

Friday, January 26, 2007

### **Nixon's man who "knows too damn much" dies.**

Do you need a Bay of Pigs invasion? Call this man. How about breaking into the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist? Call this man. Time to wiretap the Democratic National Committee offices? Call this man? Now this man -- E. Howard Hunt -- has died, as have so many other Watergate figures, including Nixon. Hunt lived the life of a government operative outside the law, and his boss Nixon was a master at operating outside the law. One difference between the two of them: E. Howard Hunt spent thirty-three months in prison for Watergate, while Nixon received a pre-emptive pardon against prosecution. E. Howard Hunt: Even he was entitled to a zealous criminal defense. Shortly after the Watergate break-in -- which actually consisted of a first break-in to install wiretaps and a second to remove them -- Nixon recognized that "This fellow Hunt, he knows too damn much." Nixon went down two years later, when Hunt already was serving his thirty-three month prison sentence. As Watergate figures get older, and die, the Watergate office, hotel and co-op apartment complex still stands. The 1967-built Watergate's design is strange, as if the architects had a warped vision of a futuristic building to come. As I understand it, the break-in took place in what for over a decade has been a non-descript-looking orthopedic surgeon's practice which I have twice visited. From my understanding, no plaque, marker, or other indicator designates the spot; there is rent to be charged. I have seen at least three of the key Watergate figures. Four months before his downfall, I saw Nixon entering the Washington Hilton for a news conference or other gathering, on my first visit to the city. My parents bumped into Dick and Pat fourteen years later, and Nixon cheerfully gave his autograph for me and my brothers, with his "Best wishes." Around ten years ago, I saw G. Gordon Liddy conferring with someone in the hallway of the old courthouse in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, several miles down Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. He seemed pleased to have been recognized; he was powerless, so there was no reason to tell him my unsolicited view on his role in Watergate. Then, a few days before Bush II launched Gulf War II, I went to an anti-Gulf War II demonstration. At the nearby Mall area, I saw the most important of the Watergate figures I have seen: Carl Bernstein. To him and Bob Woodward, I owe limitless thanks. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Criminal Defense at 00:00