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*An exclusive interview with  
the CIA superspy who  
engineered both the  
Bay of Pigs and Watergate.*



Howard Hunt is certainly the most famous, if not the most successful, agent in the twenty-five-year history of the CIA. He is also a prolific author, having published more than forty novels under various pseudonyms since his first book, *East of Farewell*, in 1942. He was twenty-four years old at the time, and he had just been discharged from the Navy. Reenlisting in the Army Air Corps the next year, he joined the Office of Strategic Services—the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA—and thereby embarked on a career as a spy that was to take him to far-flung places over the next quarter-century, a career that culminated in his arrest for masterminding the Watergate break-in in 1972.

The CIA's image as the exotic but essential protector of American democracy has lately been eroded by revelations of massive illegal spying on American citizens, and also by charges that it is a law unto itself, cloaked and daggered with secrecy, intrigue and murder—charges that include the often repeated rumor that the agency even had a hand in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. But in the Cold War deep-freeze, in the years immediately following World War II, the CIA was a useful refuge for superpatriots like E. Howard Hunt, to whom the Red Menace and the Yellow Peril seemed both frightful and imminent. In that atmosphere, virtually anyone to the left of Joe McCarthy was suspect as a pinko dupe.

In the early 1950's, Hunt began his CIA career as an operative in Mexico, where he befriended a young recruit who was later to become both his ideological mentor and the godfather of several of his children—William F. Buckley, Jr. In 1954, Hunt had his first taste of the CIA nitty-gritty when he helped overthrow the freely elected government of President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala. At about the same time Fidel Castro, a young Cuban lawyer, was organizing his band of guerrillas in the Sierra Maestra mountains, and within a few years he had deposed the Batista regime.

Hunt was moved from his post in the American embassy in Montevideo, Uruguay—where he had been photographed proudly pumping Eisenhower's hand on the president's official visit—to Miami, to begin organizing the colony of anti-Castro expatriates, the *gusanos*, for an attempt to overthrow Castro. For two years, Hunt worked feverishly in Florida and at the CIA operations base in Guatemala to prepare for the landing in the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

"It was the hardest thing I ever had to do," he told *Penthouse* interviewer Ken Kelley. "The great strengths and the great weaknesses of the Latin people were on hourly display."

Hunt was embittered by President Kennedy's refusal to commit air support to the Bay of Pigs mercenaries, and when the popular uprising of the Cuban people, which he had predicted, failed to materialize, Hunt's dream of becoming the Bolívar of Cuba was shattered. All was not in vain, however, for Hunt became very close friends with many Cubans; and a decade later, when he and G. Gordon Liddy were charged with the task of recruiting a spy/burglar team for break-ins at Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office and Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate, Hunt chose four

of his Cuban friends to work with him.

The Watergate operation, of course, was as big a disaster as the Bay of Pigs. Some of the story is now well known: As the payment for his early silence in jail, Hunt was promised "hush money" by Richard Nixon through the White House frontmen, and Hunt's wife Dorothy, who acted as his agent, was killed in a plane crash near Chicago in December 1972. Her body was found with \$10,000 in her purse. Some "experts" on Watergate have claimed that sabotage was involved. But Hunt doesn't think so, though he is suing the airline for negligence.

Hunt also has a spate of other lawsuits on his hands, including a recent one he brought against the *National Tattler* for printing pictures purporting to show him in Dallas on November 22, 1963. He denies being in Dallas at the time and professes outrage that anyone should think he was involved in the assassination of John Kennedy. He also denies having anything to do with the attempted assassination of Alabama Governor George Wallace, although he doubts that Arthur Bremer acted alone.

An interesting historical footnote was revealed to *Penthouse* in this interview. Hunt had originally demanded \$132,000 as payment for his silence; and Fred LaRue, the White House emissary, was authorized by President Nixon through John Dean to pay the entire sum in cash. For some reason, according to Hunt, LaRue only delivered \$75,000. When he then had to come back to Dean for a further authorization—as Hunt would not accept the smaller sum—Dean presumed that Hunt was trying to blackmail the White House for more money, unaware that LaRue had simply been short-changing the original authorization. Dean then went to the prosecutors with his information. And therein, as Hunt told interviewer Kelley, "lay the seeds of the falling apart."

Hunt freely admits his knowledge and involvement in CIA domestic operations—illegal under the CIA's charter from Congress. He maintains that he objected to the CIA's funding of the National Student Association, and that there was "a serious fraud against the American people because contributions were being solicited by the Advertising Council on behalf of Radio Free Europe, which was simply a funding cover."

His latest book, *Undercover* (Putnam), contains by his own admission an outright lie in at least one crucial passage, a fact that emerged in last year's Watergate cover-up trial. Later editions of the book have deleted the passage.

As this interview reveals, E. Howard Hunt is a beaten man, bereft of most of his old friends, a widower who sees himself as despised by many of his fellow citizens. He blames the media—in much the same way the convicted felon and former vice president, Spiro Agnew, does—for many of his troubles.

He plans to forsake America permanently for Italy once his legal problems permit him to do so. "I'll leave others to face the problem of getting America going again," he says. "The people I put my trust in did not come through."

**Penthouse:** Your latest book, *Undercover*, opens with a quote from Tacitus: "A man may defend himself from all enemies, save those who are resolved that such a man as he should not exist." Who did you mean?

**Hunt:** Well, I was thinking of journalistic enemies particularly, and certainly of some political people too. Given the fact that I'm not a very popular figure in America—and I recognize this—I don't even want to fight the situation. Nevertheless, when I see these repetitive allusions to the death of my wife as having somehow been caused by myself, by the CIA, by the Watergate people, or by some unnamed assassins; when I see my name continually linked to that of Arthur Bremer, the man who is in jail for crippling Governor Wallace; and when I see stories appearing both in this country and abroad about the possible role I may have had in the assassination of John Kennedy—then I think

that enough really is enough.

I've served eleven months in prison, and I may serve more. I've lost my wife, and I've certainly lost the way of life I knew and enjoyed and was dedicated to for many, many years. I've been humiliated, ridiculed—and lost a lot of what I now realize were only so-called friends. And I wonder, really, what further price I have to pay. If they want to see my blood running in the gutter, I'm sure that can be achieved too.

I think that the humanists, or so-called humanists, in the journalistic community have been pretty intolerable in my case, and I'd hoped that with my jailing these personal attacks would cease. For example, when my book, *The Berlin Ending*, was published a little over a year ago, it was a rare reviewer indeed who decided to review the book and not me. They seemed incensed that Howard Hunt of Watergate should be capable of

writing two consecutive words.

**Penthouse:** You mentioned the press speculation that you were somehow involved in the Kennedy assassination and the attempted assassination of George Wallace. Is it true that you were in charge of the CIA station in Mexico City when Lee Harvey Oswald visited there in September 1963?

**Hunt:** Untrue. I wasn't even in Mexico during that entire year. This is the type of unsubstantiated rumor that really does damage. These things make me very concerned—who knows how many more Jack Rubys are walking around? Moreover, there are certainly plenty of pro-Kennedy people around . . . a great many admirers of Governor Wallace, too. And the more I'm linked to these things in a totally irresponsible way, the more danger I run. And my children, too. I'm very unhappy about it.

**Penthouse:** You must be aware of the pic-



ture that allegedly shows you and Frank Sturgis, one of the Watergate burglars, being collared by the Dallas police in 1963.

**Hunt:** No, I've never seen that one. The one I'm familiar with is the one that appeared in the *National Tattler*—for which I've sued them. I didn't know Sturgis until '71 or '72.

**Penthouse:** Well, just for the record, if you weren't in Dallas, then where were you November 22, 1963?

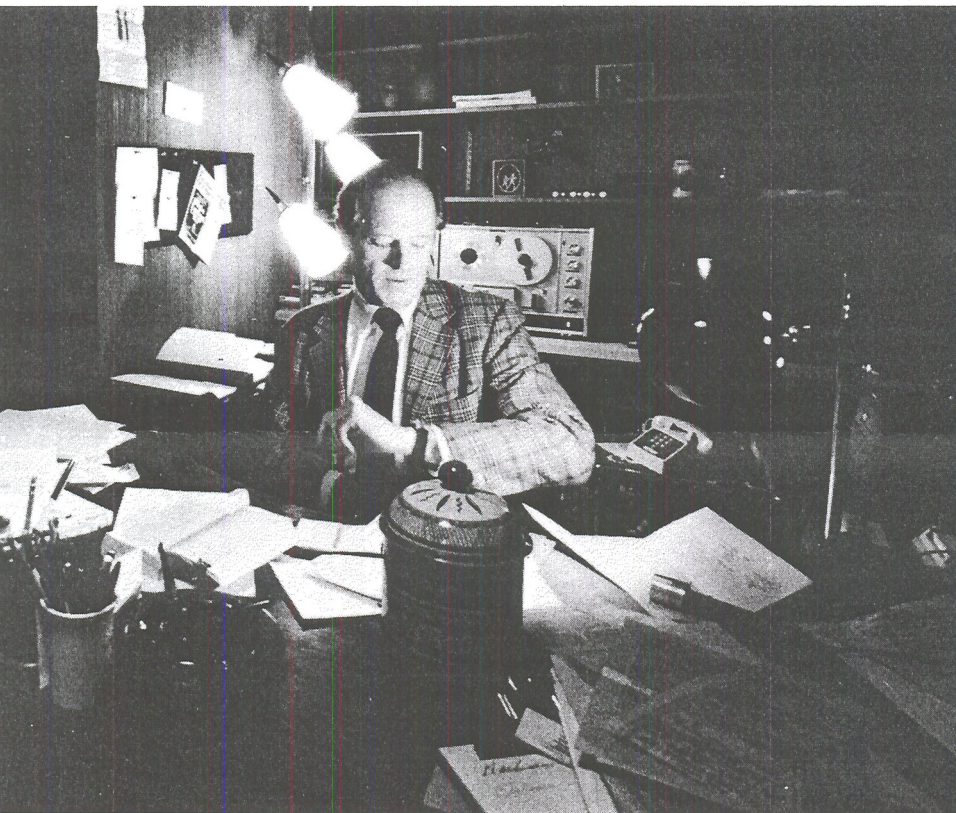
**Hunt:** In D.C. with my wife and children. We were buying Chinese groceries when the word came over. Interestingly enough, this Dallas story has had sufficient impetus that the Director of the FBI, Clarence Kelley, asked my attorney if I would submit to a voluntary interview on the subject. And I welcomed the opportunity to do so—to provide the names of witnesses and so forth. Then, a week later, I was interviewed about

spiracy involved in the Bremer attempt?

**Hunt:** Well, I'm not much of a fan of conspiracy theories, but I do wonder about Arthur Bremer's life and his movements just prior to the attempt on Governor Wallace. As I recall, he had been making frequent trips to Canada, and I've never heard that these were followed up. Why did he go to Canada? Who did he see there? Who paid for his trips? I don't think these facts have ever surfaced.

**Penthouse:** It seems a little strange that Bremer, who was virtually illiterate, could write such exacting accounts of his travels. It has been said that someone else—perhaps even you—must have written the diary.

**Hunt:** I think that Gore Vidal made that suggestion. I've never read Arthur Bremer's diary, but I've seen photographs of pages in magazines and I never paid much attention



the Bremer affair. So again I come back to the quote from Tacitus—there's just no end to the harassment.

**Penthouse:** Did you go to Milwaukee after the Bremer shooting?

**Hunt:** No, I never went to Milwaukee.

**Penthouse:** But you were asked to go to Milwaukee by White House Counsel Chuck Colson?

**Hunt:** Yes, but I didn't go.

**Penthouse:** Why not?

**Hunt:** Well, I didn't want to go because the FBI had been stamping around there for about twenty-four hours, the place was sealed off, and I couldn't see any reason to go. I resisted it. I went home and dallied over the packing—I wish now I'd done that with Watergate too, but I didn't—and after a while Colson's office called and said it wouldn't be necessary to go.

**Penthouse:** Do you think there was a con-

spiracy to it. But I *do* pay attention to allegations that link me to him and other people.

**Penthouse:** Do you have any theories about John Kennedy's assassination?

**Hunt:** I don't have any theories about that. I know that there are people restlessly shifting the ashes—committees, commissions, and self-appointed investigators, much the same sort of thing that's going on in the case of my wife's death—despite the fact that competent government authorities made a certain pronouncement. Some people will never be satisfied, regardless of what evidence you present them with, unless the evidence conforms with their preformed theories.

**Penthouse:** Obviously, you don't regard the death of your wife as part of a conspiracy.

**Hunt:** No, absolutely not. That crash was investigated by the FBI, by the FAA, and by the National Safety Transportation Board. Of

course, I am now in litigation against the air carrier, but my wife was not the only one who perished. I think there were forty-four or forty-five other people who were also killed. If there really was foul play, and there's never been any serious suggestion of that, I would be the one most interested to make such a determination. I would want to find out about it myself. And certainly the families and survivors of the other forty-odd people would also want to. . . . If my wife had been the only one killed, well, that might be one thing; but where you have a major disaster with over forty victims, it seems just ridiculous to me that people could maintain there had been foul play. Sensible people don't, really. There are some cranks who are making a living out of this—and I very much resent their work, because it keeps the wound open for my children and for myself. It's very painful, and I'm invariably asked about it wherever I go.

**Penthouse:** About the \$10,000 that was in her possession at the time. . . .

**Hunt:** Do you really want me to go into that? It was for investment for a management company that owned two Holiday Inns. The major stockholder was her cousin's husband. He's testified to that, given depositions. He's been constantly harassed. . . . the poor guy.

**Penthouse:** Is it true that you engineered plans to assassinate Fidel Castro both before and after the Bay of Pigs invasion?

**Hunt:** Only before. I didn't want to engineer the plan—it was just something where I said, this is one of my recommendations. But I think in hindsight that it was a good recommendation, because without Fidel Castro nobody could have rallied the Cuban troops after the landing. That was a suggestion I made well prior to the invasion—a year prior. But, as far as I know, nothing was ever done with it. I had nothing further to do with Cuban affairs after the Bay of Pigs.

**Penthouse:** Can you, on principle, oppose the assassination of John Kennedy while supporting the assassination of another national leader?

**Hunt:** Sure—just as I can approve the assassination of Adolf Hitler or General Tojo.

**Penthouse:** Is Castro in the same category?

**Hunt:** Oh, yes! But at the same time, I'm shocked and horrified—stunned—that not just foreign enemies but domestic enemies also attempt—and in the case of John Kennedy succeed—in assassinating our leaders. Don't forget there were a bunch of wild-eyed, wild-assed Puerto Rican nationalists that shot up Congress and tried to kill Harry Truman.

**Penthouse:** Were American businessmen contributing to the overthrow of Castro?

**Hunt:** They were both supporting him and, at the same time, supporting his enemies. When Castro was still in the Sierra Maestra, contributions were made to him by Cuban and American businessmen who were concerned that if he did take over he would make their lives more difficult. I think the Bacardi interests were among the most prominent. They were playing both sides, which is a typical ploy in any political situa-

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tion. We certainly see it here in this country, where corporations and individuals contribute to both parties, and of course there were some American firms and businessmen that were contributing to one or more of these 140 political fragmentations in Havana. But the principal money for the Bay of Pigs came from the U.S. government.

**Penthouse:** Did you approve of all the CIA operations when you were an agent?

**Hunt:** No, there were a lot of things I objected to. I objected to the CIA's support of the National Student Association.

**Penthouse:** Did you know about that before it was public?

**Hunt:** Christ, yes—for ten years! I thought it

such prolonged absences as when I was involved in the Guatemalan coup. Or explaining why I was living alone in Florida, while my family was in Washington, during the Bay of Pigs affair—why I had taken them down to Mexico, resettled them down there, got them started in school, and then two months later pulled up and come back. This was the hardest part, but maintaining a false identity isn't hard when your backstops are authentic-appearing documents. Although I suppose most people think that's a hard thing to do, it's not. It becomes a way of life.

**Penthouse:** Would you want your sons to work for the CIA?

**Hunt:** Not today's CIA. There isn't much future in being in the clandestine business anymore; there's a lack of opportunity because national policy has changed. I don't see any future in the covert arm right now.

debased. I believe it was Justice Holmes who said that no man has a right to shout fire in a crowded theater. Well, that's basically how I feel about the preservation of secrets. We've had examples very recently of members of Congress who in the performance of their committee duties have come by classified information, and who have taken it upon themselves to reveal this information to the press. This is wrong.

**Penthouse:** One deleted quote from the Marchetti book later came to light. Henry Kissinger is talking about Chile and he says, "I don't see why we have to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people." Do you agree with that philosophy?

**Hunt:** I associate myself with that philosophy. I always have. In fact, the *United States* has always associated itself with it. Since the days of President Monroe that has been a cornerstone of our foreign policy. When I was in prison, I received a great number of letters from Guatemalans who, as a result of government revelations, had become aware that I had been involved in the Arbenz ouster. They wrote from Guatemala and other parts of Latin America to thank me.

**Penthouse:** Are you proud of your role in Guatemala?

**Hunt:** Well, I don't beat my breast about it. I had a job to do, under the Eisenhower administration. I guess pride is a subjective thing—I never think of being proud of a particular operation.

**Penthouse:** Is it moral to oppose a democratically elected government through covert actions such as those conducted by the CIA in Chile?

**Hunt:** I'm not much of a moralist—I'm more of a pragmatist. The posture of our government over the years—and we can go back to the days of Teddy Roosevelt's gunboat diplomacy in the partition of Colombia—has been to act in its own self-interest. I think the government has no right to exist if it doesn't continue to do things in its self-interest.

**Penthouse:** Yes, but that leaves the U.S. government in constant conflict with other governments, who are doing things in *their* self-interests that are different from the self-interest of the United States.

**Hunt:** Well, I think that anyone with any degree of political sophistication would go along with that.

**Penthouse:** Then you also go along with the concept that might equals right?

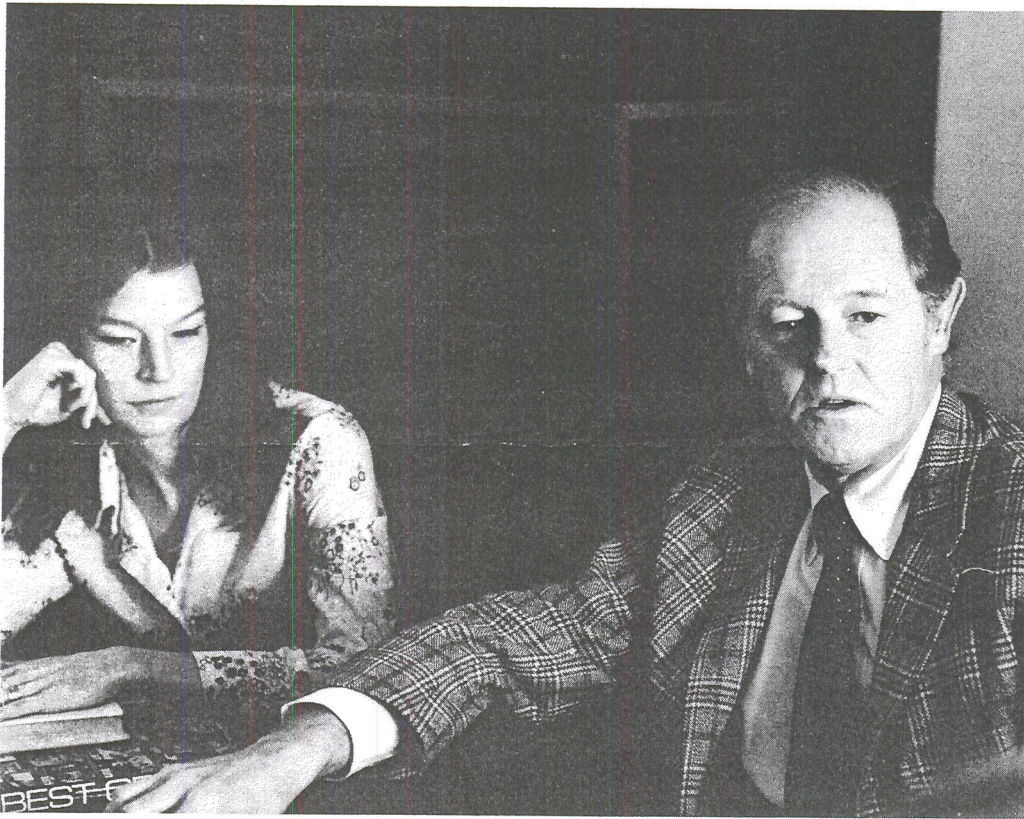
**Hunt:** The fact of the matter is that big nations, like the Soviet Union or Red China, get away with a lot of things that the small nations can't.

**Penthouse:** And the United States?

**Hunt:** Yes, but we're less successful at getting away with it. The Soviet Union and Red China get away with bloodbaths—and nobody complains. There's a good deal of international hypocrisy around today.

**Penthouse:** Were you sad to retire from the CIA?

**Hunt:** No, I was delighted to leave. I was going into promising work for which I had professional competence, work that would give me an opportunity to be almost uninter-



was a waste of money. I thought that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were a waste of time and furthermore a serious fraud against the American people, because contributions were being solicited by the Advertising Council on behalf of Radio Free Europe, which was simply a funding cover.

**Penthouse:** You first met William Buckley when you were his boss in CIA operations in Mexico in the early 1950's. Is that right?

**Hunt:** He came to work for me, but he was an agent.

**Penthouse:** Do you share Mr. Buckley's political philosophy?

**Hunt:** I wouldn't put it on so grand a scale. I would say that I'm a follower of his philosophy on most germane issues.

**Penthouse:** What was the hardest thing about being a CIA agent?

**Hunt:** Explaining to one's children one's constant departures from one's post—and

**Penthouse:** Did you read Victor Marchetti's book on the CIA?

**Hunt:** No, I was shown passages from it in galleys, but that was before a good deal of material was restored to it.

**Penthouse:** Do you agree with the right of the CIA to cut certain portions for "national security reasons"?

**Hunt:** In principle, yes. I agree with the concept of the National Secrets Act, which the CIA is drafting and which will probably never be passed.

**Penthouse:** You are a strict constitutionalist—a believer in the American Constitution. The First Amendment says that Congress shall not abridge the freedom of the press. How do you reconcile that with the National Secrets Act?

**Hunt:** I think the right of the press to know and investigate has got to end where the national interest becomes endangered or



ruptedly with my family and to recover to some extent from the financial reverses I had suffered. I looked forward to it very much. I wasn't forced out of the CIA—I applied for retirement six months in advance and I had to get special permission from the Director to retire.

**Penthouse:** When Chuck Colson asked you to take part in the same kind of operations that you had done for the CIA, were you gladdened by the opportunity?

**Hunt:** That wasn't the upfront thing. The upfront thing was to look into the origins of the Vietnam War, the research type of thing, and it was laid on me in terms that I *had* to. I was familiar with classified documents, policy papers, State Department policy papers—that was true—and they needed someone competent to go through them. It was really the same old ball game. But then I wasn't entirely happy about moving over to the Special Investigations Unit. Every time a proposition was submitted, I would say to Liddy or someone, "Can't the FBI do this? Can't the Secret Service do that?" And then they'd come back and say, "No, they've decided it's too sensitive—the FBI can't do it."

**Penthouse:** How did you feel when you were first approached about Watergate?

**Hunt:** I thought the entries were unnecessary to begin with—but I went along with them. But when Gordon Liddy told me the second entry had to be made, I pointed out that we were getting reports from the monitor across the street, Al Baldwin, and that through James McCord that there was an outward movement of personnel and files and everything else. Our friends in Miami reported that Larry O'Brien, the Democratic Party Chairman, was actually down there. So it seemed ridiculous to me to go in and bug a man who had moved and was probably not coming back. We knew he wasn't going to continue as Chairman after the selection of a candidate had been effected. And in fact he didn't. So I would say there was a real lack of professionalism both in the concept of the Watergate entries and in the orders that were given.

**Penthouse:** If you knew what you know now, would you have done the same thing?

**Hunt:** Of course not.

**Penthouse:** What changed your mind?

**Hunt:** Well, I had assumed that we were operating under the authority of a very highly placed cabinet member and that that authority was sufficient. Certainly, in the past, no U.S. government agent has ever been tried for an entry whether it was illegal or not, and there were a great many of them over the years—organized crime usually being the target, but also foreign embassies. Also, I don't think that any of us seriously thought there would be any hesitancy about completing a rescue mission—which was actually undertaken rather halfheartedly and then abandoned altogether.

**Penthouse:** Similar to the Bay of Pigs in some respects?

**Hunt:** Yes, that's true. It has startling similarities. Our government put men ashore at the Bay of Pigs and abandoned them there to be slaughtered; then later on they were ran-

somed back for four or five million dollars. But the Watergate people haven't yet been ransomed back.

**Penthouse:** It was said that James McCord—when he wrote the famous letter to Judge Sirica that ultimately led to the unraveling of the Watergate puzzle—did so because he was unwilling to have the CIA, an organization for which he felt a great sense of loyalty, get blamed for the incident by the White House, which was attempting to do just that at the time. You obviously don't feel that way. . . .

**Hunt:** No, don't put it that way—I would object to that. I don't feel the same sense of dull loyalty to an institution that McCord may have, but I don't want you to put me in the position of saying I was prepared for a false defense to be mounted involving the CIA.

**Penthouse:** But the White House was trying



to blame it on the CIA—or at least was *considering* blaming it on the CIA.

**Hunt:** Yes, but who knew that at that time? It really didn't come out until later. It had become a matter of controversy between McCord and his lawyers, and of course their communications were secret from me. They had access to information that I didn't. I had been asked many times—before the Senate, before the House—"Do you have any reason to believe there was any CIA involvement?" And I always steadfastly said no.

**Penthouse:** Are you bitter about the CIA? About how you've been treated by the CIA since Watergate?

**Hunt:** I was a great deal more bitter in the past than I am now. I realized that I could become a nonperson very quickly and that some highly placed officials were doing all they could to distance themselves from me—affecting not to have known me at all,

or if they were forced into a position of admitting that they'd known me, then saying it was only on a casual basis.

**Penthouse:** In October 1974 you admitted to Judge Sirica that you had lied about certain things in your book, *Undercover*. How can you now expect people to believe anything in it?

**Hunt:** Well, the book's about 165,000 words long, and the statements that I have since repudiated under oath in the Watergate trial amount to probably no more than 100 words. And I wrote those words at a time last spring when I hadn't really determined to disclose certain things that I decided later on to disclose. They were totally consistent with everything that I had testified to before. And, actually, it was a personal decision, perhaps at cost to the book—who knows?—to get the truth out during the trial. I've testified how it all came out—the feeling of unease on my part, the unspoken questions of my children after their first readings of the White House transcripts. But between the time I wrote *Undercover* and the time it was published, let's say there was no forum available to me. Nobody was asking me any questions at that time. It actually wasn't until I was sworn in at the trial that I had an opportunity to tell the whole truth. As I say, there are only about 100 words in the book out of a total of 165,000 in which I was being less than candid.

**Penthouse:** Nevertheless, there are people who will say, "Well, if *he* admits he lied about *this*, then who knows what else he probably lied about?"

**Hunt:** That's true, and I expect it. They've said that about John Dean, too: "He took money that didn't belong to him; how can you believe the man?"

**Penthouse:** One of the most universally despised characters down through the ages has been the person who implicates his friends to gain his own freedom. John Dean certainly has been the object of a lot of this kind of feeling, even among people who felt that he only did what had to be done. Was there any remorse on your part at having to testify against your former bosses?

**Hunt:** Very much so, I would say. At the Watergate trial, I was indifferent, really. I didn't have much feeling one way or the other. But I was very bitter at being forced to testify at the trial of Ehrlichman and Liddy and two of my Miami friends for breaking into the office of Dr. Fielding, Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. On the other hand, I don't think my testimony did them any harm. It only substantiated that a team had been formed and that we had been authorized to go to the West Coast and effect this entry. That was really all I could testify to, but I felt that insofar as I was personally concerned it was terribly unfortunate for me to be forced to testify. Because that was the working level, the guys—hell, I brought them together! And there was Liddy, who wasn't taking the stand. Ehrlichman, a man I had met once before—well, of course, I had no feeling about him one way or the other. As it turned out, none of my work associates got more time because of my testimony, and so I'm

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able to console myself to some extent.

**Penthouse:** Did you ever consider playing mute like Liddy did?

**Hunt:** No, there was no reason to. Our paths were totally divergent from the legal point of view. Gordon had stood trial and been convicted along with McCord, and he was pinning his hopes on appeal—which has now been denied him. I could understand his silence. As for myself, I was immunized and made many appearances before the grand jury. From that time on, there was never any question in my mind that I was going to testify until Gordon separated himself. It was a traumatic time for everyone, but I understood his decision. That was his choice and I respect him for it. I don't know that he ever understood mine. He would probably be incapable of understanding John Dean's performance—except on the basis of youth, fear, and inexperience.

**Penthouse:** And saving his own scalp?

**Hunt:** Of course, we're all involved in *that* these days. But I think that as it turned out there were better men at the bottom of the pyramid than there were at the top.

**Penthouse:** You would include John Dean at the top of the pyramid?

**Hunt:** Well, he and Magruder and Mitchell helped Liddy put Gemstone together. [Gemstone was the large-scale espionage scheme against the Democrats that included the Watergate break-in.]

**Penthouse:** You come out quite strongly in your book against Richard Nixon. What first turned you against him?

**Hunt:** I think it goes back as far as April 1973, when I was in the D.C. jail with the four men from Miami. We watched with rapt attention as the president of the United States said that, yes, he had in fact organized the special investigations unit in the White House, and that in reference to the Dr. Fielding entry on the West Coast, he assumed full responsibility. We thought, quite naïvely, that this was cause for rejoicing. But nothing ever happened. Then we realized some days later that the president, while assuming *responsibility*, had neglected to assume any of the *blame*. This didn't enhance our position at all, and there was more distancing that took place then than had happened before. We felt that it lay in the president's power to get the whole thing into focus and that he didn't do it. Then, later on, when the White House tapes became available—at first piecemeal, then in a flood—I think that anyone with an open mind realized that the people in the White House were not terribly concerned with the sufferings of others. They were primarily concerned with putting the best face on their own performance.

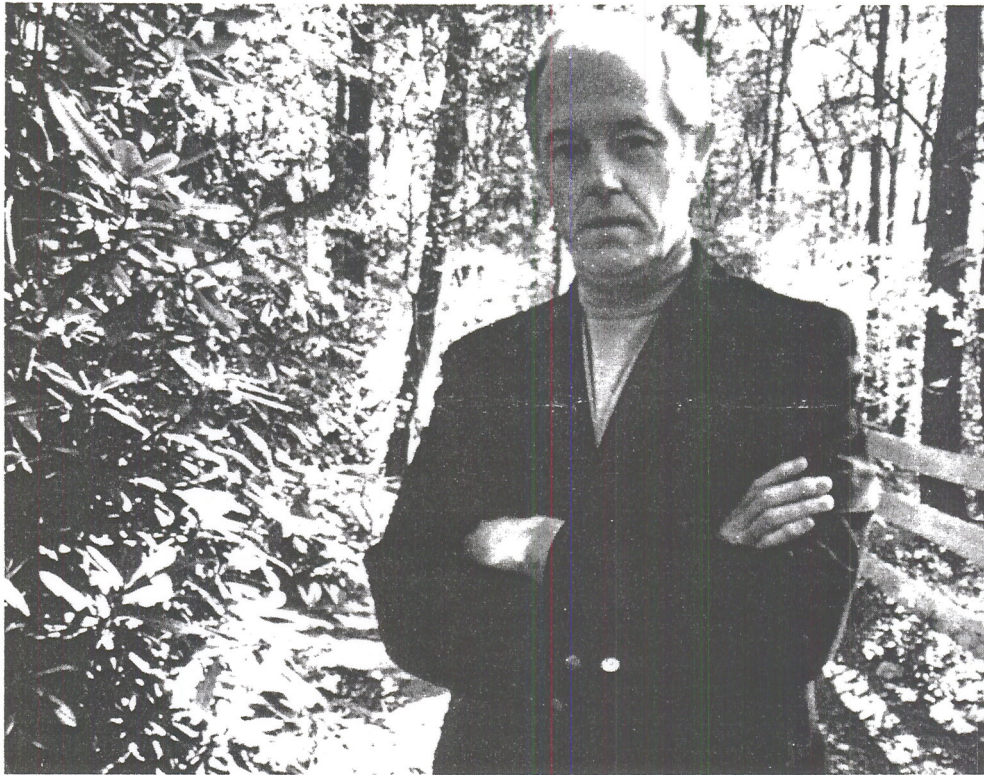
**Penthouse:** Is it true that you were trying to blackmail the White House for \$200,000 as hush money?

**Hunt:** No, and the Special Prosecutor's office agreed with me. Blackmail and extortion are attempts to obtain by pressure

something that is *not* your due. Quite to the contrary, the support money, the lawyers fees, had all been agreed to in the past—they were our due. I was exerting on behalf of myself and others what pressures I could to have our contracts kept. And bear in mind that Watergate was not our idea. We were *approached*—very much in the clandestine tradition. We were sought out specifically. My wife was appointed to serve as the channel, and our requirements were inquired about. They were translated, or "conveyed" I should say, and we were given an understanding that everything would be taken care of. Subsequently, at the House Judiciary proceedings last summer when the impeachment activities began, Mitchell's assistant, Fred LaRue—who was the most heavily involved person in the procurement and couriering of the funds—

Let's suppose that the principal had entrusted taking care of these financial matters to LaRue and/or others, and had assumed that these commitments were being kept. But LaRue kept coming back for further authorizations. Now, by this time the men who were disposing the money probably believed that all the commitments to us had been met—when in fact, from the very first delivery, there were arrears. So you had a false perception on the part of the principals that everything was being taken care of. And we, for our part, knew that they hadn't been.

This middleman, Mr. LaRue, had never told his bosses or superiors that he was shortchanging the people for whom he was responsible. This only came out very recently, and in that context I can understand how John Dean, as of late March when he was being asked for more money—not knowing



made some astonishing statements to me. He was describing how he had an emissary get in touch with my wife, and how he had provided the budget in good faith. But he said that he—and in other instances too—arbitrarily cut the sum of money. I'd like an opportunity to ask Mr. LaRue *why* he arbitrarily cut these sums. Because therein lay the seeds of the falling apart. I would look at it this way: the president is on tape saying that a sum of X dollars is needed. I think this happened about March 21 or 22. And he asks, "Is that right?" and somebody in the room says yes. Then Nixon says, "Get it." But they *didn't* get it. They got part of it. It was \$132,000 that was required at that point, and only \$75,000 was delivered. And when LaRue was asked by the House members, "How much money did you have on hand at that time?" he said \$190,000. So one wonders, *why* these false accountings?

the background and believing all along that the orders had been carried out—got panicky. Dean translated what was simply a reiterated demand into a threat of blackmail. So he got panicky. He didn't know what to do; he didn't make the correct assessment of the situation. He believed that our demands were escalating, while in fact we were still talking about the same funds that we had been talking about from the very beginning.

**Penthouse:** Why did you ever support Richard Nixon?

**Hunt:** I felt that he was probably the only game in town. He was never really embraced by conservatives, you know, but I would guess that they also felt that he was the lesser of a number of evils.

**Penthouse:** Do you think that Nixon was just an opportunist?

**Hunt:** What politician isn't an opportunist?



To single him out for one more epithet does seem just a little unfair at this point.

**Penthouse:** After Francis Gary Powers's spy plane was shot down over Russia in 1959, much was said about the fact that Powers was equipped with a suicide device to use if he was caught. What about you? Were you ever on a mission for the CIA where you were equipped with a suicide device?

**Hunt:** Not with the CIA—but with the OSS, yes. But those devices are used to avoid torture. That's not too tough a decision to make.

**Penthouse:** Was there ever any other time when you were ready to face suicide? Other than the time with the OSS?

**Hunt:** No, not in modern times—that is, not since World War II. I was never equipped with anything like that after the war.

That's unusual in itself. I was in Danbury for about seven months of my total imprisonment, and about half of the prison population there spoke Spanish. There was an overlay of white-collar criminals doing thirty days, lawyers doing sixty, and so forth. I never felt that I had any particular problems in prison. Down in the D.C. jail there was one attempt to beat me up. But other than that I thought I was well received.

**Penthouse:** What did they do to you in the D.C. jail?

**Hunt:** Well, I had been brought down from Danbury and it was a Sunday—hotter than hell, about 104 degrees. I was in a two-man cell with nobody else in it. I finally got to sleep about two o'clock in the morning. About four I heard the cell door open and close, and I was aware of somebody coming in and taking the lower bunk. Then I heard

you going to prefer charges?" And I said, "No why?" And he said, "Cause I didn't see *nothing*." So I said, "All I want is what's left here." Then I left.

**Penthouse:** When Jimmy Hoffa got out of jail, he did an awful lot of talking about prison reform.

**Hunt:** So do I. There's a basic problem to be resolved among penologists and by the Bureau of Prisons. It has to do with the purpose of incarceration. Is it to punish? Or is it to rehabilitate? This question has never been resolved satisfactorily—at least not satisfactorily in terms of the prisoner. Now we're supposed to be an advanced, progressive society. Yet we seem to insist on the medieval practice of taking a pound of flesh—flesh gushing blood. And the blood seems to come mostly from the innocent members of the family of the imprisoned man. For certain crimes—for the protection of society—incarceration is clearly the answer. Nevertheless, it seems far in excess of what the law should require to deprive a family—a wife and children—of the financial support their father could provide. And to have the children grow up with the shame of belonging to the family of a convict. For some reason I'm taking the male point of view, though I don't necessarily mean to, except that the male is usually the breadwinner. But is it proper to deny a man his sexuality because he has cheated on his income tax? Is it proper to destroy his home, to drive his dependents on welfare, to create a never-ending cycle of dependence, crime, and so on? I think these are very real questions that are faced by prisoners and by every family of every prisoner every day. And I think that a more adequate solution has got to be found. The states—much more than the federal government, I suppose because they're closer to their constituents—are trying to get men out on the streets as wage-earners, as job-holders at least.

**Penthouse:** You befriended Clifford Irving in jail?

**Hunt:** Well, we kind of flowed together.

**Penthouse:** Did you find you had a lot in common with him?

**Hunt:** Well, we had the book world in common—literary agents and that sort of thing—but he comes from a younger generation than I do. He was an avid baseball player, and I was a little old for baseball. But we got along well—he was well-liked. We used to eat together a good deal.

**Penthouse:** Have you resumed the friendship now, being out?

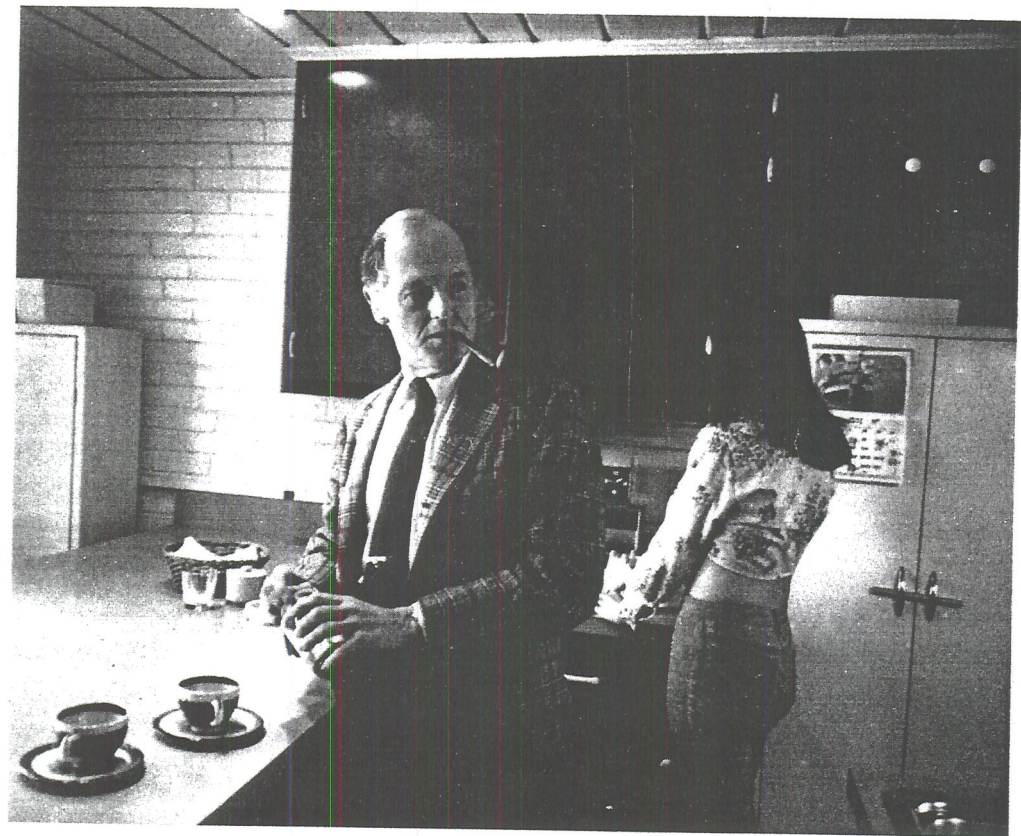
**Hunt:** By the terms of any man's parole, he can't be known to associate with known criminals.

**Penthouse:** Is it strange to be called a "known criminal"?

**Hunt:** Well, it takes a couple of years to get used to it.

**Penthouse:** What do you think of the *Rolling Stone* interview with two of your children that was done last year?

**Hunt:** I think they exploited my children at a very delicate point in their lives. And I think it shouldn't have been done. It was a cruel thing to do, and it has caused quite a bit of



**Penthouse:** You spent almost a year in jail after Watergate. What was it like?

**Hunt:** It was a brutal experience, and I may be facing still more of it. All I can say is, imprisonment, like military service, affects each man differently and he has to meet it on his own terms as best he can. *And survive.* You do this, first, by following instructions—following orders without questioning them is a very good start. And the second way to survive is to keep your nose clean and your mouth shut.

**Penthouse:** Is that the policy you followed in jail?

**Hunt:** Yes.

**Penthouse:** How did the other inmates react to you?

**Hunt:** Well, that depended on the institution. I was in ten different institutions in an eleven-month period because I was brought back to Washington so frequently to testify.

paper rustling around, the john flushing, and so forth. Well, the guard got me up soon after that to dress for court, and when I got down and began looking for my shoes and socks I couldn't find them. Then I looked for my manila envelope with my legal papers in it—couldn't find that. Couldn't find my address book; couldn't find my glasses. So I woke up this guy in the lower bunk and said, "What about this?" He said, "Well, I haven't got them." So I called the guard and said, "I think this man has taken some of my possessions." The guard prodded the guy and the fella got up . . . and he was wearing *my* socks, wearing *my* shoes. I looked over at the toilet, and there were all my papers torn up in there. And I said, "All right, get out of my shoes!" The guy swung at me and broke my other pair of glasses, the ones I was wearing. So the guard finally came into the cell and held the guy. He asked me, "Are







But I don't really think the American bloodlust against the perpetrators of Watergate, without further stimulation from the press, is going to maintain any kind of high threshold. I think that left alone, we'll just let the judicial process take place.

**Penthouse:** Five of the congressmen who were Nixon's staunchest supporters on the impeachment question were all voted out of office. There is a public concern.

**Hunt:** Sure, there's a revulsion against all aspects of Watergate. Watergate doesn't have any constituency, I'm the first to admit that. There are no fans or supporters of the Watergate five—or seven, or fifteen, or twenty-five, or however many there are—and people have suffered the loss and ruination of their careers and will continue to suffer for a long, long time.

But I think that we've got to stop talking about it. As one pundit said back in the Thirties, "Bury the dead." I think that Watergate has got to be buried. Then, in effect, our wounds must be bound up and something positive done, because this is all negative stuff.

**Penthouse:** Is it going to be harder for the CIA to operate in light of Watergate and all the more recent revelations?

**Hunt:** I don't know that it's doing much operating at all. It was set up to do things, but Congress has gone beyond the original intent of limiting CIA knowledge to a certain specified number of people. There's a revulsion today against it. Nobody ever said, "I wonder what the KGB is doing?" Well, I'll tell

you what the KGB is doing. The KGB is dancing and laughing and issuing free rations of vodka, because it's just great. They weren't responsible for the demise of the CIA—we were.

**Penthouse:** Do you think—in the light of your estimation that this country is losing more than it's winning globally—that today it's more necessary than ever to have the kind of CIA that existed twenty-five years ago?

**Hunt:** I think Bill Colby, the current director of the CIA, put it pretty well when he said that the country really shouldn't be without the means to effect an international response that isn't limited to (a) a diplomatic protest or (b) landing the Marines. The covert-action arm of CIA was intended to be just that. And it did serve successfully for many years in that capacity. And if we do away with that, what are our alternatives? Our alternatives are to accept unendingly a second- or even third-rate role in global affairs. And if nobody's afraid of the CIA anymore, then these tinhorn dictatorships will go bananas.

**Penthouse:** Do you ever stop to consider that the concept of the U.S. versus the rest of the world, in terms of power supremacy, is perhaps no longer relevant, given the developments of the last twenty years? That perhaps countries can coexist without interfering with each other? You're pretty much aware that the Cold War has largely ended in the last few years?

**Hunt:** Well, on certain levels perhaps. But I haven't heard of the KGB laying off any

workers. And certainly the Chinese Communist intelligence service hasn't. On one level the Cold War is dying—that is to say simply by our nonparticipation in it—but the objectives of our self-declared enemies remain the same.

**Penthouse:** You don't think it's possible that China and the Soviet Union are not out to conquer the world?

**Hunt:** Well, maybe not today, but I feel that that's certainly their end goal. Meanwhile, Castro, despite the pleadings of Senators Javits and Pell, has declined to prohibit the export of revolution. And you can't find any responsible Chinese or Soviet leader who will disavow armed struggle. That is the way things are in that part of the world.

**Penthouse:** The Marxist president of Chile, Salvador Allende, did disavow armed struggle, yet the CIA helped overthrow him.

**Hunt:** I'll have to confess that I'm really only an amateur on Chile. I was not in the CIA—or in any aspect of the government really—while those deliberations were going on. I wouldn't want to put myself in a corner on that.

**Penthouse:** Do you think that your stature will change over the years?

**Hunt:** I don't really know. If I'm ever freed, I'm just going to move abroad and not have any problems to face up to. My country has treated me shoddily. The people I trusted in didn't come through. And as a result I'm far less happy than I used to be. I'll leave others to face the problem of getting America going again. ☐



"Nice work, Policewoman Hendrix!"