

'Bug Suspect Said to Seek Kennedy Data

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E. Howard Hunt Jr., who is being sought for questioning about the alleged attempt to bug Democratic National headquarters, showed a special interest in Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's accident at Chappaquiddick while a consultant at the White House, according to sources there.

These sources include a high White House official and a former aide in the office where Hunt worked. In addition, a White House librarian, Jane F. Schleicher, said Hunt checked out "a whole bunch of material" on Kennedy and the 1969 accident in which Mary Jo Kopechne, a passenger in Kennedy's car, was killed.

Hunt, an ex-CIA employee hired as a \$100-a-day White House consultant, was working in the Executive Office Building next to the White House on Kennedy research as long ago as the summer of 1971, according to two of the sources.

Ken W. Clawson, deputy director of White House communications, denied these reports and said on Monday that Hunt was not assigned to do any research on Kennedy as part of his White House duties.

However, Clawson noted that Hunt was the author of some 40 books and "could have been doing research on his own."

Clawson has said Hunt's White House assignments dealt with declassification of the Pentagon Papers and narcotics intelligence.

Both Hunt's wife and his former employer in a Washington public relations firm said this week they had no

knowledge that Hunt may have been investigating Kennedy and the Chappaquiddick accident.

Mrs. Schleicher, the White House librarian, told a Washington Post reporter Monday that she remembered Hunt checking out "a whole bunch of material" on Sen. Kennedy and the fatal accident at Chappaquiddick.

She later told another Post reporter, "I had no business giving that out," and referred the second reporter to the press office.

Clawson said yesterday that Mrs. Schleicher "denies that the (first) conversation took place" and that she told him both callers were referred to the press office.

Hunt was first linked to the alleged break-in and plot to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee when his name—with the notations "W. H." and "W. House" beside it—was found in the address books of two of the five suspects arrested in the case. Police also found an uncashed check made out by Hunt to a Rockville country club among the suspects' belongings.

Hunt was hired as a White House consultant in 1971 on the recommendation of Charles W. Colson, a behind-the-scenes political strategist who is President Nixon's special counsel.

According to one person who worked in Colson's office suite with Hunt, the latter began research on Kennedy and the Chappaquiddick acci-

dent shortly after coming to work there.

Another source, who recalled Hunt's interest in Kennedy during White House office hours, said Hunt borrowed some of the material on Kennedy from the Library of Congress.

(Officials at the Library of Congress refused to disclose if material on Kennedy had been checked out to the White House or to Hunt. It is the library's policy to keep all such records confidential, the officials said.)

According to one White House source, it was no secret among those in Colson's office that Hunt "was doing investigative work on that case"—Chappaquiddick—as well as working on the Pentagon Papers.

The source could recall no discussion of why Hunt would have been doing research on Kennedy, who until recently was regarded by President

Nixon as the likely 1972 Democratic presidential nominee, according to widely published reports.

The source recalled that among the materials used by Hunt was a book called "Bridge at Chappaquiddick," by Jack Olson.

That book, published in 1970, was originally cited by Mrs. Schleicher as among the materials checked out by Hunt.

The librarian was asked by a reporter if she remembered "the name of the book that Mr. Hunt checked out on Sen. Kennedy and Chappaquiddick."

She replied:

"I think I do remember something about that . . . I think so. He took out a whole bunch of material" on the subject.

Mrs. Schleicher added that she "thought I had it in my notes" and asked the reporter to call back.

When the second call was placed, the librarian said: "I think the book you probably mean is the one by Jack Olsen, 'Bridge at Chappaquiddick.'"

Asked when Hunt had borrowed the book, Mrs. Schleicher said she would check, then said:

"I don't have a card that Mr. Hunt took that out. I remember getting this book for someone but there is no card on Mr. Hunt taking it out."

Then she said there was no card on the book at all, added that she had never had any borrowing requests from Hunt, and finished the conversation by referring the reporter to the press office and saying she did not know who Hunt was.

The Chappaquiddick accident occurred about midnight July 18, 1969, when Miss Kopechne drowned in Kennedy's car following a party on Chappaquiddick Island, Mass.

Kennedy and the 28-year-old former secretary to his brother, the late Robert F. Kennedy, left the party together. According to Kennedy, he accidentally drove his 1967 Oldsmobile off the narrow bridge into the water. He said he made a desperate attempt to find Miss Kopechne in the submerged car.