

The Secret Life Of H. L. Hunt



Jack Anderson

THE ECCENTRIC oil billionaire, H. L. Hunt kept a tight lock during his life on a Pandora's box. When he died a few weeks ago at age 85, the lid was lifted for us.

What we found, attested to in a suppressed court document, is an incredible tale of bribery, infidelity, corruption, tax cheating, political manipulation and worse.

The charges were brought by two of the old tycoon's closest associates — his former personal assistant, John Curington, and trusted corporate aide John Brown.

Both have now been indicted for allegedly siphoning off funds from the Hunt empire. But their charges, made jointly under oath, shouldn't be dismissed without an investigation.

Haroldson Lafayette Hunt was a crusty curmudgeon, who liked to boast he was "the richest man in the world" but who had a reputation as a skinflint.

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BUT THE secret life of the oil billionaire, according to Curington and Brown, was a different story. They portray him as a big-stakes gambler who squandered money to gratify his hates.

The story was buried in the legal filings of a 1970 lawsuit. After Curington and Brown made their charges, the suit was settled and the sworn statements were withdrawn. But we have obtained copies of the suppressed material. Among the allegations are these:

- That Hunt "spent huge sums of cash" to mail out "an attack on John F. Kennedy and the Roman Catholic Church."

- That Hunt furnished cash to "a leading anti-Semitic propagandist ... with instructions for the funds to be used to create an unfavorable image for Jews."

- That the oilman "spent large sums of cash" to defeat the late Lyndon Johnson, Senators Hubert Humphrey, (Dem.-Minn.), William Fulbright, (Dem.-Ark.), and Alan Cranston, (Dem.-Calif.). The document charges Hunt's corporate funds and employees were used for political purposes.

- That Hunt cash went to Richard Nixon. This secret financing, it has been reported elsewhere, helped to put Mr. Nixon into the vice presidency in 1952.

- That Hunt once admitted he had "stolen in excess of \$8 million from himself," using Swiss bank accounts. He allegedly told the tax collectors he lost it gambling.

- That Hunt's employees were required to recruit women to travel with him, to explain away his infidelities and to straighten out a scandal involving a relative and a prominent Texas matron.

A Hunt spokesman pointed to Curington and Brown's current indictment as argument that they couldn't be trusted to tell the truth about the Hunts. The spokesman contended their accusations were untrue and should be classified as "smut."

Today's column is by Jack Anderson and Les Whitten.