

# Aides to Nixon, Hughes Plotted

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For a few months early last year, the Watergate-conspiracy world of E. Howard Hunt Jr. and the business-intrigue world of billionaire recluse Howard Hughes converged in a plan designed to help President Nixon's re-election chances and Hughes' financial interests.

The plan involved no fancy, high-level wheeling and dealing, but rather a burglary of the office safe of Las Vegas publisher Herman M. (Hank) Greenspun.

Hunt told the Senate select Watergate committee yesterday that he and G. Gordon Liddy both plotted with a representative of Hughes' financial empire early last year to break into Greenspun's office at the Las Vegas Sun and loot his safe of documents believed to be in Greenspun's possession.

Liddy and ex-CIA agent Hunt, both convicted in January for the break-in and bugging of Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate, hoped to find information that would be politically damaging to Sen. Edmund Muskie (D-Maine), Hunt said.

Muskie at the time was the front runner for the Democratic presidential nomination and was widely regarded as the biggest threat to Mr. Nixon's re-election chances. Rumor had it that Greenspun had damaging material on Muskie, Hunt said.

Hughes at the time was (and still is) the defendant in a libel suit brought by his former corporate aide, Robert Maheu, and it had been widely reported that Greenspun also had memos exchanged by Hughes and Maheu.

After the first of two meetings with Hughes' security chief Ralph Winte, it was decided there was a "commonality" of interest in burglarizing Greenspun's safe, Hunt said. Later, he and Liddy met with Winte in Los Angeles to discuss the break-in plan further. (Winte refused to comment on the testimony, referring all calls to a spokesman for the Hughes company.)

## Joint Las Vegas Burglary

Hunt said the burglary was never carried out but, if it had been, he and his superiors would have kept what interested them, and Hughes' people would have kept what was helpful to them.

What exactly was in Greenspun's safe?

Greenspun himself refuses to say, but there are

clues and hints from news articles that have appeared in his paper, and in the columns of his friend, syndicated columnist Jack Anderson. Greenspun will not say how he obtained the memos, but it is widely suspected in the Hughes camp that Maheu gave them to him.

All Greenspun will say about the documents in his possession is that he has nothing damaging on Muskie. The only document pertaining to Muskie tells of Muskie's arrest in 1965 for a minor hunting violation, Greenspun said in a recent telephone interview with The Washington Post.

In some of the articles by Greenspun and Anderson relating to the Hughes' interest, the names of President Nixon, his brother, F. Donald Nixon, and his closest confidant, Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo, have surfaced.

For example, Anderson printed columns in 1971 and early 1972 that stated that:

- A \$100,000 payment passed from a Hughes' lieutenant, Richard Danner, operator of Hughes' Silver Slipper gambling casino in Las Vegas, to Rebozo in 1968.

- Hughes hoped to heavily underwrite Mr. Nixon's 1968 campaign in an effort to put the President in Hughes debt for future favors.

- The White House was unhappy with Donald Nixon's close association with Hughes' aide John H. Meier, and Rebozo once intervened to tell the Hughes firm to keep Meier away from Donald Nixon.

Hunt did not say yesterday if there was any interest in obtaining possible documents in connection with the above allegations.

Meier was eventually fired by Hughes, and it was recently reported by The Washington Post that the Secret Service, at the direction of President Nixon, had wiretapped the telephone of his brother Donald because, according to informed sources, he feared embarrassment from Donald Nixon's involvement with the Hughes empire and other businesses. The White House later stated that such surveillance was maintained on the President's "immediate family" by the Secret Service as a security precaution.

Meier was indicted by a federal grand jury in Reno last month on income tax evasion charges growing out of an investigation of the sale of Nevada mining claims to Hughes. Four

other persons also have been indicted in the case, and an Internal Revenue Service source said more indictments are expected.

The Greenspun burglary plan had been touched on only briefly in earlier testimony before the Senate Watergate committee by Watergate conspirator James W. McCord Jr. and former deputy Nixon campaign manager, Jeb Stuart Magruder. Hunt's testimony yesterday was the first sworn, public statement on the matter by a principal in the plan.

Hunt testified yesterday that he had been told by his former business associate, Robert F. Bennett, that Bennett had heard a rumor that



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Sen. Howard H. Baker Jr., left, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., center, and counsel Samuel Dash at hearing yesterday

Greenspun's safe contained information that was potentially damaging to Muskie.

Hunt, in an earlier interview with the Senate committee staff, indicated that Liddy was in charge of the Greenspun burglary plan and said he believed Liddy was taking his orders from then-U.S. Attorney General John N. Mitchell and then deputy Nixon campaign manager, Jeb Stuart Magruder.

Las Vegas publisher Greenspun said in a recent telephone interview that he thought the Nixon aides were concerned about information he had because of the news articles using the Hughes' memos, as well as conversations he said he had in late 1971 with Herbert G. Klein, then the President's director of communications, and Herbert W. Kalmbach, the President's personal attorney.

Greenspun said he talked to Klein after a Klein speech in Portland, Oregon, in September, 1971. "I asked him (Klein) about a large contribution in cash by the Hughes' interests here (Las Vegas) or the supposed agents of Hughes," Greenspun said. "He (Klein) said he didn't know about it, but he would ask about it."

Greenspun said he was called a short time later by Herbert W. Kalmbach, the President's personal attorney who had handled the acquisition of the Western White House property at San Clemente, Calif., for Mr. Nixon. Kalmbach then came to Las Vegas to see Greenspun.

"I asked Herb (Kalmbach) whether this (Hughes)

money went to purchase a certain place (the San Clemente property) in California," Greenspun said. "He denied it emphatically. He said the books on that are

open and he assured me that no campaign money went into it."

Kalmbach's attorney, James O'Connor, confirmed in a recent telephone interview that Kalmbach assured Greenspun in late 1971 that no campaign funds were used to purchase the San Clemente property.

Kalmbach, a key fundraiser in the 1968 and 1972 Nixon campaigns, was entrusted with almost \$2 million in leftover campaign funds after the 1968 campaign. O'Connor said that Kalmbach has not been asked by any investigator "and probably doesn't know what happened to the \$100,000" from Danner.

Klein, in a recent telephone interview, said he recalled having "a brief conversation" with Greenspun in Portland, Ore., in late 1971 but "what we discussed, I don't recall. I certainly don't recall any discussion of Howard Hughes or Donald Nixon." Klein said he re-

called hearing that Kalm-  
bach later visited Green-  
spun, "but what the subject  
was, or how they got to-  
gether, I don't recall."

Greenspun says he never  
learned what happened to  
the purported \$100,000 from  
Danner, the Silver Slipper  
operator.

"The \$100,000 went from  
the cage of the Silver Slip-  
per to Rebozo," Greenspun  
said. "What happened to it  
after that, I don't know."

The Silver Slipper is a  
Las Vegas gambling casino  
personally owned, rather  
than corporately owned, by  
Hughes. Syndicated colum-  
nist Jack Anderson, who first  
reported on the alleged  
Hughes' donation on Aug. 6,  
1971, wrote that the money  
did not pass through  
Hughes' corporate books.

Hughes, who is on record  
as contributing \$100,000 to  
the Nixon campaign in 1972,  
was not required under the  
law in existence in 1968 to  
have any payments publicly  
reported. (Danner was  
called a half-dozen times by  
The Post and did not return  
the calls. Rebozo could not  
be located.)

Greenspun said he feels  
his late 1971 conversations

with Klein and Kalmbach  
may have tipped off the  
White House that he might  
have information that could  
be potentially embarrassing  
politically to President  
Nixon. He said his office  
was, in fact, broken into in  
the spring or summer of  
1972 and an unsuccessful at-  
tempt was made to forcibly  
enter his safe. He said he  
does not know who the bur-  
glars were.

According to Hughes'  
spokesman Richard Hannah,  
the Hughes' memos be-  
gan surfacing around Las Vegas  
after Robert Maheu's ouster  
as operator of all of Hughes'  
Las Vegas gambling  
enterprises in late 1970.  
Upon leaving his office, Ma-  
heu reportedly removed  
hundreds of memos, most of  
them in Hughes' own hand-  
writing.

Copies of some of Hughes'  
memos have found their  
way to Washington.

The Post obtained copies  
of three memos from Benja-  
min F. Schemmer and  
viewed copies of several  
other memos in Schemmer's  
possession. Schemmer, edi-  
tor of the Armed Forces  
Journal here in Washington  
and a leading authority on  
Hughes, says the memos are  
authentic.

One of the memos ob-  
tained by the Post, hand-  
written sometime in March,  
1968, purportedly by Hughes  
to Maheu, details Hughes'  
concern over increasing crit-  
icism of his acquisition of  
casinos in Las Vegas. It  
speaks of having Maheu "go  
to see Nixon as my special  
confidential emissary. I feel  
there is a really valid possi-  
bility of a Republican victo-  
ry this year. If that could  
be realized under our spon-  
sorship and supervision ev-  
ery inch of the way, then we  
would be ready to follow  
with Laxalt as our next can-  
didate." (Laxalt is Paul Lax-  
alt, who was then the gover-  
nor of Nevada.)

The memo goes on to say  
that "I agree we can win  
this hassle" over acquiring  
another casino on the Las  
Vegas strip, but suggests  
proceeding cautiously.

At the time, Hughes was  
planning to purchase the  
Stardust, a hotel-casino on  
the Las Vegas strip. The  
Justice Department blocked  
the transaction in June,  
1968. Memos viewed by the  
Post show that Hughes was  
seriously concerned at the  
time, not only with the anti-  
trust action against him, but  
with his effort to try to end  
atomic testing in Nevada.

The prohibition against  
Hughes acquiring additional  
Las Vegas casinos was later

lifted to permit him to ac-  
quire the Landmark, a  
building that had been built  
by someone else but never  
opened. The acquisition was  
authorized by the Justice  
Department in the waning  
days of the Johnson admin-  
istration. Hughes has ac-  
quired no other Las Vegas  
casinos since then, leaving  
him with five casino hotels  
and one casino in that city.

It is not clear from the  
memos if Hughes ever made  
up his mind on which candi-  
date to support for Presi-  
dent in 1968, but the memos  
indicate he was out to back  
most heavily the candidate  
who would best help him  
with his antitrust and  
atomic testing problems. In  
one memo, dated April 17,  
1968, Hughes writes Maheu:

"I am sort of anxious to  
know whom we are going to  
support for President and  
how much, because I believe  
these others you mention  
should bear some relation-  
ship to our contribution to-  
ward the White House candi-  
date."

It was memos of this type  
that Greenspun had stated  
publicly he had in his safe.  
Rumors concerning Green-  
spun's memos led to the for-  
mulation of the break-in  
plan at Greenspun's office,  
Robert F. Bennett told The  
Post last week.

Bennett, president of the  
Robert R. Mullen Co., a  
Washington public relations  
firm that handles an ac-  
count for Hughes' interests,  
worked with Hunt, who had  
been a vice president and  
then a consultant at the  
Mullen firm.

Bennett told The Post  
that Hunt, while serving as  
both a consultant to the  
White House and to the  
Mullen firm, mentioned in  
late 1971 or early 1972 the  
possibility of breaking into  
Greenspun's safe.

Bennett said Hunt told  
him that Greenspun had  
"said to a friend, 'don't  
worry about Muskie, I've got  
enough in my safe on him to  
blow him out of the water.' I  
asked him, 'Howard, who is  
your source?' He said 'all I  
can say is that the source of  
my information is so high, I  
can only assume the inform-  
ation is from a wiretap.'  
When I heard that, I knew  
that the FBI was authorized  
to wiretap by the Justice  
Department and my reac-  
tion was that this had come  
from (then Attorney John)  
Mitchell."

Bennett said, "It seemed  
logical they would be wire-  
tapping Greenspun because  
after all he is a convicted  
felon." (Greenspun was con-  
victed in 1950 of illegally  
sending arms to Israel.)