

HUNT'S TALES OF WATERGATE

He was the spy who came back from the heat, and he did it like the anti-hero of one of his own pulp thrillers—slipping out of a Florida prison before dawn to beat the press and hedgehopping north to Boston on three different planes. "I've paid my price for Watergate," said E. Howard Hunt, aged and embittered by nearly 1,000 days behind bars for his ringleading role in the burglary that brought down a President. And now, free on parole, he planned to exact a price of his own—trailing a whole star company of his brother Watergate alumni out onto the lecture circuit and retailing his inside version of the scandal at \$2,000 to \$5,000 per telling.

His story, as previewed in a farewell speech to some fellow inmates and in a coming-out news conference in Boston, will be laced with pity for himself, anger at his pursuers—and tales out of school about former employers ranging from the CIA to Richard Nixon. He attacked Federal Judge John J. Sirica as a "vicious, merciless" man who dealt him felony time for an offense that "would have gotten a 30-day suspended sentence . . . in any other court." He railed at the CIA for having "got rid of me like they would have a dead rat" once he got caught and imprisoned, instead of engineering a pardon for him. He suggested that he might have beaten John Dean to the confessional if only the original



Spymaster Hunt: The pity and the profit

Watergate prosecutor, Earl Silbert, had been willing to plea-bargain for his story. "If Silbert had led me with a carrot instead of beating me with a stick," Hunt told his prison mates, "he would have had the fame [Archibald] Cox does today."

'Paranoid': But Hunt saved a special share of his resentment for Nixon—a man he described as a "paranoid" President running a "garrison" White House. He promised some further "horror stories" once he gets out on the talk-for-pay tour and dropped some teasing hints as to what they might be; on "Good Day," a Boston TV talk show, he confirmed that members of the White House "plumbers" had

once entertained a plan to "waste" Panamanian dictator Omar Torrijos (NEWSWEEK June 18, 1973). In the meantime, Hunt made no secret of his disaffection for his ex-boss. "Nixon gave his blessing to everything that went on," he said, and to the Boston press he added: "Nixon is the one I would blame. If he had opened up in the first few weeks and said, 'Look, these guys were working for me, none of what happened would have happened. I hold him responsible for the tragedy of Watergate.'"

Hunt wore that tragedy on his sleeve. He pictured himself as a man who had been trained to take orders ("As a CIA officer, I was never charged to deal with morality") and who had been broken for obeying orders he assumed had come from his Commander in Chief. He may in fact profit now from his role in the scandals; he has signed on with the same lecture bureau that books John Dean, Leon Jaworski, Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein and the Fonz, and will make his own debut at Millersville (Pa.) State College in mid-March. But he has come back to the world gaunt, pouchy-eyed, deep in debt and alone. His wife died in a plane crash after his 1972 indictment and at his farewell to prison a fortnight ago, he said: "I wish I could have been up there with her."

—DENNIS A. WILLIAMS with RICHARD MANNING in Boston