

A Theory on the Watergate Mystery



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SENATE investigators have come up with a theory which may explain the greatest Watergate mystery of them all. Why did the White House burglars take such foolish risks to burglarize and bug the offices of a Democratic party factotum like Larry O'Brien?

The investigators think they know the answer. The key to the puzzle, they now feel sure was the celebrated \$205,000 which billionaire industrialist Howard Hughes loaned to President Nixon's brother Don on Dec. 10, 1956.

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WE LEARNED about this curious transaction in 1960. Our disclosure coincided with Richard Nixon's first campaign for the presidency. He complained afterward that the loan story had helped to defeat him.

After his political comeback and triumphant takeover of the White House, Mr. Nixon remained so sensitive about Howard Hughes that he had his own brother bugged and followed in 1969. Don Nixon, an amiable but bumbling wheeler-dealer, was consorting too openly with Hughes aides John Meier and Tony Hatsis.

Yet at the same time, in the deepest secrecy, the President's bosom friend Bebe Rebozo was arranging to receive a \$100,000 cash contribution from Hughes.

We dug out and published the story of the secret \$100,000 gift on Aug. 6, 1971. Our story, according to Senate investigators, caused panic inside the White House.

We were marked for investigation by undercovermen G. Gordon Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, who had started operating a month earlier out of a command post in Room 16 of the basement of a White House annex known as the Executive Office Building.

Meanwhile, Las Vegas publisher Hank Greenspun in September, 1971, mentioned to White House aide Herb Klein that the \$100,000 Hughes gift "may have later been used in the purchase of San Clemente."

In a confidential memo, the Senate investigators note that the White House first learned of Don Nixon's new involvement with the Hughes organization "from a sensitive case report" about the tax problems of Johnny Meier and Tony Hatsis. The Internal Revenue Service wanted to interview Donald Nixon about his connection with the Hughes aides.

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THE SAME sensitive report also disclosed that a tax audit of Larry O'Brien had uncovered a close relationship with the Hughes organization.

The Senate investigators now believe the White House was highly alarmed over the possibility that O'Brien, through his relationship with the Hughes crowd, might get for the Democrats confirmation of our story about the delivery of \$100,000 in cash for the President.

It was to cover up the Hughes-Nixon connection, the investigators strongly believe, that the Watergate crimes were conceived.