White House:
An emotional hug for Julie**

Into exile: Leaving Washington
for California, Aug. 9, 1974

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The President's men: Ehrlichman (left), Haldeman and Kissinger with Nixon in 1971

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of his White House predecessors—Dwight D. Eisenhower and Lyndon B. Johnson—and on the U.S. Supreme Court, including some comments about one of his own rejected nominees, G. Harrold Carswell, that Frost people say is sure to “make news.”

This section may also include some of Nixon's reflections on government surveillance. He spent more than an hour of taping time on the subject of electronic bugs and wiretaps, and somehow managed to avoid any association with the bugging and taping that lay at the heart of his own Watergate crisis. “He could have been talking about his grandmother, Tricia or his dogs,” said one man present. “He made absolutely no connection.”

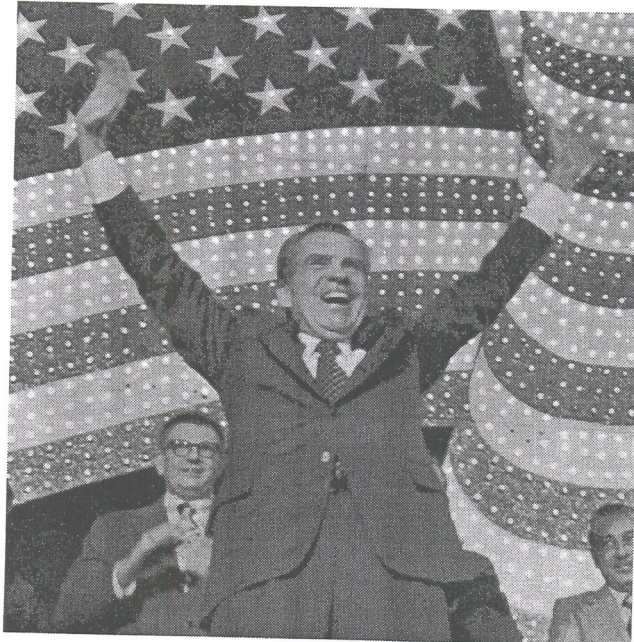
In addition to the programs broadcast in the U.S., Frost and Nixon also taped special segments for television networks in Britain, France, Italy and Australia.

For the French, Nixon expresses support for the Concorde SST and says that he hopes his polite praise of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing will not hurt him in the next election. For the British, he reviews his encounters with former Prime Ministers Harold Wilson and Edward Heath. The Italians were particularly interested in Nixon's views on Communist electoral victories in Europe, while the Australians wanted the ex-President's discussion of his meetings with their leaders and his prognosis for stability in the Pacific.

MAKING THE DEAL

Whatever the public makes of the interviews—or the Richard Nixon they reveal—just getting them on the air was a triumph for David Frost. Most British critics consider Frost a TV heavyweight, both for his brilliant early work in political satire (“That Was the Week That Was”) and a string of interviews with political figures and celebrities. He also produced a thirteen-part series on British Prime Ministers, and his company is currently filming a \$2 million history of the Persian Empire, financed by the Shah of Iran. In the U.S., however, Frost is often remembered for his puffy talk programs and some silly shows in which people broke records with such stunts as kissing underwater. Indeed, cynics thought that his lightweight reputation had helped Frost hook a wary Nixon.

But Frost's first approach was a flop. In April 1975, he made overtures through former Nixon communications director Herb Klein, now a Metromedia, Inc., executive, but got no response. Three months later, visiting friends on Long Island, Frost learned from magazine publisher Clay Felker that New York agent Irving (Swifty) Lazar was offering a Nixon show to the major networks without much success. Frost quickly put to-



Photos by Wally McNamee—Newsweek



Newsweek, May 9, 1977

gether an offer of \$600,000 to Nixon plus a percentage of the profits—in part as an incentive for Nixon to be candid and commercial.

It worked. The thirteen-page contract was signed a year to the day after Nixon's resignation. Negotiated largely by Frost's lawyer, Paul Ziffren of Los Angeles, the contract gave the interviewer full control over the questions and subsequent editing of the tape. "If David just tosses you softballs and you hit them out of the park, the people are going to turn off in fifteen minutes," one Frost aide told Nixon. "I want him to toss me hardballs," he replied. "That's the only way this is going to mean anything to me. Make 'em as tough as you want."

But the sales job was far from complete. The networks still weren't interested, partly because they don't like buying news and partly because they prefer to retain control of editing. So Frost raised \$270,000 in production money from a group of San Diego investors (some of whom hoped to see Nixon skewered). Then he assembled his own network of stations around the U.S. through a New York-based company called Syndicast Services, Inc.

At first, Syndicast offered a barter deal under which local stations could get the interview shows free in return for carrying six minutes of national advertising lined up by Syndicast for each broadcast; the stations could then sell another six minutes to local advertisers and keep all the profits. At some of the stations, the time was eagerly snapped up by advertisers, but others had trouble selling it. Syndicast itself fell short on commercials and ultimately insisted that each local station buy one minute per broadcast.

Among the national advertisers who did sign on were Datsun, Radio Shack, Hilton Hotels, Weed-Eater and Alpo. "It was controversial and we did have our pros and cons," admitted Weed-Eater ad manager Thomas Young. "But in the end we decided that it was probably going to be an historic event and a public service—also a good advertising buy." Syndicast executive Leonard Koch projected an audience of 18 million households.

RESEARCH AND REHEARSALS

While the deal was taking shape, both the Frost and Nixon camps were preparing for the confrontation to come. "It was like training a fighter for the heavyweight championship," said one Frost hand. Frost's principal aides were Marvin Minoff, executive in charge of production, producer John Birt, director

Jorn Winther and reporter-researchers C. Robert Zelnick, Philip Stanford and James Reston Jr., son of the columnist. The researchers read everything published on Watergate and interviewed hundreds of sources including Post reporter Bob Woodward and psychoanalyst David Abrahamson, author of "Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy." The result was four 100-page volumes on the Nixon Presidency—covering foreign policy, domestic affairs, Watergate and other abuses of power—plus advice on how to question Nixon.

Frost's men prepared questions that they hoped would lead Nixon step-by-

subjects to be covered, and according to one recent visitor to San Clemente, "he practiced, sometimes aloud, in preparation for the tapings." The ex-President also kept asking for delays in the schedule of tapings and broadcasts—first because of Pat's stroke, next to do more work on his memoirs, and then finally to avoid interfering with both last year's election and the Inauguration. The Frost crew ran into a different sort of problem when they began to plan the taping in Nixon's La Casa Pacifica home: radar at the nearby Coast Guard station interfered with the tape equipment. But a local real-estate agent made arrangements to use the home of industrialist Harold H. Smith 12 miles up the coast in the well-guarded community of Monarch Bay. Smith's father was a customer at Nixon's father's grocery store some 45 years ago. The Smiths got \$6,000 in exchange for making themselves scarce on taping days—and signing a pledge of secrecy.

SETTING THE SCENE

Most of the 40 people in Frost's production crew had to sign similar pledges, and they were driven to the Smith house three mornings each week by special bus so reporters could not trace their cars. Inside, the living room had been redecorated with a Presidential look: brass candlesticks, a parquet-top writing desk, Nixon's collection of carved elephants and shelves of books, each personally approved by the ex-President. Frost and Nixon sat in camel-colored lounge chairs whose design was also approved by Nixon—to assure it did not aggravate the lingering effects of phlebitis in his left leg. Both men wore blue suits

and dark ties, and they stuck to those outfits throughout the taping so that portions from any session could be smoothly intercut with one another.

The first session was a general tour of the horizon, and the Frost crew was glum upon returning to headquarters at the Beverly Hilton hotel. While Nixon had not "come out swinging," according to one member, he had taken what they thought were some low blows at members of the House Judiciary Committee and others, and they didn't know how to deal with the problem. "Do you let it slide and edit it out later—or do you come back [at him] every time?" Frost put the tape in a safe each night, but showed parts of it to friends, including Felker, whose advice was: "Confront the son of a bitch." Eventually, the team developed techniques dubbed "the declamatory question" and "the alternative hypothesis," in which



Szep—Boston Globe

step from predictable explanations of Watergate and other subjects to fresh, revealing answers. Then they staged practice sessions that ran six to eight hours during which Zelnick took Nixon's part and answered Frost's questions as he thought the ex-President might. At one rehearsal, one of Zelnick's answers was so neatly put that Frost leaned back in frustration and exclaimed: "That's really persuasive—what can I say to that?"

Nixon was also in training for the match—"with massive seriousness and preparation," says Frost. Working with the ex-President were former White House aides Ken Khachigian, Ray Price, Frank Gannon and Dianne Sawyer. He also consulted by phone with Henry Kissinger about once a week, as he has since he left office.

Eventually, Nixon had his own set of black, loose-leaf briefing books on the

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Frost let Nixon answer in his own way, then asked if other interpretations were not reasonable.

In the end, the Frost crew was surprised at how often Nixon's answers matched the ones they had imagined in their rehearsals. Off camera, Frost often apologized for his tougher questions, telling the ex-President: "I've got to do this for this program to have any value." Nixon, for his part, talked more bitterly of his former aides when the cameras were turned off. "There's no question he sees himself as a victim of Mitchell, Halde- man and Ehrlichman," said one witness.

'DON'T LOSE THE EDGE'

But mostly Nixon retreated to the Smiths' master bedroom when the tape wasn't rolling. "You prepare yourself for something like this and you don't want to lose the edge," he explained. Occasionally, he made small talk and cracked jokes. When he spotted a woman sipping a can of Tab, he said, "You realize that has saccharin in it." "Yes, of course," she said. "Ah," said the ex-President. "Then you'd rather die of saccharin than senility." On a substantive level, however, Frost found him endlessly engaging: "There are very few people in the world whom you could talk to for 28¾ hours and still wish you had another ten hours to talk."

When it was over, Nixon made a farewell speech to the crew that drew a round of applause. Outside the Smith house, he and Frost paused for pictures and the former President walked toward a neighbor, Mrs. Olivia Tanner, and her dog Tinker. "Is this what you call a dachshund?" he asked stiffly—then climbed into his limousine, waved and drove back to seclusion in San Clemente. Clearly, Richard Nixon hopes the broad- casts will end his long isolation and win him a measure of redemption. But it will be the American people who rate his performance, determining just what sort of re-entry he can hope for in the life of the nation he once led.

—DAVID M. ALPERN with HAL BRUNO and MARTIN KASINDORF in Los Angeles and NANCY STADTMAN in New York

THE ADMINISTRATION:

Hire the Handicapped

Dozens of the handicapped, some in wheelchairs, gathered for a protest demonstration outside the new offices of Joseph Califano, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Later, some of the crowd followed Califano to his home, and then to a number of his public appearances. Other disabled people, all protesting Califano's delay in implementing a law that would ban discrimination against them, staged demonstrations in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas and other cities. In San Francisco, 80 people brought mattresses, food and battery chargers for their motorized wheelchairs and began occupying the



Wally McNamee—Newsweek

Disabled demonstrators in Washington: 'A new era of civil rights in America'

regional HEW office on April 5, staying until last week. Said Barry Ryan, who has muscular dystrophy: "We are like the audience in 'Network' that shouts, 'We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it any more.'"

Soon they won't have to. Last week, four years after Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against the handicapped, Califano finally signed the regulation required to make the costly and controversial law effective. It seems certain to force sweeping modifications in the employment, education and treatment of more than 35 million handicapped people. Said Califano last week: "It opens up a new era of civil rights in America" and will "work fundamental changes in many facets of American life."

Braille Books: The regulation, which goes into effect June 1, applies to any school, college, hospital or other institution receiving HEW funds. It prohibits employers from refusing to hire the disabled—including victims of cancer and heart disease—if their handicaps don't interfere with their ability to do the job. It also requires employers to make "reasonable accommodation" to their handicapped workers. It mandates that all new buildings be made accessible to the handicapped with ramps, elevators or other conveniences; many existing buildings would have to be modified as well. It also instructs universities to make their programs available to the handicapped (by providing books in Braille, for example) and orders hospitals to establish special techniques for treating the disabled, such as ways of communicating with the deaf in emergency rooms.

The public schools will be affected

the most. They must provide free education to 1 million disabled children now denied access to school. And rather than segregating the handicapped in separate classrooms, they must educate them in regular classes with the non-handicapped to the "maximum extent appropriate."

The regulation has been controversial from the beginning. Critics say it is vague, tangled in red tape and expensive. HEW officials estimate it will cost more than \$2 billion to implement, but they say the costs will be substantially offset by the productivity of the newly employed handicapped. One of the most contentious issues was whether 10 million alcoholics and 1.5 million drug addicts should be classified as handicapped and thus protected by the regulation. Attorney General Griffin Bell ruled last month that they should be, but Califano indicated that employers could refuse jobs to alcoholics or addicts if they have records of unsatisfactory work performance. "The regulation clearly contemplates [making] decisions on the basis of an individual's behavior caused by such disease," he said.

HEW officials expect protracted litigation over sections of the regulation, partly because employers can be excused from full compliance if it would mean "undue hardship." But the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities said it was "90 per cent" happy with the new rule, which, it hoped, would bring the handicapped into the mainstream of American life. And after taking a day and a half to clean up, the handicapped protesters in San Francisco finally ended their 25-day sleep-in.

—SUSAN FRAKER with HENRY McGEE in Washington