

3 February 1974

First and immediate reaction is to the selection of the surname of the hero, Gault. The exceptional rather than the usual spelling is typical Hunt, and if selection of this name represents what we all feel is his fondness for and emphasis on names, it could point toward some relationship with another case in which this name was selected. Without going back and reviewing all the rather mixed up details of that other case it would be dangerous to generalize further. It may be interesting that the copyright date on the original hardcover of The Coven is supposed to have been 1967, before the other case came along.

In many respects Senator Vare appears to represent a synthesis of JFK and EMK, but there are several differences, such as Sen. Vare's pale complexion and his habit of flying his own plane. On the whole, however, Vare is so vaguely delineated that he really doesn't come alive. On the other hand, Cathy Vare appears to be copied pretty much from Jackie, with elements of Joan (blonde) thrown in along with hints of Pat Lawford and/or Eunice Shriver (tallness, arrogance). Poor Ethel seems to have been neglected. Cathy pushes no one into any swimming pool, and Cathy's three children match the three Jackie had rather than the nine or so Ethel produced (I've lost count).

It seems to me that if the Kennedy family is targeted in the book, it's in the sense of being intimately tied up with hippies, junkies, the youth revolution in general and even with witchcraft -- in other words, with all that is evil and anti-establishment. You can't trust a liberal, no matter how rich he is.

I'm unable to get much more from the book, however, because of the skimpy motivation of most of the characters, the slap-dash stringing together of various episodes, and the abysmally corny writing. Perhaps my chief impression is that for some reason Hunt seems to have been determined to write a book based on witchcraft. This could be important, depending on how he acquired or had to acquire his knowledge of it. He may just have been fascinated with a whole new realm of colorful detail with which to background another of his fantasies, but for some reason one is left with the impression that there somehow was more to it than that. If the 1967 date for the original copyright is correct, it's interesting that Chappaquiddick didn't come along until July, 1969.

jdw

HW:

Agree with JL's speculation that Hunt and Shaw had considerable opportunity to have known each other for reasons which need no elaboration here.

As to his speculation that Hunt may have done his OSS stint in China with the Tai Li assassination seminar in Chungking, agree it's quite possible. But that's assuming Hunt ever was in China. In spite of his noting his CBI service in Who's Who, there's no objective evidence he ever was inside China for any length of time. In none of his writings that I've seen does he use a single bit of Chinese color or background detail, which would be pretty abstemious for a writer like Hunt.

Also re Tai Li, apparently no question he was the CIA's boy, but does JL know that Tai himself may have been assassinated. Sometime after the end of the war, I think during the Nanking-Communist negotiations under ~~Marshall~~ Marshall, Tai was killed in a mysterious plane crash in the general area of Sianfu. I've always had a sneaking feeling that he may have been working up to a deal with Mao and Chou just as the "Young