

GLOBE

SUNDAY, JULY 7, 1974, WITH TV WEEK



**Women, Watergate
and Howard Hunt**

All Through the Night with Howard Hunt

It's hard to get a handle on the enigmatic Watergate figure, and perhaps it's because he himself is not quite sure of his identity.

By ELIZABETH SCRIBNER

Jan. 2, 1974

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I'm doing a book on women & Watergate. Something you said at the Senate hearings makes me think you may be different from the bon vivant sexist you were typed as in the press. You said you called Colson again after your wife had. Your reason was that "because she was a woman, her words would not be given sufficient weight." Would you give me an interview?

This will be my first book. I graduated from the Baldwin School and then from Smith in 1966. I taught French at Emma Willard and I am accurate.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Scribner

1/3/74

Dear Ms Scribner —

What I said at the Senate hearings — the quote you wrote me — was a quotation of my wife's words. It was her thought, not mine.

So now you can begin being accurate all over again.

Sincerely,
Howard Hunt

P.S. I hadn't realized the Media typed me as a "bon vivant sexist." I thought I was being depicted as a dangerous idiot.

Jan. 7, 1974

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I note you didn't refuse me an interview.

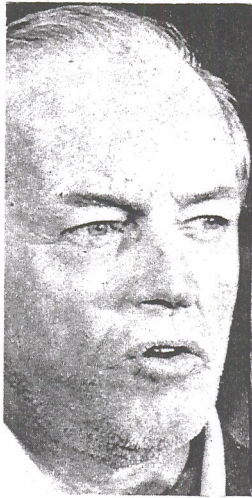
I appreciate your fast correction which, however, poses questions rather than answers them. Did you disagree with your wife's thought that she was given insufficient credibility because she was a woman? If you did, why did you make the call?

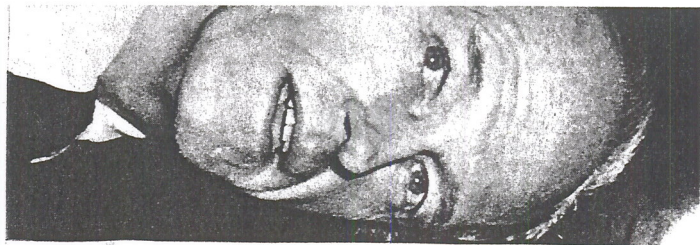
I must point out, in the interest of accuracy, that being depicted as a dangerous idiot in no way precludes being shown as a sexist bon vivant. The press seized on the superficial, belabored the obvious and came up with a gestalt I think is askew.

Your attitude toward women seems the least standard of the Nixonians. I note with surprise that you have a woman in Gift for Gomala being disgusted by her pregnancy — an astounding apercu for a man.

Will you have dinner with me at my favorite Washington restaurant, the Peking at 15th Street?

Elizabeth Scribner, shown in the neighborhood of the White House and at the restaurant where she met Howard Hunt, is a freelance writer from Hyannis Port currently working in Washington on a book that is tentatively titled "Women & Watergate."





Or would you rather, in good 18th century fashion, correspond?

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Scribner
(This letter is on very thick paper with "HOWARD HUNT" embossed at the top in dark blue) 1/15/74

Dear manneater

Your delayed note just arrived. It sounds portentous (sp)? and deserves more thought than I can give it right now. . . . So, send me a note at my home with your D.C. address or phone number. It would be nice to have someone other than the Bureau of Prisons buy me a meal.

Regards,
HH

P.S. My daughter is Smith '76

Jan. 21, 1974

Dear Mr. Hunt,

You flatter me. Your salutation, that is.

How about dinner. . . . Thursday or Friday at 8? I know a good back table. The friends I stay with here turn out to be terrified of you so I can't give you an address or phone. I'll show up and hope to see you. If you don't remember me from court, I have brown hair and a scar in the form of a question mark on my forehead.

Or: set your own date & send it to my Massachusetts address. It should reach me a little before the spring thaw. This all seems rather convoluted — even for Washington — but my curiosity strengthens and makes me persevere.

I should warn you I am one of the handful of people in the world who liked Smith. Does your daughter? I look forward to our meal and your answers. Perhaps even to your questions.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Scribner

1/22/74

Dear Ms. S:

On the off chance the Peking rendez-vous aborts, I want you to know that I'm willing to meet you there this Thurs. or Fri. evening. I'd asked my Smith-type daughter along, but she returns to Hamp on Thursday morning.

Your confession that those you stay with (communal style)? are terrified of me comes as no surprise; they are not alone in their terror of the Watergate bungler. Surely, however, you could have contacted a code name for my use on your communal phone: Hagopian, arresting . . . and significant.

P.V.T. my daughter does indeed like Smith — but not as much as I did in my undergraduate MCP days on the banks of Paradise Pond. In all Candor (a mis- and over-used word) I don't think I remember you from my public appearance days. The unique forehead scar I may have perceived as something other than a perpetual query.

Do not count on a fruitful interview, Ms Scribner. In MCP style I'll toss you for the check.

Yrs.
H

I was halfway through a Heiniken when he appeared. Howard Hunt (also known as Eduardo, Edward Hamilton, Ed Warren, John Baxter, Robert Dietrich, David St. John and Gordon David) had on a ribbed turtle-neck, black and white hounds tooth slacks with what seemed to be a cummerbund, and a navy blue blazer with the insignia of Brown on the pocket. As he came toward the table, he looked like a dyspeptic imp determined to see the humorous side of life.

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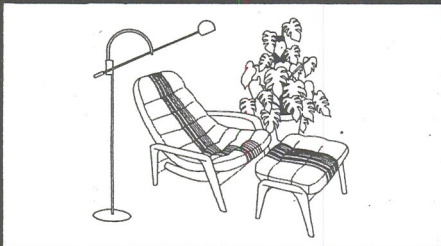
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"Mr. Hunt," I said, "I'm so glad you came tonight instead of making me wait until tomorrow. I'm glad you didn't play hard to get."

"I am hard to get," he said as he sat down.

We shook hands. Hunt, a gentleman by training, looked at my beer and ordered one himself to put me at my ease. I was reminded of Archie and Veronica comic books: if Jughead had gray hair and a charge account at J. Press, he would look like Howard Hunt. On television the arresting feature of Hunt's face is his nose, a long one with considerable cartilage at the end. In real life, though, it is his eyes. Amused, they don't fit with his dour mouth. His ears are actually pointed at the tops so that, with the turned-down mouth, he looks like an embittered pixie.

"My daughter asked me, 'Poppa, what do you think she'll be like?' and I told her you'd probably be four feet tall and a troll." He looked at me: "And here you are the girl of my dreams." We both laughed. This is part of his charm. You and he are, by his jokes, conspirators in a put-on. It is also part of his insidiousness. Anyone who takes anything he says seriously can be accused of missing the irony.

Kevan, his "Smith-type daughter," was clearly his major remaining pride. She was vice-president of her house and a government major; more, she wanted to be a lawyer. He was even proud of her having led a student strike at Holton-Arms. The issue was the expulsion of a girl who'd stayed in her boy friend's house when his parents were away. "Dorothy and I thought this was her own business," said the man who explained breaking into the files of Ellsberg's psychiatrist by wanting to know "what kind of animal we were dealing with."

Luxuriating visibly as he settled into his chair, he reminisced about his visits to Smith, about nights spent scaling up and down the rope fire escapes. He was warming to one of his favorite themes — himself as one who loves not wisely but well. Unable to "tell the good from the bad," he'd chosen badly as a youth. During World War II, after six months without mail at a Pacific outpost, he got a batch of letters from the girl he'd left behind. Reading right off, "Darling, I'm pregnant," and thinking he might already be a father, he ripped through the rest — not another word on the subject. He wasn't allowed to write back, he claimed, and could only choose among variously pre-worded telegrams. He sent off, "Give all my love to the children." He heard nothing from her till she popped up — out of the blue — in a bar ten years later.

"My darling," he asked, "do we have a child?"

"No, I was only testing your love."

Switching to the "hard stuff", he poured his shot glass of Red Label into a glass of water.

"Why do men love war so?" I asked him.

He wasn't aware they did.

"Then why do they do it all the time?"

"To defend ideals, I suppose."

"I think the pleasures of war come first and the ideals come later to justify."

Shrugging, he said he hadn't thought of it that way and that anyway he hadn't had a good time in war. ("The taste of death was in his mouth the way he had never known it before. It was never like this when you slaughtered

an enemy. The taste was different then — high and thin and exciting — like straight alcohol," Howard Hunt wrote in *Bimini Run*.)

"Technology got in the way of pleasure in war," I said. "You can see why men liked war in the old days — Vikings raping and pillaging."

"I've never understood how rape is possible. You know the one about the needle and the thread?"

"No."

"If the needle moves you can't thread it."

I began to wonder what I, a person sensible enough to grow soybeans on Cape Cod and wise enough to be unmarried and childless, was doing being civil to this man. Not at all sure he wasn't serious, I laboriously explained that centuries of telling women they are helpless has its effect.

"I hadn't thought of that," he said. "Actually I didn't want to rape the Jap women," he mused. "I just wanted to kill them so they couldn't reproduce."

I ordered a Japanese beer whose virtues Hunt explained to me.

"So your book's about women and Watergate?"

"Yes, I got hooked, obsessed, when the Senate hearings came on TV. Looking around, there weren't any women except for the supportive wives."

"What?"

"Wives sitting demurely behind their husbands. You remember, Maureen Dean — that vacant look. I think John Dean had her lobotomized pre-nuptially."

"Yes, Maureen Dean is dull." (Dull is the ultimate Huntian put-down which may explain his liking Gordon Liddy.) John Dean had a "hormone problem," Hunt said. Only Hunt and Liddy were real men. "Job Magruder probably never had sex until he got married," Hunt said looking very pleased with himself. "Boys pick girls and men pick women."

"Watching Watergate," I said trying to get back to my thesis, "made me realize that to Nixonians, as to most Americans, there are three kinds of natural women: wives, secretaries and prostitutes."

Hunt got defensive about his wife. (Dorothy Hunt was killed in a plane crash on Dec. 8, 1972. Her body was burned but her purse, containing \$10,000 in \$100 bills, was not.) She was very intelligent, he said, and then gave as his evidence that she handled servants well and gave good dinner parties. This was peculiar proof of the intelligence of a woman who worked as a translator, who was a rumored spy and whom Dean called "the savviest woman in the world."

"Yes," I said, "your wife was an unnatural woman." I meant her active role in an otherwise male-dominated crime but he continued on her domestic skills: she was a fine cook.

Hunt's secretary, Kathleen Chenow, was not apparently as savvy as Dorothy Hunt. She spilled some of the first beans on the Plumbers and Hunt despised her for it; she was just another of "those Capitol Hill girls" who didn't understand the clandestine.

Our food came. The vegetables were limp and faded. I'd forgotten: at night the vegetables

were leftovers from lunch. Washington being an alcoholic's town, the restaurants neglect dinner because the big shots are into serious drinking by then. Hunt politely ate an egg roll and a shrimp roll without comment.

"Was Liddy really serious about his prostitute plan?"

"Magruder's," he said firmly and insisted it wasn't the sort of thing Gordon would think up. (Magruder denies it was his idea and points out that the prostitutes were discussed only at the first meeting where Liddy — according to Mitchell, Dean and Magruder — took everyone by surprise.)

I said the prostitute plan seemed a little corny to me, even for Nixonians, but what had Dean meant when he said the women would be "high class, the best in the business"? The way to do it, Hunt explained, would be to get "beautiful, highly intelligent girls who were politically motivated" and have them make contact in Washington before finishing in Miami. It wasn't a great idea, he pointed out, because the Democrats would have their wives at the convention and wouldn't have time for dalliances. The subject seemed to stir great contempt in Hunt.

Matching contempt, I said, "And the yacht — no cliché too frayed, none too hackneyed?"

"It was a houseboat, not a yacht," he corrected me.

Hunt signaled the waiter and asked if the sweet and sour pork was good. The waiter balked — what was he supposed to say — and refused to go into that charade.

"Before prison," Hunt said abruptly, "I was not much of a humanitarian." In jail he'd met people he wouldn't have otherwise, he said in much the way scions excuse going to a state university or being forced to take public transportation. He listed the wrongs of prison: guard brutality, bad food, assorted humiliations. His new concern for the rights of the jailed made him consider going on a tour to lecture on conditions. He was going to do it for expenses.

"That's good," I said. "They'll listen to you. They wouldn't listen to George Jackson."

"Who," he asked, "is George Jackson?"

Startled, I said, "He's dead now."

That must have rung a bell because Hunt said, "Oh yes, the one with Angela Davis."

I ordered more beer. Hunt began picking at his sweet and sour pork which looked like something out of Redbook — it even had maraschino cherries in it.

I told him I thought the critics were wrong, that I liked his later books better than the early ones. There is a progression of sorts. The first books are about men at war. Women figure as whores and memories. Later his female characters are more varied. There is the complaisant secretary ("Bea emerged from her bedroom in a filmy peignoir and light-blue mules."); the serious wife ("Foreign Service wives play an important supporting role."); the aging businesswomen ("After being compromised by a Russian interpreter in his thirties, she would co-operate."); the spy ("Her attitude toward sex was healthily open and prudence dismayed her. She expected thoughtfulness and competence of a partner.") It is a proliferation rather than a progression, I suppose, because all of Hunt's female characters are defined by their relation to men. As such, Hunt is squarely in the mainstream.

"But I think your best book is still to come. You know the Emerson quote in the beginning of Tropic of Cancer. The one about novels dying out and real life coming in?"

"Oh yes," he said, "Novels will give way... Something like that." He began reminiscing about smuggling Tropic of Cancer into the country and ended up referring to "Hemingway the master."

Remembering what I was about with a start, I said, "Come now, Mr. Hunt, you must think something about the lack of any but the most traditional roles for women in Watergate."

"Lamentable," was all he said.

He invited me to his house where he had "some rather nice wines" and I accepted. The check came and I slammed my hand down on it fast, the way you swat a fly without a fly-swatter, so the sound startled him. I paid and we, truly an odd couple, walked up the stairs to the street.

On the way to his car, which was a standard white American model with a black vinyl roof, I realized how short Hunt is. Not only is he delicate in build and skin but he is a very short man.

Howard Hunt doesn't drive; he motors. We motored past the White House. The streets were still wet from an earlier rain so that even Washington, where the buildings that don't look like post offices look like sets for Raisin in the Sun, looked good.

His house, Witches Island, had a white horse fence around it. He had a paddock, he told me as he motored carefully up the winding driveway, but no horses. Inside were a big black Afghan dog and a thirteen-year-old Siamese cat, both of whom Hunt immediately put out.

Two of his children, Saint and Lisa, having been told to leave by one of Hunt's lawyers, had moved out. David, the youngest, was sent to live with one of Eduardo's faithful Cubans who always seem to play Tonto to Hunt's Lone Ranger.

Hunt's study must have been decorated with Hemingway the master in mind. Display cases held fishing reels and antique pistols. Another case to show rifles was empty. "Parole," he said when he saw me looking at it.

Between the cases were Chinese gravestone rubbings of horses which he'd brought back from the war. On the opposite wall hung a framed caricature of Hunt wearing a Santa Claus hat. The inscription read, "Howard Hunt. The real spirit of Christmas."

He is in fact the real spirit of Christmas. Christmas is the time to buy presents for people you feel guilty about and Howard Hunt is the apogee of the consumer — the fastidious consumer who knows the best among kinds of cognacs, loafers, turtlesnecks, women, cars, fishing reels, guns. If it's for sale, Howard Hunt knows the best kind. The ultimate American. As Nixon pointed out to Khrushchev in Moscow, the value of the American way is that we can choose between a washing machine that wears out in eight months and one that breaks in ten.

His desk was a serious big one. It was neat. I spotted a caricature of Sirica which was partly covered by papers so that only the head was visible. Sirica had been made to look like Frankenstein — sewn-up forehead and all.

"And this," he said walking toward the door, "is an Indian disemboweling knife." He took

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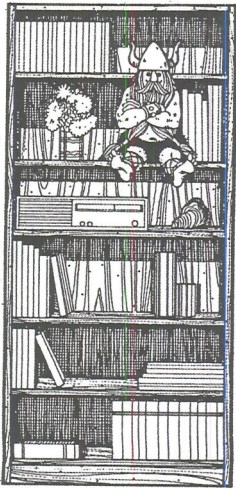
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the knife off the wall where it served as decoration and pulled it out of its sheath. It was about ten inches long, had a curved blade and a big notch just below the handle.

"How does it disembowel, as opposed to a regular knife?" I asked.

"You push it in and the intestine catches on the notch."

"What are these other little knives attached to it for?"

"Eating knives."

"How efficient. In lieu of a mess kit."

He showed me the kitchen which reminded me of Ozzie and Harriet; the dining room which I have forgotten; and the living room which had a big fireplace, a grand piano, two gray couches, a picture of his mother in a silver frame, unstandard oil paintings and the inevitable Chinese gravestone rubbing. As he was pointing out stone horses on the mantle, I realized he was showing me his objects. I possess therefore I am. Now and then, coming on a gap in his objects, he would say, "The kids took that." An American King Lear, he had two of his children turn on him. They had even taken his Oriental rug.

"I have some champagne," he said. I told him I hated champagne. "I'm not a wine snob," he said cheerfully as he pulled out a jug of Almaden Mountain White Chablis, ice cubes and glasses. I sat on a couch and watched as he lit a fire. It caught immediately.

"Let's have French 75s," he said brandishing a bottle of liqueur. I assumed French 75s were a drink. Being a firm believer that no experiment is a failure, I agreed. I've since been told there are only two uses for French 75s: seductions and knock-outs. French 75s, Hunt told me, had something to do with one of the Great Wars. Tasting mine, I was reminded of cough medicine.

"Do you play the piano, Liz?"

"No. I took lessons until my teacher told me I had a mechanical feel for music."

"How about a little Gershwin?"

Perched on the bench, with his back to me, Howard Hunt began playing the way they do in cocktail lounges — he even put in a run up the keyboard at the end. As he played, the words of the song ran through my mind and reminded me that real life has the best ironies:

*They're writing songs of love.
But not for me.
A lucky star's above.
But not for me.
With love to lead the way,
I've found more clouds of gray.
Than any Russian play.
Could guarantee.*

*Although I can't dismiss.
The memory of her kiss.
I guess she's not for me.*

*I know that love's a game.
I'm puzzled all the same.
Was I the moth or flame?
I'm all at sea.
It all begins so well.
But what an end.
This is the time.
A fella needs a friend.
When every happy plot
Ends with the marriage knot.
And there's no knot for me.*

"There was no fraud in Gershwin," Hunt

wrote in Maelstrom. "Nick began . . . feeling the same swelling inside himself that always came when he played it."

He came back over and sat down next to me. I asked him about Dita Beard — was he attracted to her? It was as if I had accused him of buying his suits at Robert Hall.

"Oh no. She's gross."

"She bills herself as a former beauty. Hemingway, even, she claims to have had a liaison with him."

This seemed to upset him. He continued on her disgusting qualities — there she was being interviewed by a refined, if disguised, Howard Hunt and she had the gall to have tubes coming out of her nose, use an oxygen mask and wear a hospital shift. He began to get animated. "Huge mammaries," he said in an incredulous tone, as if I wouldn't believe him.

He disappeared and came back in a navy-blue dressing gown with his monogram in red on the pocket. I felt as if I had slipped into a forties movie. Handing me a light blue robe, he told me it was oxford cloth: "Can you tell by the feel?"

"Let's have something secret from the Washington Post or the Special Prosecutor or whoever you work for," he suggested.

"Or the White House," I said realizing that the spy habit dies hard. He could not believe I was who I said I was.

A brief skirmish followed which centered around a perfunctory pass. I think now it was like any other nervous habit a person uses when boredom sets in — kisses instead of coughs. Earlier he'd referred to himself as an "homme du monde" and, as such, he did not make a scene although he did claim I'd led him on. And he did stop his anecdotes and jokes.

He showed me to a bed and, after turning down the covers, he left without a word. The room, which had been Lisa's, had been stripped except for a vacuum cleaner and the ubiquitous gravestone rubbing. I got into the bed and, after reflecting on the essential depravity of reporters and spies, I went to sleep.

Waking to the sound of him padding around in the hall, I got up and asked what time it was. "4:10. I heard a dog barking and went to see why."

Not having heard any dog barking, I considered that perhaps I should be terrified. Male characters in Hunt's books think things like "in spite of the pain he knew he must choke her until she could struggle no more. Webb dug his thumbs into her larynx and felt a strange animal exultation come over him." But I was too tired to fight sleep and, when I woke up again, it was to the sounds of Hunt moving around again. It was still dark but I got up and headed for the bathroom. Dressed in a shirt, slacks and a tweed jacket, he was standing in the hall.

"I have coffee and orange juice. Would you like some toast, Liz? Do you have towels?" he asked and, proper host, he checked the bathroom.

There was indeed a Holiday Inn towel there and a washcloth. I washed my face, got dressed and went into the kitchen.

There on the Ozzie and Harriet counter was a cup of instant coffee, a paper cup of orange juice and a plate with a piece of toast cut



The author, Elizabeth Scribner, at a familiar Washington landmark.

Photos by Cary Wollinsky/Stock Boston

diagonally and folded over on itself. The thought crossed my mind — did Howard Hunt used to be a short order cook? I picked up the top piece of toast and, yes, he'd done it perfectly: a pat of butter was melting inside. As I ate breakfast, he watched the CBS news. His charm was off. He was like a Christmas tree in the daytime when the lights are out. Picking up the morning's Post, he read the account of Egil Krogh's sentencing and remarked, "Preserve me from religious zealots."

It was still dark when Howard Hunt and I embarked on morning rush hour. As the sky began getting gray, Hunt's light began flickering; the charm came back on. He launched into a long anecdote illustrating the servant problem, the fragility of women, resentment of the Kennedys and his own command of the French language.

The Potomac was a vile yellow-brown and we were hemmed in on all sides by single determined humans, grim behind the wheels of their cars. No one, from this scene, would have guessed there was a gas shortage. I began to wake up enough to note that Howard Hunt had on a tweed hat with a little feather in it and that we had had two near accidents.

The sinister force, he said, was an "ectoplasm." I told him all serious people had been duped by thinking that only Bull, Woods, Nixon, Bennett and the Secret Service had had direct access to the tape with the 18.5 minute buzz. "What about King Timahoe?" I asked. "Can't you hear it: 'Down, boy, down.' The click of dog toenails on the tape recorder keys."

We got to 21st and Pennsylvania without, as far as I could tell, anybody recognizing Howard Hunt. Indeed he looked so much like the other commuters he could have passed for

the head Revere Ware salesman.

I got out of the car and, as I reached in the back for my umbrella, these were the last words I heard from Howard Hunt, "Have a good book."

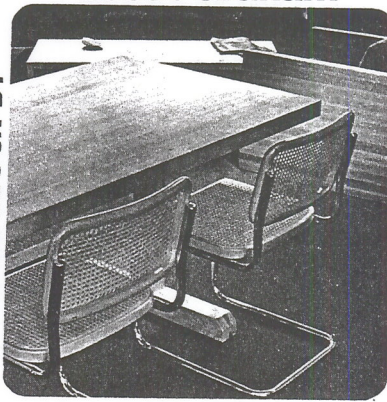
It was 8:30. Twelve hours after shaking hands with him, Howard Hunt was more of a puzzle. There wasn't a Howard Hunt; there were Howard Hunts. And it was virtually impossible to fit the Howard Hunts into a coherent whole. There was Howard Hunt the snob with the shabby genteel boyhood in upper New York State: a man who tells you his turtleneck is by "Pierre." There was Howard Hunt as cub humanitarian concerned with the lot of the jailed. There was Howard Hunt, according to Nixon and Dean (and one of the few things they agree on), as blackmailer. There was Howard Hunt as urger of the assassination of Castro and forger of the Diem cables. There was Howard Hunt the imp, a humorous man in the midst of an administration that takes itself very seriously. There was Howard Hunt the father of children with psychiatric troubles and there was Howard Hunt the plotter of the break-in of Ellsberg's psychiatric files. There was Howard Hunt the proud father of an achieving woman and there was Howard Hunt as dogged womanizer. And there was Howard Hunt the professional criminal who logically pointed out the oddity of being prosecuted for doing the work he had been trained for. It was even odder, after all, to be prosecuted by the state which had not only trained him but also paid him for work it would later call illegal.

Surely it means something that a man chooses a life with seven pseudonyms. Howard Hunt has led a manic life trying on new selves like a little girl trying on her mother's shoes. At fifty-five, he has still not chosen his self. ■

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