

Parade 3/2/75



RUTH AND H. L. HUNT

WATERGATE RIVAL

One of the major scandals of all time is brewing in Texas. It involves the family of Texas oil billionaire Haroldson Lafayette Hunt who died last year at age 85.

Behind the scandal lies a vicious family feud for the old man's money. Some 20 odd years ago when Hunt's first wife, Lyda, was dying of cancer, Hunt found himself increasingly dependent upon the services of his secretary, Ruth Ray Wright of Idabel, Okla., a competent, attractive woman, 30 years his junior.

In 1955 the first Mrs. Hunt died, leaving, in addition to her husband, six children: Lamar, Nel-

son Bunker, W. Herbert, H.L. Jr., Margaret, and Caroline.

Two years later, the eccentric H.L. Hunt married his secretary, Ruth Ray Wright. Ruth had four children at the time, supposedly from a previous marriage, but after H.L. Hunt legally adopted the four --Ray Lee, June, Helen, and Swanee--the second Mrs. Hunt reportedly confessed that H.L. Hunt had indeed fathered all of them.

Thus the forces were joined--the first set of Hunt children versus the second. Which set would get how much of the old man's fortune? Helping the second set was Paul Rothermel, 47, a former FBI agent, lawyer and H.L. Hunt assistant. It was

Rothermel, a friend of the second Mrs. Hunt, who persuaded Hunt in 1969 to alter his will to benefit his second family because he had already given so much to his first.

Not long after that, Rothermel found that he and three other executives of Hunt Oil were being wiretapped by a private detective, J.J. Kelly, and his assistant, Patrick McCann.

When Kelly and McCann were sentenced to three years in jail, they turned state's evidence and revealed that they had been hired by Bunker and Herbert Hunt for the wiretapping caper. The two Hunts were indicted in 1973 on wiretapping charges. They called upon Sen. James Eastland (D., Miss.) for help.

What help Eastland may or may not have supplied the Hunt brothers is currently being looked into by a flock of investigative journalists. What help Richard Kleindienst, Henry Petersen, John Connally, Richard Nixon and other members of the Nixon Administration may have provided the oil-rich Hunt brothers is also under scrutiny. The grand jury is investigating many people on charges of obstructing justice.

In short, when this case goes to trial, Texas will witness a brouhaha, the likes of which will surely rival Watergate in its publicity and ramifications.