Part IV: Mr. Hunt & Martin Luther King

I was at Mr. Hunt’s Mount Vernon in the summer of 1966 when a reporter from Playboy Magazine conducted an interview with him. The reporter said, “You have frequently been called a bigot. What’s your answer to this charge?”

Mr. Hunt replied, “A bigot is expected to be biased, intolerant, and have a closed mind. Well, I have a consuming curiosity and always like to hear the different viewpoints. I consider myself open-minded, and therefore not a bigot.”

The reporter pressed, “You’re not anti-negro?”

“No,” came the answer, “I like the Negroes I have known, and I believe nearly all of them like me.”

That blanket statement did not reflect Mr. Hunt’s feelings toward one African-American man, however: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On August 17, 1964, the New York Times wrote an article on H.L. Hunt and in it said, “Mr. Hunt and Life

Line have been accused of being anti-Negro, anti-Jewish, anti-Roman Catholic and anti-union. Mr. Hunt has enjoined Life Line from criticizing minority groups or unions. He says he does not believe any of them represent a threat to American society.”

In reality, Life Line did actively attack individuals, however, and perhaps none more so than Dr. Martin Luther King.

Perceived or real, Dr. King was a serious threat to H.L. Hunt’s food companies. On one hand, Hunt’s Life Line program was carrying on a campaign against King who both Mr. Hunt and J. Edgar Hoover believed to be a Communist; on the other, MLK had the power to call for a boycott against the products that could cripple the Hunt food division.

At the time, HLH Products sold food – a good deal of food – into the African-American community. It would not take a lot for King to notice that this company was the main sponsor of Life Line, who had been so vehemently attacking him. Calling for a boycott of HLH Products would be a simple and peaceful way for Dr. King to go on the offensive against the Life Line radio program’s attacks… a fact that Mr. Hunt was well-aware of.

Martin Luther King and J. Edgar Hoover

In that August 1966 interview with Playboy Magazine, H.L. Hunt was asked whether he regarded Martin Luther King as an “agitator seeking power and votes.” Mr. Hunt replied, “I share J. Edgar Hoover’s opinion of him.”

Playboy further asked, “Are you saying that you agree with Hoover that King is ‘the biggest liar in the United
Part IV. Mr. Hunt & Martin Luther King

States’?” Hunt said, “I cannot detect that King has any regard for the truth, religion, sincerity, peace, morality or the best interest of the Negro people.”

H.L. Hunt: Motive and Opportunity

On November 21, 1964, a letter was sent to King’s wife, Coretta, which outlined alleged sexual indiscretions by her husband. A copy of the letter was sent to Dr. King as well, and he not only believed that it came directly from the FBI, but he understood it to be a suggestion that he take his own life. According to the New York Times Magazine, a copy of the letter is known to exist in J. Edgar Hoover’s confidential files at the National Archives.

On Mr. Hunt’s part, he brought the full guns of Life Line to bear on Martin Luther King—he was probably the subject of more Life Line programs than anyone else in the program’s history. But while Mr. Hunt felt like he was doing his duty by exposing what he considered to be a true Communist, he was also worried about the damage that King could do to his business.

Dr. King and the Boycott Threat

As previously stated, the Hunt food division, which was the only sponsor of Life Line, catered largely to the African-American community with its sales. Mr. Hunt knew that if Martin Luther King decided to retaliate against Life Line by calling for a boycott among his loyal followers, it could literally cost him millions of dollars.

After all, Dr. King had let the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott a decade earlier, targeting the Montgomery Bus Line in Alabama. At that time, the ten front seats on a Montgomery bus were reserved for white riders, the ten back seats were designated for black riders, and the fourteen seats in the middle could be used by either, although it was against the law for a black rider and a white rider to sit next to each other. The buses filled from
the front to back for whites, and back to front for blacks. Black riders were required to stand and give up their seats to white riders should the need arise.

One fateful day, December 1, 1955, an African-American woman named Rosa Parks was sitting in the middle section. The bus stopped and a white man boarded, and the bus driver ordered everyone in her row to move back. Ms. Parks would not comply and was arrested. She was fined $10 for her violation, along with $4 court cost.

Dr. Martin Luther King met with a group of people at the Mt. Zion Church to discuss a boycott, which although hard-fought, was so successful in the end, that it nearly crippled the bus company financially and eventually led to the end of segregation on the buses.

Several years later, Dr. King participated in the famous March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that took place on August 28, 1963. Up to 300,000 attended the event, with an estimated 75-80% of which were African-American. It was one of the largest political rallies for human rights in United States history.

At the rally, Dr. King stood up before the Lincoln Memorial and delivered his famous “I have a dream” speech, which included the famous words, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

This speech cemented King’s reputation not only as a gifted orator but an inspirational and motivational force to his followers. Mr. Hunt knew that should King ever call for a boycott of Hunt food products, it would be a devastating blow to the company.

H.L. Hunt: Motive and Opportunity

And it wasn’t an unrealistic threat. Not only was Mr. Hunt bombarding the public with anti-King messages, but his Hunt food companies had been accused of providing substandard food that was sold in the African-American community.

Dr. King after the Montgomery Bus Boycott (U.S. Library of Congress)

One thing was certain – as long as Dr. King was continuing to grow in popularity, the Hunt food division was in jeopardy.

Assassination Day

On March 29, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. went to Memphis, Tennessee, in support of the black workers there. A few days later, on April 3, King addressed a rally
and delivered his last speech, which included the famous closing:

"And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say the threats, or talk about the threats that were out. What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers?"

"Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop.

"And I don’t mind.

"Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!

"And so I’m happy, tonight.

"I’m not worried about anything.

"I’m not fearing any man!

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!"

Dr. King was booked into his usual room at the Lorraine Motel, room 306, and the next evening he walked out into the night air of the balcony. At 6:01 pm, April 4, 1968, as he stood on the motel’s second-floor balcony, a rifle shot rang through the air. The bullet hit Dr. King, entered through his right cheek, smashed his jaw, and then traveled down his spinal cord before lodging in his shoulder.

He was rushed to St. Joseph’s Hospital and after emergency surgery, Dr. King died at 7:05 pm.

Right after the shot was fired, people saw a man who was later identified as James Earl Ray running from a boarding house across the street from the motel. A rifle and binoculars were both found there with Ray’s fingerprints.

Mr. Hunt received a phone call within minutes after the assassination from J. Edgar Hoover and was told about the death of Dr. King.

The National Civil Rights Museum and Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Today

Mr. Hunt Hits the Road

On the evening of the assassination, Mr. Hunt called me and gave me two things to do immediately. The first was to cancel any Life Line programs that were anti-King,
and the other was to get him and his wife out of Dallas right away.

He had been receiving many threatening phone calls at his house — much more than he had after JFK’s assassination — and he was concerned. His “Mount Vernon” home had no real security, no fence, and his name was listed in the phone book just like everyone else’s. Along with the phone calls, a few cars had pulled into the driveway and fired shots at the house. Mr. Hunt had absolutely no protection at the house — you could drive right up to it; there were no guards (armed or otherwise), and to my knowledge, Mr. Hunt didn’t own a gun. In fact, in case someone came up to the house that he wanted to scare away, I kept him supplied with a supply of “Baby Giant Firecrackers.” He would simply light one and throw it out a window. That was the extent of his security measures. Mr. Hunt was justifiably afraid, so he asked me where he could go so as not to be easily recognized.

I suggested the Holiday Inn in El Paso. I had been a guest there just a few days earlier; it was a new motel and I don’t think that Mr. Hunt had ever spent any time in El Paso. I called and reserved a room in my own name, and then drove out to the airport and bought two tickets to El Paso — one in the name of “John Curington,” and the other in the name of “M.A. Curington.” After that, I went to Mt. Vernon and picked up H.L. and Ruth Hunt, gave them their airline tickets, and took them to the Love Field Airport. In those days you didn’t have to show any identification to get on a plane, so I knew that wouldn’t be a problem.

H.L. Hunt: Motive and Opportunity

I went back to the office, and just like I had done after JFK’s death, I assembled a team of Hunt Oil secretaries and had them call the Life Line radio stations and advise them not to air any of the programs involving Martin Luther King.

On Monday morning after the Friday assassination of Dr. King, J. Edgar Hoover called the office to speak to Mr. Hunt. When he was told that he was unavailable, Hoover asked to speak to “John,” which was the only name that he knew me by.

Mr. Hoover wanted to know the whereabouts of Mr. Hunt and asked me if I knew how to get hold of him. I explained that he was in El Paso, and would probably be there a few days — or at least until the news coverage of the death of Martin Luther King died down. Hoover asked me to call Mr. Hunt and have him come to Washington immediately. I assured him that I would relay the message as soon as we hung up.

I called El Paso and got Mr. Hunt on the phone, and then advised him of Hoover’s request. He said that he wanted to leave for Washington just as soon as I could get the airline tickets arranged and reservations at the Mayflower Hotel.

After doing so, I called Mr. Hoover back and told him that Mr. Hunt would soon be on his way. I gave him the flight number and time of arrival, knowing that Hoover would make the rest of the arrangements on his end.

Mr. Hunt didn’t get back to Dallas for several days, and when he did, he didn’t say anything about the call from Hoover or the trip to Washington. It was simply business as usual.
When Mr. Hunt checked out of the Holiday Inn in El Paso, he instructed the hotel to send the room bill to John Curington at the Hunt Oil Company’s Dallas address. Again, this was not at all strange or out of character at all. What was unusual was that Mr. Hunt called me from Washington and told me that the hotel bill was being sent to me, and I was not to pay it with a Hunt Oil Company check – instead I was to obtain a cashier’s check in my name and mail it directly to El Paso. He did not want the name H.L. Hunt disclosed or associated with it in any way.

I have no idea why J. Edgar Hoover wanted to meet with Mr. Hunt, but clearly, it was very important to the FBI Director.

**Mr. Hunt and Percy Foreman**

When King was shot, witnesses saw a man who was later identified as James Earl Ray fleeing from a house across the street from the motel where he had been renting a room. A rifle and binoculars were found nearby that had Ray’s fingerprints.

Two months after Martin Luther King was killed, Ray was arrested at London Heathrow Airport, attempting to leave the United Kingdom on a Canadian passport.

I know that Mr. Hunt had a number of conversations with Hoover after the arrest and extradition. Hoover was adamant that the murder of Martin Luther King be placed squarely on the shoulders of James Earl Ray.

This was a concern because H.L. Hunt lived in fear that if Ray did go to trial he could have testified that messages that he got from the *Life Line* radio program could have influenced him to shoot Martin Luther King. If this had come out, Mr. Hunt believed that he personally could have been indicted.

I sometimes think back to one of the things that Joe Civello had told Mr. Hunt – that if you had someone killed, you must never let the unknown that you hired ever go to court – *always make him plead guilty*. And of course, when I consider Lee Harvey Oswald, I can’t help but recall another piece of advice from Civello: hire an unknown to do the violent act and then kill the unknown who did the act.

When James Earl Ray began to have a falling out with his attorney, Texas trial lawyer Percy Foreman flew to Memphis and showed up at the Shelby County Jail. There he convinced Ray to fire his original attorney and hire him.

One day I was in Mr. Hunt’s office, and he called Percy Foreman with me sitting there. He told Foreman that he had a young attorney – meaning me – who had some very interesting ideas on who killed King.

Percy Foreman replied that he’d be happy to talk to this fellow and to have him stop by his office.

At Mr. Hunt’s instruction, I traveled to call on Percy Foreman with a briefcase and laid it on the desk in front of him. “I have one hundred and twenty-five thousand reasons why James Earl Ray should plead guilty to killing Martin Luther King,” I said.

Foreman looked at me and said, “Well, just leave them with me, and I’ll take a look at them.” I walked out of the room, not having been there more than a minute or two.
Part IV: Mr. Hunt & Martin Luther King

I left the $125,000, which would be just under a million dollars in today’s money, and sure enough, James Earl Ray entered a guilty plea.

Three days later, Ray asked the judge for a change of plea, a new attorney, and a trial by jury. His request was denied.

When the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper eulogized Percy Foreman on his death on August 26, 1988, it included the notation, “He persuaded James Earl Ray to plead guilty to the 1968 slaying of King, the Nobel Prize-winning civil rights leader, in exchange for a 99-year sentence. Ray charged later that Foreman pressured him into the plea by saying that the odds were 99% certain he would go to the electric chair if he faced a jury in Tennessee. Ray contended that he only purchased the rifle used in the Memphis assassination and gave it to a man named Raoul.

He charged that Foreman failed to investigate two mysterious Louisiana men who, he contended, would have helped his case.”

James Earl Ray denied killing King until he died in prison from complications of Hepatitis C. According to records at the King Center, the King family has come to believe that James Earl Ray had nothing to do with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

H.L. Hunt: Motive and Opportunity

Percy Foreman continued to be tied to Mr. Hunt, his family, and his associates... including many of the names that have appeared in this book.

**Final Thoughts on MLK...**

I paid $125,000 to Percy Foreman on Mr. Hunt’s behalf to get James Earl Ray to confess to the killing of Martin Luther King. Although that is exactly what happened, Ray soon recanted his confession, and to this day the King family believes that he was innocent of the murder.

Why was it so important for Mr. Hunt to have a confession from Ray? And if Ray was indeed guilty, why did his attorney require such a substantial, under-the-table payment?

There’s something else that has always weighed on my mind. That phone conversation that I was privy to between Mr. Hunt and Percy Foreman was very short and to the point, and the promise of money was just a veiled, casual thing. My own conversation with Foreman wasn’t much more. Surely some prior groundwork had been done, and I have to wonder if it hadn’t been done between J. Edgar Hoover, Mr. Hunt, and Percy Foreman.

Unfortunately, the answers to all those things and many other questions died with Mr. Hunt.
Part V: Mr. Hunt & Bobby Kennedy

The assassination of John F. Kennedy made the country grieve and lifted the beloved former president almost to the status of sainthood. The state funeral, complete with John Jr. saluting his fallen father, cemented JFK’s place in history and in the hearts of the nation.

A few years later, the country’s wave of emotion was apparently going to wash over onto Robert Francis “Bobby” Kennedy – something that deeply worried H.L. Hunt.

Bobby Kennedy, LBJ, & Bobby Baker

Robert Gene “Bobby” Baker first met Lyndon Johnson when LBJ was elected to the Senate in 1948. Even as a young man, Baker was active in the political world. He started out as a Senate page and worked his way up to the position of Senate Secretary to the Majority Leader. He ingratiated himself to all the important congressmen, and became a Washington “insider.”

When LBJ met Bobby Baker, he was told that he “knew where all the bodies were buried,” so Johnson embraced the young man as his friend, confidant, and advisor.

Baker was one of the founders of the Quorum Club, a private organization housed adjacent to a Senate office building that was said to be a place for Congressmen and other prominent figures to dine, enjoy drinks, and hook up with women to entertain them. One of these Congressmen was allegedly a Senator named John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

In 1962 while LBJ was Vice President, Baker and a friend, Fred Black, set up a corporation named Serv-U that provided vending machines for programs and organizations that were established under federal grants. It was rumored that as part of the normal operation of the corporation, bribery and sexual favors were used as influence with Congressmen.

Robert Kennedy – now the Attorney General – began to look even more carefully at Bobby Baker. He uncovered the fact that Baker had ties to many influential men, ranging from Texas oil millionaires to Mafia chieftains. Because of the ties between Baker and LBJ, the trail soon led to Lyndon Johnson and included even more shady deals, such as the awarding of a $7 billion contract for a fighter plane to Texas company General Dynamics.

A special Senate investigation was launched against both Baker and Johnson, and it seemed as if it was going to bury them both. Baker resigned from his positions in October 1963, a month before JFK was assassinated. Lyndon Johnson was still under investigation, but that was dropped when he became President in November.
This destroyed Bobby Kennedy’s plans to have LBJ not only dropped from the 1964 Presidential ticket but indicted for criminal activity as well. John F. Kennedy’s death enraged brother Bobby, not just because of the loss that he felt, but also because it catapulted LBJ into his brother’s chair in the Oval Office. It also wasn’t lost on Bobby that his brother had been killed in LBJ’s home state, on a political visit that Johnson had encouraged.

Bobby and the 1968 Election

During LBJ’s first full term as President, Mr. Hunt called him at the White House and said something to the effect of, “Lyndon, you’ve had a good go at this, but I don’t think that you should run next time around.” Mr. Hunt was very, very good at reading a situation, and I believe that he saw the divisions in the Democratic party, and the mounting tension over the Vietnam War, and knew that Johnson wasn’t going to be able to win.

Most political analysts believe that Johnson withdrew from the race once Bobby Kennedy announced his intention to run, but it was much more than that LBJ knew that Mr. Hunt’s support – both financial and political – had been one of the cornerstones of his success, and that had disappeared.

By 1968, it was clear that Bobby Kennedy was going to get the nomination and probably win the Presidency. This was a serious concern for Mr. Hunt because, in his opinion, Bobby would be ten times worse than JFK ever was. Mr. Hunt felt that Jack was kind of lazy and a do-nothing sort of fellow, but Bobby was very aggressive.

Bobby Kennedy hated Lyndon Johnson and knew that Mr. Hunt had depended on LBJ for a number of things on his personal agenda. Mr. Hunt was concerned that RFK would be strong enough and vengeful enough to hurt him in any possible way. Mr. Hunt was in the most vulnerable position of his entire business life.

The California Trip

In the late spring of 1968, Mr. Hunt came in and told me that he wanted to go to Los Angeles the next day. I was to get tickets for both of us, along with a room at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles... even though we had never stayed at the Ambassador before. Our usual accommodations were at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

The trip itself wasn’t an unusual request, however, because we went to California every month or so. I made the arrangements, and when we arrived, Mr. Hunt told me two things. First, he asked me to contact Wendell Niles. This was a man whose father was Bob Hope’s TV announcer, so Wendell was very well connected in L.A. We had him on the payroll so that he would keep us advised as to what was going on in the movie industry and in the Los Angeles area. Mr. Hunt wanted me to find out from Niles exactly what Bobby Kennedy had been doing in California, including where he’d been, where he was going, and who was in his inner circle. I left Wendell a message to call me at the Hotel.

We arrived at the Ambassador Hotel, and Mr. Hunt told me that he was going to have a private meeting with a fellow, and for me to just go to my room and wait to hear from Wendell. It was clear that whatever the business might be, I wasn’t going to be privy to it. This was a little unusual. I contacted Wendell Niles while Mr. Hunt had
of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. It was just after midnight. His only security was a former FBI agent and two former professional athletes.

Kennedy was planning on simply walking through the ballroom on his way to a gathering elsewhere in the hotel, but campaign aide Fred Dutton diverted him through the hotel’s kitchen for a quick, impromptu press conference. As he followed the hotel’s maître d’ through a narrow kitchen hallway, he reached out to shake a busboy’s hand, and Sirhan Sirhan moved over to him and repeatedly fired a .22 caliber Iver-Johnson Cadet revolver.

Robert F. Kennedy was rushed to the Central Receiving Hospital, where doctors performed heart massage and stabilized his heartbeat. He was then transferred a few blocks away to the Hospital of the Good Samaritan for surgery to have the bullets removed and wounds treated.

In spite of the extensive neurosurgery, he died at 1:44 am, twenty-six hours after the shooting.

Kennedy had been hit three times. One bullet entered his head behind his right ear, sending fragments into his brain. The other two bullets entered at the rear of his right armpit, one exited from his chest and the other lodged in the back of his neck.

I personally found out about the shooting about five minutes after it happened. My phone rang, and it was Wendell Niles from L.A. with the news. I hung up and immediately called Mr. Hunt, who didn’t express any interest one way or the other. He said something like, “Okay, we’ll talk about that tomorrow,” and that was the extent of it.
Sirhan Bishara Sirhan

Unlike the killing of John F. Kennedy, where Oswald’s role of assassin has been repeatedly challenged, the murder of Bobby Kennedy was up close and personal, and in front of a room full of witnesses.

When the shots were fired, author George Plimpton, author Pete Hamill, football star and Hall of Famer Rosey Grier, and 1960 Olympic gold medalist Rafer Johnson struggled with Sirhan Sirhan to subdue him.

Four days later, on June 9, Sirhan Bishara Sirhan confessed to the police that he had murdered Bobby Kennedy. The confession was not allowed in court, however, and he was put on trial and given the death sentence. This was later commuted down to life imprisonment.

In what seems like a straightforward case, there are actually a number of different conspiracy theories surrounding the assassination. One is that another shooter fired the fatal shot, which is a possibility that is supported by the Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner for the County of Los Angeles who said that the fatal shot was behind Kennedy’s right ear, and had been fired at a distance of approximately one inch, something that Sirhan Sirhan could not have done.

Another theory is that Sirhan Sirhan was psychologically programmed and controlled by someone else, a theory that is supported by psychologist and hypnosis expert Dr. Eduard Simson-Kallas after many hours of work with Sirhan Sirhan in 1969 after his conviction. This is widely referred to as the “Manchurian Candidate” theory, named after the famous 1962 movie starring Frank Sinatra.

Whether or not he acted alone will probably never be known for sure, but one thing is certain: Sirhan Bishara Sirhan claimed after his incarceration, and ever since, to
have absolutely no memory of the assassination of Bobby Kennedy.

**The Money Delivery**

Approximately four to six weeks later, Mr. Hunt called me in and told me that he needed to send $40,000 to California to a fellow, but he didn’t want me to take it. Instead, he told me to pick somebody in the organization that I trusted but who wouldn’t be readily connectable to the Hunt company. That was a lot of money — keep in mind that in today’s world, that would be almost $300,000.

I selected a man named Mark Deering, who was in a different building from ours. He came over to the First National Bank Building, and Mr. Hunt personally gave him two envelopes with the money — each had $20,000. Mr. Hunt didn’t give him any instructions; he just gave him the cash. I told Mark that a man named Tom would meet him at the airport, and he would give the money to him. Remember that at that time, no one searched bags before the flight, not even a carry-on, so it was a trivial task to take two envelopes full of money onto a plane and fly across the country.

When Mark landed in L.A., another man — not Tom — was at the airport to collect the money. Since it wasn’t the fellow that we were expecting, Mark phoned me for further instructions, and I informed him we weren’t going to release the money to anyone but Tom.

Mark relayed this to the man, who called his boss to explain the situation. The fellow who was supposed to be the recipient of the money — Tom — finally spoke to Mark, and told him that they would meet at the Ambassador

Hotel for the handoff, which they did. It is curious that they met at the location where Robert Kennedy was assassinated.

Mark returned to Dallas and told me that he had delivered the money as ordered. He turned in a handwritten report to me, and that was the last thing that I ever heard about it. I have no idea what the money was for, or why it had to be delivered by someone who wasn’t that identifiable with the Hunt organization. I still have his report, shown below:
Final Thoughts on RFK...

The strangest thing about our California trip was that I'd been left out of whatever business meeting that Mr. Hunt had. I'd delivered large sums of money to pay off his gambling debts in the past and also collected from the people that owed him. I'd been a part of every aspect of his business, so I cannot imagine what transpired that night.

And then there's the payment that had to be delivered after RFK was killed — along with the fact that it had to be delivered by someone besides me. On most every occasion, I was the only one that Mr. Hunt would trust with a cache of money like that.

All of these are ingredients interesting, and although at the time I knew better than to even ponder what had gone on, at this point in my life, I have to look back with more than a little curiosity, and a few questions:

- Why did we make such a sudden trip to Los Angeles?
- Why did we stay at the Ambassador Hotel, a place that we had never used before?
- Who did Mr. Hunt meet alone?
- Why was Wendell Niles instructed to give daily reports regarding Robert Kennedy?
- Why did H.L. Hunt show no interest when I told him within a few minutes of Robert Kennedy's shooting?
- Why did the $40,000 payoff end up at the Ambassador Hotel?

I don't have the answers to these questions, but they are very interesting to think about. I do know for a fact that Mr. Hunt believed that Bobby Kennedy would get the 1968 Democratic Nomination and that after he would be elected President of the United States — something that was almost unthinkable to H.L. Hunt.
Part VI: Mr. Hunt & Jimmy Hoffa

Jimmy Hoffa was a union activist as a young man and quickly rose through the ranks of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. He also became involved in organized crime in parallel to his union activities and was indicted and convicted on any number of charges related to that in 1964.

For a man such as H.L. Hunt, who had thousands of non-union employees, a man like Hoffa represented a serious threat.

Mr. Hunt and Mr. Hoffa

In the 1960s two of the most powerful men in the world were: 1) H.L. Hunt, the world’s richest man with widespread business interests, and 2) James Riddle “Jimmy” Hoffa, the world’s most powerful labor union organizer. Each had a very powerful and personal motive for everything that they did.

H.L. Hunt did not want any of his employees, which numbered in the thousands, to be involved in a labor union in any form, shape or fashion.

Jimmy Hoffa, on the other hand, believed that every employee in the nation should be a member of a union and pay monthly dues.

Mr. Hunt was very proud of his working relationship with his employees. They were paid fair wages, respected in their job duties, and afforded many other benefits. It was his belief that by providing above average attention to each and every employee, it would not only benefit the company but would benefit the employee as well.

Jimmy Hoffa believed that if an employee became a union member that not only would the union benefit, but the employee would get better working conditions.

Each side had strong talking points, and each side had something to gain.

In addition to many, many business ventures, H.L. Hunt was involved in opening several food-processing plants throughout the United States. The plants employed a good many people, which caught the attention of the unions.

Whenever a union organizer would visit the city where one of the plants was located, Mr. Hunt would send me there. I made contact with one or two of the most prominent men in that town – men who shared the same views as Mr. Hunt as far as labor unions. I would solicit their help in getting the union organizer out of the town.

Normally, the best approach would be to work with the Chief of Police, who would, in turn, find ways to compromise the organizer and force him to leave town. He would watch the organizer closely, for example, looking for any possible violation that might result in an arrest.
In one instance, the union organizer had a goal of getting into the oil well drilling companies. There were many employees in most drilling companies and higher wages were paid. This union organizer case took place in Louisiana, and in the course of trying to keep him out of the oil business, the organizer was killed. An attorney was making an attempt to get a wrongful death suit filed over the union organizer's death. H.L. Hunt was most concerned that he could have been named in such a suit, because the man who did the killing was soon hired as a Louisiana police officer, and the murder of the union organizer was swept under the rug. I don't think that Mr. Hunt wanted the organizer killed, he just wanted him to leave his drilling operations alone.

From month to month and day to day, the union became more aggressive in their efforts to organize the various business ventures of Mr. Hunt.

**Jimmy Hoffa and Bobby Kennedy**

Jimmy Hoffa was a ninth-grade dropout who started out his career as a grocery worker, where he was subjected to low pay, long hours, and terrible conditions. He stood up to the boss and gained the respect of the other workers. When he finally left the job, he had been noticed by the union and was offered the job as organizer with the Local 299 of the Teamsters in Detroit in 1932.

By 1933 the Teamsters had 75,000 members, but by 1936 – in some part due to Hoffa – the membership had more than doubled and grown to 170,000 members. Jimmy Hoffa rose through the ranks as the union grew; 420,000 by 1939, and over a million members by 1951.

In 1952, he was appointed to be the Vice-President of the Teamsters and assumed the role of President in 1957 when the former union President was indicted and convicted of fraud. Hoffa had become a very powerful man, and he was forced to do business with many members of organized crime families. Some say that he had become little more than a gangster himself, although on a grand scale – he basically controlled all of the over-the-road truckers in America.

In 1957 he was faced with his first major criminal investigation, although he managed to escape conviction. There were some storm clouds looming on the horizon, however, in the embodiment of Robert Francis “Bobby” Kennedy.
Bobby Kennedy had been the chief counsel for the McClellan Senate Labor Subcommittee who first went after Hoffa in 1957 and was frustrated by the inability to bring him down. When JFK was elected president, he appointed Bobby as the U.S. Attorney General – and Bobby immediately launched the biggest crusade against organized crime that the country had ever seen... and this included Jimmy Hoffa.

In fact, Bobby Kennedy put together his own special "Get Hoffa" squad within the Justice Department. They reportedly engaged in activities that were questionably legal to try to bring down the head of the Teamsters.

The Kennedy brothers hated Jimmy Hoffa, and Jimmy Hoffa hated them right back with an equal veracity. When JFK was assassinated, Hoffa reportedly stood up on the chair in the restaurant where he was dining and cheered, adding, "I hope the worms eat his eyes!"

Bobby Kennedy must have felt victorious when Hoffa was convicted in 1964 of attempted bribery of a grand juror, a crime for which he was sentenced eight years. Later that year, he was convicted of fraud for improper use of the Teamsters' pension fund. For that, he received a five-year prison term that was set to be served concurrently.

Following his incarceration, Robert F. Kennedy resigned as Attorney General to run for the U.S. Senate position from New York, which he won.

**Jimmy Hoffa in – and out of – Prison**

Jimmy Hoffa served time in the Federal Bureau of Prisons from the two 1964 convictions. Being incarcerated did slow Hoffa down personally, but it did not stop the unions from continuing their efforts to organize workers.

H.L. Hunt, as usual, had powerful friends in Washington and was very close to a United States Senator who had the reputation of being able to work with Hoffa. Mr. Hunt came up with a plan where he would use his influence and political contacts to get Jimmy Hoffa released from prison, and then arrange a pardon from him from the President himself, Richard Nixon.

During the period of time that this deal was being made, it was obvious that there would have to be some payoffs and such. A sum of $125,000 in cash was going to be required, and of course, that money would have to come from Mr. Hunt.
Part VI: Mr. Hunt & Jimmy Hoffa

There was an attorney out of Washington who was Jimmy Hoffa's man, and he was to pick up the money; his name was Sidney Zachery.

Zachery had been in H.L. Hunt's office on two other occasions that I recall. On the day that the $125,000 was paid, I met him with the money in a briefcase at the Cabana Motor Hotel, which was built and owned by the Teamsters Union on I-35 (Stemmons Freeway) in Dallas. Entertainer Doris Day also owned a piece of the hotel.

H.L. Hunt: Motive and Opportunity

Hill Bridge, which was named for H.L. Hunt's oldest daughter because of her position in Dallas as an heiress and philanthropist. This is just a note of interest in how things come back around and connect.

At the time when I met Zachery at the Cabana, it was simply a hotel with a popular nightspot. I gave him the briefcase with the $125,000, and he did not open it. There were no papers signed, we simply shook hands, and I left the Cabana.

This Hoffa attorney, Sidney Zachery, left Dallas and was to fly to Atlanta, Georgia. I later got word that this man had gone out to dinner that night in Atlanta, and while he was dining, the restaurant caught on fire. The one person killed in the incident was Sidney. I have never had any proof of that and have never heard any more information whatsoever.

If in fact Sidney was killed, I have to wonder what happened to the money. Had he already delivered it to someone? I don't know the answer to those questions— I can honestly say that I'd handed this man a briefcase with $125,000 in it without knowing where it was going or what it was for.

What I do know is that H.L. Hunt had made a deal with Jimmy Hoffa. The agreement was that Hunt would arrange for Hoffa to be released from prison and then given a Presidential pardon, and Jimmy Hoffa would pledge that no union organizers would ever enter a Hunt business. This arrangement cost $125,000, and in the end, it was probably worth it for Mr. Hunt. I have no idea how this money was spread around; after all, it would be the equivalent of well over half a million dollars in today's world.
Interesting enough, the Teamsters threw their support to Nixon in the 1972 election, something that raised more than a few eyebrows. I can't help but wonder if this was part of the deal as well. However, that wasn't the end of the money trail.

Periodically, additional payments were necessary, and a Louisiana Government Official was used to pass the money on to Hoffa and his Teamsters, which in turn kept unionization out of the Hunt companies. In fact, Jimmy Hoffa personally pulled a union organizer out of a Hunt company in Muncie, Indiana. With the Hunt/Hoffa deal, and the continued payouts, the Teamsters used strong-arm tactics to keep any union issues out of Hunt operations.

Assassination Day

On July 30, 1975, Jimmy Hoffa went to the Machus Red Fox Restaurant just outside of Detroit at about 2:00 in the afternoon. He was supposedly going to meet two other Mafia leaders: Anthony Giacalone and Anthony Provenzano. He arrived in the parking lot first and waited for about thirty minutes before calling his wife to tell her that he suspected that he'd been stood up by his associates. He told her that he was going to wait a few minutes longer before giving up. That would be the last time that his wife ever spoke to him – she was the one that first reported him missing that evening.

About 2:45 pm, Hoffa was seen getting into a car in the restaurant parking lot with a number of other men. It was the last time that anyone saw Jimmy Hoffa alive.

His car was found at the restaurant, unlocked, but with no clues as to what might have happened to him. Anthony Giacalone and Anthony Provenzano both denied having scheduled a meeting with Hoffa and produced alibis. The authorities ruled that they were not near the restaurant that afternoon.

James Riddle "Jimmy" Hoffa was declared legally dead on July 30, 1982, seven years after he pulled into the parking lot of the Machus Red Fox Restaurant.

Personally, I was told that he was shot, and then his body was put through an industrial meat grinder – clothes, shoes, belt, watch and all. Whatever was left would be very easy to dispose of, which is probably the reason that no one has ever found his body.

Of course, there are stories that his body was buried in the concrete of Giants Stadium, or in some highway or a dozen other places. I believe that the killers would never take a chance to have the body found, so if it wasn't disposed of as I was told, then it was most certainly completely destroyed in some other fashion – cremation, possibly.