

'Destitute' Howard Hunt



HOWARD HUNT, convicted Watergate burglar, dresses modishly and vacations in Florida. Last September he said he was in financial trouble.

By ^{7/10/73} **ROBERT L. JACKSON** and
RONALD J. OSTROW
Special to The Star

WASHINGTON

Last fall, E. Howard Hunt, Jr. depicted himself during Senate hearings as a near-destitute, widowed father of four, all but ruined by his participation in the Watergate burglary.

In reality, only six months earlier—two days before going off to jail—more than \$100,000 in stock was purchased on his behalf, a portfolio he still holds.

This contrast adds one more element of intrigue to the already mysterious ex-spy who played a principal role in the original Watergate break-in. Hunt, 55, will command further attention in the months ahead since he's likely to be an important witness in trials of the Watergate cover-up defendants and ex-members of the White House Plumbers.

There are these other unusual elements surrounding Hunt's financial activities:

—Hunt purchased the \$109,872 in stock last year at the same time he was demanding \$120,000 in alleged "hush money" from the White House. His brokerage records, made available by one of his lawyers, indicate the stock was purchased with part of \$260,000 in flight insurance on his wife, Dorothy, who died in a plane crash on Dec. 8, 1972.

—Hunt, through his lawyers, initially said he had purchased no stock anywhere near the time the alleged hush money was received. Then, when reporters demonstrated independent knowledge of the March, 1973, stock acquisition, Hunt acknowledged it had taken place but said it was done without his knowledge.

bought \$109,872 in stocks

—Hunt, who had demanded the \$120,000 as a “priority” item to pay his legal expenses, eventually received \$75,000 in cash. But he did not immediately use this sum to pay legal fees. The use to which he put specific funds is unclear because he intermingled the income.

—William A. Snyder, Jr., one of Hunt’s lawyers, said the \$75,000 was kept for a time in Hunt’s suburban Washington home. Snyder said Hunt’s daughter, Kevan, 21, put the money in a safe deposit box after prosecutor Earl J. Silbert suggested that should be done, inasmuch as Hunt revealed the cash hoard to grand jurors. Silbert said he has no such recollection. Miss Hunt declined to discuss it.

Hunt, a retired 20-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency, implied he was in deep financial trouble when he appeared before the Senate Watergate committee last September. He said then in his opening statement:

Isolated

“I am isolated from my four motherless children. The funds provided me and others who participated in the break-in have long since been exhausted.”

Nowadays Hunt—three months out of prison—vacations in Florida while his appeal is pending and enjoys attending the theatre in Washington. He dresses modishly in double-breasted blazers and bell-bottom trousers.

The \$75,000 was paid to Hunt on the evening of March 21, 1973, in order to keep him quiet, according to the federal grand jury which indicted seven former Nixon administration and campaign officials

Former presidential counsel John W. Dean III has testified that some Nixon aides feared Hunt might re-

veal other undercover work he had done for the White House—including the then still-secret 1971 break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist.

Hunt told the Senate committee he needed the money for a “priority” item—\$60,000 in legal fees he owed his lawyer, William O. Bittman. The remainder, he said, was needed for living expenses for himself and his children.

After receiving the money, however, he did not use it to pay Bittman, he conceded. Rather, he paid Bittman by cheque the next month—a cheque drawn against his wife’s insurance money.

Thus, the picture emerging from his testimony is that Hunt intermingled his income, principally the insurance funds and his alleged “hush money,” and made disbursements without any apparent attempt to segregate the two main sources.

Snyder, his lawyer, said Hunt’s \$109,872 in stock was all purchased by a Washington-based brokerage firm with three deposits Hunt had made from insurance proceeds and from no other source.

The settlement date on most of these stock purchases was March 21, 1973, just hours before Hunt received his secret \$75,000 in cash in a nighttime delivery. The cover-up indictment alleged Hunt demanded the larger sum of \$120,000 on March 16—five days earlier.

On March 23, 1973, Hunt went off to prison for nine months and was released pending appeal last January.

In all, Hunt and his late wife handled more than \$200,000 in Watergate case payments, according to Senate committee calculations. Although they disbursed much of it to other defendants, Senate investigators were never able to reconcile all the totals.

Snyder said the timing of the

stock purchases—occurring as Hunt demanded money from the White House—was “the damndest piece of bad luck I’ve ever seen.” He said Hunt did not learn of the transactions until four months later because he had given the brokerage firm, Ferris & Co., discretionary power to make investments for him.

Ferris & Co. notified him by mail after the purchases, Snyder said, but the notification was not immediately forwarded to him at the Danbury, Conn., federal correctional institute.

“He was sore as hell when he learned about this,” said Snyder, adding that Hunt thought his money was being kept in U.S. treasury bills.

Stocks sagged

However, in a March 20, 1973, letter to Hunt from Ferris & Co. that Snyder allowed reporters to examine, the company noted Hunt had discussed at least one of the stock purchases with Lulia Walsh, a representative of the firm. Snyder said he could not explain this reference.

He said just before Hunt went to jail “somebody at Ferris got it in their head that Howard Hunt needed a stock portfolio.” The stocks have sagged, like the rest of the market, aggravating Hunt’s disappointment, he said.

Stanley Ragle, Ferris’ general counsel, says that Hunt’s version is “not a complete statement with respect to what happened.” Ragle said he was barred from discussing it further, without Hunt’s permission, because of the confidentiality of an investor’s dealings with his broker.

Ragle subsequently said he made several attempts to obtain this permission from Snyder but failed.

Los Angeles Times

P. Rubin 4/23/74

KFFA-TV Berkeley

23 April 1974

6:30 p.m. news

Taped and transcribed:

Announcer [David Selvyn, telephone feed from Washington]:...
....According to the Los Angeles Times today, at the same time convicted Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt was ~~wax~~ demanding alleged hush money from the White House, and claiming he was destitute, he had more than \$100,000 in a stock fund which the paper claims was of unclear origin. The Times says Hunt still holds the stock, purchased in the name of Johnson & Co. The stock fund was reportedly transferred to Hunt just two days before he went to prison. In addition to the stock fund, Hunt also has \$260,000 worth of insurance money, collected as the result of his wife's death in an airplane crash, plus about \$75,000 worth of alleged hush money. The report on Hunt's finances came from the paper's staff reporters here in Washington who said they had been shown some of Hunt's financial records by his lawyer, William Snyder. This is David Selvyn, for Pacifica Radio in Washington.

[complete]

---jdw/24apr74---