

Hunt Says Seven Cartons Had No Rockefeller Data

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By JOHN M. CREWDSON AUG 19 1974

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MIAMI, Aug. 18—E. Howard Hunt Jr. said today that, as far as he knew, the seven mysterious cartons stored in his White House office after the Watergate break-in in June, 1972, contained hundreds of copies of a book-length criticism of television news reporting but no information concerning former Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York.

Mr. Hunt, one of the seven men who pleaded guilty or were convicted in the original Watergate break-in case and who is now a Miami resident, termed a "total absurdity" recent reports that the boxes had contained evidence that Mr. Rockefeller, who is under consideration for the Vice-Presidential nomination, had financed demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention here in 1972.

The White House charged yesterday that the "tip" concerning the apparently non-existent documents, which reportedly came to its attention a week ago, was a hoax designed "to discredit Mr. Rockefeller and thereby attempt to remove him from consideration" for the Vice-Presidency.

'Deplorable' Affair

J. F. terHorst, the White House press secretary, added that President Ford considered the affair "deplorable."

In an interview, Mr. Hunt, who is free pending an appeal of his conviction in the Watergate matter, recalled that in the fall of 1971 he was approached by a woman assistant to Charles W. Colson, then a special counsel to former President Richard M. Nixon.

He said the woman had asked Mr. Hunt, then a member of the White House's special investigations unit known as the "plumbers," whether she might store seven bulky cartons in his quarters in the Executive Office Building, next door to the White House.

Mr. Hunt said that he had agreed, and that the cartons were moved into his office, which contained only a desk and a small, two-drawer safe.

Five of the seven cartons, all bearing the name of a book-publishing house, were sealed, Mr. Hunt said, but the two others contained copies of a book by Edith Efron, a television critic, entitled "The News Twisters."

Mr. Hunt said that he had left the cartons untouched, and that they were still in place when he made his last visit to the office on June 19, 1972,

two days after the unsuccessful break-in attempt at the Democratic party's Watergate offices. He said he had no idea whatever became of them.

Five Sealed Cartons

The former Central Intelligence Agency operative conceded that the five closed cartons, which he said appear to have been sealed by the publisher of Miss Efron's book, might have, unbeknownst to him, contained some other materials of which "I was an innocent holder."

But he dismissed the possibility as "ridiculous," in view of his close association with Mr. Colson, a fellow Brown University alumnus, and also the sensitive nature of his tasks as a member of the White House plumbers.

Information made available last summer to the Senate Watergate committee about a campaign "dirty tricks" included testimony that Mr. Colson had appropriated \$8,000 in funds belonging to the committee for the re-election of the President to purchase quantities of the Efron book. The book contended that television news reporting was sometimes distorted, a public position then favored by the White House, with the intention of putting the volume onto the best-seller lists. The Colson effort was unsuccessful.

Roy Sheppard, a member of Mr. Nixon's 1972 campaign staff, reportedly told the Watergate committee earlier this year that, a few days after the June 17 break-in, he had been directed by Mr. Hunt's wife, Dorothy, to go to the Executive Office Building and take away several cartons of documents.

Conflicting Versions

Committee sources recalled today, however, that they had been told at least two conflicting versions about what occurred thereafter, first that Mr. Hunt shipped them out of Washington by way of the Railway Express Agency.

One Senate investigator said that Mr. Sheppard's account had never been corroborated by the committee staff, which, among other things, determined that the sign-in book from the Executive Office Building for the period in question did not bear any indication that Mr. Sheppard had ever been a visitor there.

The source said that Mr. Hunt, when queried about the matter, gave the committee

staff the account about the Efron book that he repeated in the interview today. The source added that the Watergate committee, which conducted an extensive inquiry into campaign sabotage and plans for demonstrations at the Democratic convention, had never come across Mr. Rockefeller's name in any context.

Mr. Hunt said that the only materials in his office when he left it for the last time on June 19, 1972, had been the seven cartons, some old newspapers, and a small safe. He added that he had never heard of Mr. Sheppard, who could not be reached for comment today.

The safe did contain sensitive documents, Mr. Hunt said, but nothing relating even indirectly to Mr. Rockefeller. Those items, which included reports on an investigation of Senator Edward M. Kennedy and the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, falsified "diplomatic cables" and two personal telephone registers, were removed later in the week after the Watergate break-in by John W. Dean 3d, then the White House counsel.

Some of the documents were given to L. Patrick Gray 3d, at the time the acting director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who later destroyed them. Mr. Dean reportedly disposed of two notebooks.

The apparently erroneous tip regarding the "Rockefeller papers" was provided last Sunday to Philip W. Buchen, the new White House counsel, by Hamilton A. Long, a retired Wall Street lawyer who formerly headed a conservative Philadelphia publishing company, the American Heritage Education Corporation.

Mr. Long, who was described by Mr. Buchen today as about 70 years of age, has written a number of conservative tracts, including one, published in the nineteen-fifties, entitled, "Permit Communist-Conspirators to be Teachers?"

Mr. Buchen said that Mr. Long told him that he had also been in touch with the staffs of two Senators about the information purported to have been in Mr. Hunt's office, Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, the Republican whip, and Lowell P. Weicker Jr. of Connecticut, a member of the Watergate committee.

Mr. Long was described by several sources close to the Hunt affair today as an acquaintance of H. J. O'Brien, the owner of a Washington, D.C., photo copy company and also a close friend of Mr. Sheppard.