

Student Is Called GOP Election Spy

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An honors student at Brigham Young University was recruited and paid \$175 a week by E. Howard Hunt Jr. to spy on the campaigns of two of the leading contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination, the chief prosecutor in the Watergate trial said yesterday.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Earl J. Silbert, the chief

prosecutor, said in his opening statement at the trial that Thomas J. Gregory, a 26-year-old history major at the Provo, Utah, school, met with Hunt at a downtown drug store every Friday to turn over information and receive his salary.

At Hunt's direction, Silbert said, Gregory worked for three months as a volunteer in the Washington offices of, first, Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), and then Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.).

Silbert said that Gregory, who will be a prosecution witness, received school credit for off-campus study for his work from March to June.

Gregory's assignment was to pass information to Hunt, who entered a guilty plea in the Watergate bugging case yesterday. That, according to Silbert, included gathering advance data on the candidates' schedules, speeches, "dissension" in the campaign staffs, the names of powerful leaders in each staff, the names of financial contributors, the amounts they gave, and copies of mailing lists of supporters.

Hunt, a former White House aide, entered a plea of guilty to charges of bugging, conspiracy and burglary at the opening of the Watergate trial yesterday.

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Gregory also assisted James W. McCord Jr., another Watergate defendant, in an unsuccessful attempt to place an electronic listening device in the office of Frank Mankiewicz, one of McGovern's top aides, Silbert said.

According to Silbert, Gregory took McCord to the McGovern offices in mid-May and attempted to divert attention so that McCord could enter Mankiewicz' office and plant the bug in the ceiling.

However, Silbert said, McCord didn't have the three minutes he needed to place the bug and the attempt was aborted. McCord was chief security coordinator for President Nixon's re-election committee at the time of the alleged bugging attempt of Mankiewicz' office.

Silbert said that Gregory was also asked to obtain plans for the offices of Mankiewicz and Gary Hart, McGovern's campaign manager. The plans included specific information about where pictures hung in the office and where heating ducts were located, Silbert said.

Gregory was also asked to provide keys for the McGovern offices but did not do so, according to Silbert.

Silbert also said that Gregory assisted in an aborted attempt to break into McGovern headquarters about May 29. According to the indictment, Hunt, McCord and G. Gordon Liddy, a former White House aide and another defendant, "inspected, surveyed, and reconnoitered" the McGovern headquarters on that day.

About that time, Silbert said, Gregory decided he was "finished" with this type of work and on June 15—two days before the Watergate break-in—he quit.

Silbert said that Gregory

went along with Hunt's request that he remain silent about his activities until he was contacted by the FBI.

Sources close to the Watergate investigation said yesterday that Gregory was not contacted by the FBI until last month, nearly three months after the Watergate indictment was returned.

Dr. J. Keith Melville, professor of political science at Brigham Young and Gregory's adviser for the off-campus study, said yesterday, "I regret that our honors program may have been abused by this activity."

Melville said in a telephone interview from Utah that he had no idea Gregory may have been working as a political spy. Melville also said that a 15-page paper Gregory submitted in November on his volunteer campaign work gives "nothing to intimate any knowledge about the Watergate affair."

"Gregory's paper seems to conclude that politics doesn't conform with the pie-in-the-sky, rosy view most people have of it," Melville said. He said that Gregory's paper also concludes that "a very few people in the campaign staffs are in a decision making position, and it is hard to locate those who make decisions."

According to Melville, Gregory proposed the off-campus study project and is scheduled to receive 16 credits for the work once his paper is rewritten and accepted.

Gregory worked for about six weeks in the Muskie campaign and then shifted after McGovern won the Wisconsin primary, according to Silbert. Silbert said Hunt had determined that Gregory could be more useful in the office of the potential Democratic nominee.

Former officials in the Muskie and McGovern campaigns told a reporter that

Gregory's assignments included organizing files, clipping newspapers, and running errands.

"He was a quiet, innocuous little fellow who was not happy with what he was doing," Dorothy Wexler, a worker in the both campaigns, said yesterday. Mrs. Wexler said that Gregory was "quite dissatisfied" because he wanted more important assignments.

Gregory lived in Arlington while working on the campaigns, and is here in Washington this week for the trial. He could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Sources close to the Watergate investigation said that Gregory is politically conservative, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints spent two years in Brazil on a mission for his church. Gregory, who was about to be married, took the assignment from Hunt because he needed the money, the sources said.

Gregory is a close personal friend of Robert Fletcher, another Watergate witness. Fletcher, a computer programmer for a New York bank, is the nephew of Robert F. Bennett, president of the Robert R. Mullen public relations firm here in Washington.

Hunt worked for the Mullen firm until he was fired in June after his name was connected with the Watergate bugging.

According to the sources, Hunt first asked Fletcher to take on the spying assignment in early 1972. Fletcher declined and suggested that Hunt approach Gregory, who accepted, the sources said.

One source said that Gregory told federal investigators that his spying did not appear to be overly successful because the information he obtained regularly appeared in the newspapers one or two days later.