

29 January 1985

HUNT
JEFF HARDY
MIAMI

E. Howard Hunt said in federal court Tuesday he regretted organizing the Watergate burglary and denied meeting a woman a defense lawyer claims will link him to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Hunt spent most of the second day of his libel suit against the right-wing tabloid The Spotlight being cross-examined by defense lawyer Mark Lane.

Hunt is suing the Washington, D.C. tabloid published by the ultra-right Liberty Lobby for a 1978 article linking him to Kennedy's slaying.

Lane led Hunt through a recounting of his career with the CIA agent and later as one of the 'plumbers' involved in the burglary of the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Party.

'I wish I'd never heard of Watergate,' Hunt said. 'I wish I never worked in the White House.'

Hunt, 66, said he was part of a special investigative force hired by the White House because former President Richard M. Nixon was upset by information being leaked to the press.

He said his job was to organize a 'black bag' team to take photographs of party documents at Watergate. He said another team was supposed to install wire taps.

As a member of the CIA, Hunt said his job consisted mainly of funding anti-communist operations against countries unfriendly with the United States. 'I was involved in working with intermediaries to try to persuade (Cuban President Fidel) Castro to change his Marxist ways,' Hunt said. 'That approach was unsuccessful and the Bay of Pigs ensued.'

Lane then asked if Hunt knew Marita Lorenz, Castro's former lover who Lane says saw Hunt in Dallas the day before Kennedy was slain. Hunt denied ever meeting Lorenz.

Lane asked if Hunt knew that Lorenz was involved in a CIA plot to kill Castro or if there ever was a plot to kill Castro.

'I suppose so,' Hunt replied. 'I would hope there were such plans. I thought it was important to cut off the head of the snake, so its army would lose its leadership.'

Hunt also testified Tuesday he lost thousands of dollars in income because of a 'damnable article' published by The Spotlight that linked him to the assassination of Kennedy.

Hunt said he earned \$78,000 in 1977, the year before the article was published.

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"Six years after the publication of The Spotlight article my earnings were less than 5 percent of what I had earned the year before," Hunt said. He also blamed the article for the rejection by publishers of at least five of his book manuscripts in recent years.

Hunt said only one manuscript had been rejected prior to the appearance of the article in The Spotlight. In all, he has published 54 books.

Hunt testified he was doing well financially "until this damnable article" was published.

Hunt, who served 33 months in prison for his part in the Watergate break-in, denied Monday that he was in Dallas when Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. He testified he was in his car in Washington, D.C., waiting with his infant son for his wife to finish grocery shopping.

He said the August 1978 article by The Spotlight angered him because he thought allegations concerning the assassination were behind him.

Hunt originally was awarded \$650,000 by a jury in the case, but that verdict was overturned on appeal because the judge's charge to the jury was flawed.