

BACKGROUND

2-H Sunday, Feb. 4, 1973

Watergate Spurs Literary Career

WASHINGTON.
THE CLOUD OF an impending prison sentence for E. Howard Hunt Jr. in the Watergate bugging case has a solid gold lining. Hunt will now have the time and notoriety to fuel a lucrative literary career.

A compulsive writer, Hunt has turned out more than 40 books since college, and during his 21 years as a CIA agent. He is working on several now, including an expose of the Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which Hunt was a key operative.



Vera Glaser and
Malvina Stephenson

Most of Hunt's books are gripping spy thrillers, lurid with intrigue, sex, violence, and the occult. He has hedge-hopped publishers, working with at least eight well-known houses, and has been compared to the late Ian Fleming, who created superspy-lover James Bond.

None of Hunt's books were best-sellers, perhaps because he was an unknown when he wrote them. Now, having pled guilty to bugging Democratic headquarters at the Watergate, he is a household word.

His books may be scrutinized during the forthcoming Senate investigation. A member of Congress has ordered two of Hunt's oldies — "The Unfaithful" and "The Violent Ones."

Maxwell Wilkinson of New York, Hunt's longtime literary agent, said, "Howard can practically write a book overnight. He is awfully glib. That's one of his faults."

Truman Talley of Weybright & Talley, his current publisher, said, "Howard's writing convinces you he has been around the world 19 times."

He professed to be "sad" at Hunt's involvement in "a small-time bugging operation" after experience in "the real world of espionage."

Talley was shocked that the Library of Congress provided Hunt's pseudonyms, which include John Baxter, Gordon Davis, Robert Dietrich and David St. John.

Talley thought Hunt had been required by the CIA to use pseudonyms, but Hunt also published under his own name while employed by the agency.

His forthcoming book on the Bay of Pigs will be titled "Give Us This Day." In it Hunt gives his personal version of how the New Frontier diluted the Eisenhower plan to retake Cuba from Castro's Communist forces.

As the first work released under his name in several years, it will be a test of Hunt's new drawing power.

Talley said Hunt "never spoke of his espionage. One got the impression he was a competent Washington desk man."

But his books reveal a detailed knowledge of far-off places, weapons and intelligence techniques. They carry a feeling of authenticity, according to Talley.

In several recent books, Hunt's leading character is CIA agent Peter Ward, whom Talley says somewhat resembles Hunt.

In "Diabolus" published in 1971, Ward mused, "For nearly 15 years, his career had been as an agent for CIA. He had gained friends, lost others to the cold, relentless game; his wife had been murdered in his place . . ."

When Hunt tired of Ward, he created a new hero, Washington lawyer Jonathan Gault.

The book jacket of "The Coven," published in 1972, gives this sampling:

"Jonathan Gault tied it all together — a Washington office, a sports car, a warm-blooded young lady for cold winter nights. But late one evening Gault dropped by Blues Alley, not far from Capitol Hill, to hear Andree Lescaut, a black chanteuse . . . Gault quite suddenly got introduced to murder."

Wilkinson said Hunt's books have been primarily "entertainment," but that he has the capacity "to write a first-class Washington novel."

Hunt reportedly received a \$250,000 insurance settlement following the recent death of his wife in an airplane crash.

He is expected to become even richer if he capitalizes on his prolific pen and the publicity bath of the Watergate episode.



Hunt