MORMON SPIES, HUGHES and the C.I.A.

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner
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MORMON SPIES, HUGHES and the C.I.A.

During 1973, as the details of the Watergate cover-up began to unfold, we were struck with the many parallels to Mormon history. On November 11, 1973, the Salt Lake Tribune printed an article in the “Common Carrier” section which we listed some of these parallels. Since that time we have found more parallels between Mormonism and Watergate. Even more important, however, has been the discovery that Mormons were involved with Howard Hunt in his plans for wiretapping and burglary.

Nixon’s Tapes Provide Clue

As the reader will remember, Richard Nixon fought desperately to keep his tapes from becoming public. When he was finally forced to yield them, transcripts were printed by the U.S. Government and then by the New York Times. These tapes not only proved embarrassing to Nixon, but to some prominent Mormons as well. On pages 292-293 of the White House Transcripts, Nixon, Haldeman and Ehrlichman discuss an alleged attempt to break into the safe of Hank Greenspun. During the course of the conversation, it was suggested that “Senator Bennett’s son, for whom Hunt worked,” may have been involved in the plan of the break-in.

Before reading the White House Transcripts we were unaware of the fact that Howard Hunt worked for “Senator Bennett’s son,” nor did we know that the two of them had been involved in planning a break-in at Mr. Greenspun’s office. When we told Michael Marquardt about this, he did some research and found that Robert Bennett (son of the Mormon Senator Wallace F. Bennett) is the man spoken of in the White House Transcripts. Mr. Marquardt also learned that Robert Bennett worked for the Robert B. Mullen & Company. Later we discovered that Robert Bennett was the actual owner of the Mullen Co. and that this company handled international public relations for the Mormon Church. Howard Hunt, who was involved in the Ellsberg break-in and the Watergate affair, worked for Robert Bennett and was at one time Vice President of the Mullen Co. Further research led us to the discovery that plans for the Watergate break-in and other illegal activities were actually discussed in Bennett’s company—i.e., in the Mullen Co. James McCord, who was involved in the Watergate break-in, gave this testimony at the Senate Watergate Hearings:

Mr. McCORD. The meetings, as best I recall, in which these references by Mr. Hunt took place, took place in Mr. Hunt’s office, in the Robert F. Mullen Co. offices at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue. They took place in April and May of 1972. To the best of my recollection, Mr. Liddy was present in all of the discussions.

Mr. Liddy, during those discussions, as best I recall, would raise the topic that the planning and the progress of the operation itself was going forward, comments about what Mr. Mitchell was saying to him about what could be done in terms of the priorities of the operation; that is, which ones were to be done first and second.

Mr. Hunt’s comments, ... during that period of time, indicated to me that he had separate, independent knowledge, ... that Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Dean and Mr. Magruder had planned the operations in the Attorney General’s office to begin with ... Mr. THOMPSON. Do you recall anything that Mr. Hunt said to you about Mr. Colson’s involvement or did you just get the general impression that Mr. Colson was involved in some way from what Mr. Hunt told you?

Mr. McCORD. I believe my previous testimony, which I will restate before this committee, was to the effect that when I had met Mr. Hunt in his offices at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue with Mr. Liddy that he had referred to his previous work at the White House for Mr. Colson, referring to him as his superior; that during the session that Mr. Hunt, Mr. Liddy, and I had in Mr. Hunt’s offices, Mr. Hunt had a typed plan that he had typed himself, step-by-step, for the entry of the Democratic National Committee headquarters; ... (Hearings Before the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities of the United States Senate ..., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1973, Book 1, pages 142-143)

It is interesting to note that two of the Watergate burglars, Bernard Barker and Eugenio Martinez, had the address of the Mullen Co. (1700 Pennsylvania Ave) in their address and telephone directories. Below is a photograph of Barker’s address book.
In the investigation of Robert Bennett’s company some very strange information concerning the CIA and Howard Hughes has also been uncovered. We will deal with these matters later in this book.

In our research for this book we have had access at the University of Utah to the many volumes of the Senate Watergate Hearings as well as the volumes concerning the attempt to impeach President Nixon by the Judiciary Committee. We have also obtained photocopies of some of the important testimony given in the cases U.S. v Liddy and DNC v McCord. The Senate Rules Committee provided us with the previously secret executive session testimony of Howard Hunt before the Senate Watergate Committee on December 18, 1973. Unfortunately, however, we ran into a real problem when we tried to obtain the executive session testimony of Robert Bennett. We first became aware of this testimony when we read the “Baker Report” in 1974. In January or February of 1975 we wrote to the Senate Rules Committee for information concerning it. The request was not answered. On April 6, 1975, we again requested information concerning Bennett’s testimony. In a letter dated April 10, 1975, Senator Howard W. Cannon replied:

In response to your request for the testimony of Robert F. Bennett before the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities please be advised that the Watergate Special Prosecutor, Mr. Henry S. Ruth, Jr., has embargoed this testimony from release until such time as the ongoing trials are completed. If you wish to procure this testimony at a later date after the trials, please contact me and I will keep your request open.

We wrote to the Watergate Special Prosecutor about the “embargo” on Robert Bennett’s testimony, and on September 11, 1975, we received a reply from Carl B. Feldbaum, Executive Assistant to the Special Prosecutor. In his reply he stated: “You may know, by this time, that our ‘embargo’ on certain Senate Select materials has been lifted. We appreciate your interest.”

Now, since Senator Cannon had said that we could obtain this testimony as soon as the “embargo” was lifted, we wrote him another letter. On November 17, 1975, he replied:

In response to your request for testimony taken before the Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities please be advised that Mr. Robert F. Bennett did not have executive session testimony before the Select Committee.

In a letter dated November 23, 1975, we asked Senator Cannon this question: “Senator Baker mentions the ‘Executive Session Testimony of Robert F. Bennett’ many times in the ‘Baker Report’ (see photocopies enclosed). How can you say that it does not exist?” On December 5, 1975, Senator Cannon admitted that he had made a mistake. The testimony did exist, but we could not have it because of an agreement with the CIA:

The testimony of Robert F. Bennett on February 1, 1974 was classified Secret and access was limited by an agreement between Senator Baker and the Central Intelligence Agency on February 1, 1974. I have requested the Director of Central Intelligence Agency to declassify this material so I may make it available to you.

In my letter to you dated November 17, 1975, I state that Robert Bennett did not have executive session testimony. I now realize that I was in error. . . . I believe that assistance provided you in selecting material from the massive E. Howard Hunt testimony should assure you that I am willing to assist in any way possible to make information collected by the Watergate Committee available to you.

I expect to receive a prompt reply from the CIA and will contact you immediately as to their decision concerning the Bennett material.

By February, 1976, we still had not received Bennett’s testimony. We decided, therefore, to demand a copy under the Freedom of Information Act. On February 20, 1976, Senator Cannon replied as follows:

This will respond to your letter of February 9, 1976, wherein you seek to invoke provisions of the Freedom of Information Act as a basis for securing access to certain testimony of Mr. Robert F. Bennett before the Senate Watergate Committee on February 1, 1974.

Please be advised that the Legislative Branch is not covered by requirements of the Freedom of Information Act as is the Executive Branch. Therefore, files within the jurisdiction of the Congress are not accessible through provisions of that act. However, if this Committee were bound by information release provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, we would conclude that the data you seek would not be properly reachable anyway because of the act’s exemption provision, precluding release of classified information and particularly that guarded by the Central Intelligence Agency for the protection of intelligence sources and methods . . . I must also inform you that the Central Intelligence Agency advises me that the public release of the information you seek is precluded by national security considerations which attach to the documents you seek.

This was certainly a disappointing answer after we had waited an entire year to obtain this important testimony. We wondered if the fact that Senator Howard Cannon is a Mormon could have had anything to do with his decision, but Michael J. Madigan, a member of the staff on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, confirmed the fact that this testimony is “classified.” As far as we can tell, the CIA is responsible for its suppression. A member of the staff of the Senate Rules Committee told us that a senator who had examined Robert Bennett’s testimony felt that the CIA was making a mistake in trying to suppress it. Although we are disappointed that we have been denied access to this testimony, we have obtained photocopies of other testimony by Robert Bennett which throws important light on the matters which we will discuss in this book.

We have obtained about 250 pages of important testimony given by Mormons in the Watergate trial before Judge Sirica in Washington, D.C. We were somewhat reluctant to ask for this material when we heard that the Official Court Reporter, Nicholas Sokal, was a member of the Mormon Church. Fortunately, we found Mr. Sokal to be most cooperative. In fact, we could not possibly have asked for anyone more helpful than Mr. Sokal.

Before we deal with the information brought out in the Watergate investigation we want to take a look at some incidents in Mormon history that are not generally known.

The Prostitution Conspiracy

During the Watergate investigation it was discovered that there was a plan purposed to entrap political enemies by the use of call girls. In the “Final Report of the Senate Select Committee” we read as follows:

The first Gemstone plan was presented to Attorney General Mitchell by Liddy at a meeting in Mitchell’s Justice Department office on January 27, 1972 . . . Liddy illustrated his presentation with six large posters . . . The plan called for: (1) the use of mugging squads and kidnapping teams to deal with leaders of anti-Nixon demonstrations; (2) prostitutes stationed on a yacht, wired for sound, anchored offshore from Miami Beach during the Democratic Convention; . . . (The Senate Watergate Report, Dell Edition, vol. 1, page 75)

Jeb Stuart Magruder testified as follows:
Mr. DASH. With regard to the use of these women as agents, did this involve the use of a yacht at Miami?

Mr. MAGRUDER. He envisioned renting a yacht in Miami and having it set up for sound and photographs.

Mr. DASH. And what would the women be doing at that time?

Mr. MAGRUDER. I really could only estimate, but—

Mr. DASH. Based on his project, from your recollection. What did he indicate?

Mr. MAGRUDER. Well, they would have been, I think, you could consider them call girls. (Hearings, Book 2, page 788)

Howard Hunt testified that “Mr. Liddy told me that one of his superiors had suggested that the houseboat could be used as a rendezvous point and perhaps a place in which compromising photographs or tape recordings could be made” (Ibid., Book 9, pages 3, 741).

From testimony given it would appear that this plan was never actually carried out.

When we look at Mormon history we find a similar conspiracy; a conspiracy which was not only planned but actually carried into effect. The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts frankly admitted that in 1885 the Mormons used “a system of secret espionage” to entrap federal officials who were trying to enforce the laws against polygamy:

Another regrettable thing done on the part of the Latter-day Saints, and growing out of the sense of unfairness attending upon the administration of the federal laws by the federal officials, led some overzealous men, officers of the city government, then entirely in “Mormon” hands, to arrange by a system of secret espionage on such characters in the city as resorted to places of prostitution, and by prosecution of them make, at least, public exposure of their crimes. It was believed that many prominent in prosecutions of polygamy and unlawful cohabitation cases would be entrapped.

Great consternation prevailed in certain quarters. It was rumored, and was matter of press comment, that “the anti-Mormon” element had become wild with excitement, and wondered where the lightning would strike next. Many vague rumors were afloat, as to a list of from four to six hundred offenders being in the hands of the city officers, and there were more blanched cheeks and shaking knee than Salt Lake has ever before contained, notwithstanding the assertion regarding the anti-“Mormon” purity. (Comprehensive History of the Church, vol. 6, page 158)

This conspiracy to entrap federal officials occurred while the Mormon leaders were still practicing polygamy. C. S. Varian, who served as assistant United States attorney in Utah, made these comments about the prostitution conspiracy:

The thought seems to have been that if it should be ascertained that others of the non-Mormon population were found to be guilty of offenses against the law would be a sufficient answer to the prosecutions which were being brought by the government. In this view, certain prominent and influential Mormon citizens of Salt Lake City conceived the idea of opening houses of ill-fame in certain localities of the municipality for the purpose of enticing prominent government officials and others into the commission of offenses, in order that they might be detected and put in prison, or at least, those they might be entraped.

It is very interesting to note that in December, 1885, the grand jury for the third judicial district of the Territory issued a very revealing report concerning the conspiracy. It was printed by the Daily Tribune in Salt Lake City on December 8, 1885, and finally by the Deseret News on December 23, 1885. Since the Deseret News is owned by the Mormon Church we cite the following from the grand jury report which appeared in its pages:

Your Grand Jury herewith returns two indictments for conspiracy, four indictments for keeping houses of ill-fame, under the Territorial laws, . . .

The money employed in this scheme, we are told by its prime mover, was raised by private subscription. One of these creatures was promised $1,000 in the event of her being able to draw the Governor of the Territory into her toils. In the course of their operations, these women conveyed notes of invitation to many prominent officials and citizens, requesting interviews on business at the places designated. The following, leaving the names blank, is a sample of these notes, delivered by messenger boys:

Salt Lake City,
July 25, 1885.

Dear Sir—If convenient, I would be pleased to have you call and see me this afternoon or about dusk this evening. I want to see you on particular business. Please send answer by messenger boy when you will call.

Respectfully, __________________

We are informed by persons engaged in this infamous plot, that from their secret posts of observation they, from time to time, personally witnessed all that took place in apartments in these houses visited by men and women, who were weak and depraved enough to respond to the opportunities presented to them. Their names were taken and the evidence noted for future reference and use.

When the exposure of this conspiracy was at hand the houses were closed. One woman was sent to California upon a ticket furnished her. Another was driven to Franklins by a police officer who had previously purchased her a ticket, and then took the train for Denver under an assumed name.

One of these women was paid by the city official above referred to $300 or $400 and the other $700 for her services. The money employed in this scheme, we are told by its prime mover, was paid by one of the high officials of Salt Lake County. It is claimed that the money was raised by private subscription. We have been unable to ascertain that any part of it came from the public treasury. Neither the Mayor of Police, nor other city official, except as herein stated, so far as we can learn, were advised of the proceeding until the plot was ripe. All of the