

# **HOWARD HUGHES: INSIDE HIS SECRET FILES**

Part One of this report appeared in the September 1976 issue of **PLAYBOY**. It outlined the complicated relationships among Howard Hughes, Richard Nixon and the Central Intelligence Agency, relationships that went back at least to the Fifties and significantly influenced events leading up to the Watergate break-in. The publication of Part One prompted a flood of sources to come forth with new leads. People from government, the intelligence community and the Hughes organization contacted **PLAYBOY**. But the most important development since Part One was gaining access to what the authors have come to call the Mexican Files.

Shortly after Hughes died on April 5, 1976, the Mexican government seized Hughes's 20th-floor penthouse suites in the Acapulco Princess Hotel. Among the items impounded were thousands of pages of internal Hughes documents, including handwritten memos from Hughes and the only known description of Hughes's physical condition in his own words (quoted below).

Howard Hughes was the central figure in our first installment, in which it was reported that he had been seriously ill, at least since some point during

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his Las Vegas period (1966-1970).

In Part One, in fact, it was suggested that Hughes was not in control of his own empire after he vanished from Las Vegas and that it was really being run by Chester C. Davis, general counsel for Summa Corporation, Hughes's major holding company. A stocky man with bright eyes and a winning smile, Davis has nevertheless earned himself quite a reputation among attorneys all over the country as a tough, hostile, obnoxious Wall Street attorney who doesn't take kindly to losing a single point, not to mention a case. Unofficially, the top Summa man is Frank W. "Bill" Gay, a powerful member of the Mormon Church who has risen from overseeing Hughes's car pool to sitting as president of Summa Corporation. He attained that position under the tutelage of the third member of the ruling triumvirate, Hughes's former personal secretary, Nadine Henley, now a powerful Summa executive.

The Mexican Files, taken together, weigh nearly 35 pounds and stand almost two feet tall. The earliest date on the documents is October 1971,

**article**

**By LAURENCE GONZALEZ  
And LARRY DUBOIS**

**finally, the documents that reveal**

## the real world of howard hughes:

- his bizarre lifestyle
- his drug habit
- his “keepers”
- his missing will

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the latest, January 1976 even though there are roughly 3500 pages, the Mexican Files are only a fragment of the communications from those years. But even that fragment gives rare insights into the private world of Howard Hughes.

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*The point is that I did not leave the stretcher and the prone position from the time of surgery to the arrival at Freeport until I was put in a bed and I have not left that bed up to and including this moment, not even to attempt to go to the bathroom.*

—MEMO BY HOWARD HUGHES,  
DESCRIBING HIS CONDITION, 1974

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FOR AT LEAST two decades, Howard Hughes was the subject of more speculation based on less real information than any other man alive. Little was known. Everything was a rumor or hearsay. And the stories were inevitably contradictory. Now a comprehensive set of documents can resolve many of the conflicting accounts about the last years of Howard Hughes.

The Mexican Files provide a clear perspective on Hughes’s condition and lifestyle, as well as on the awesome power that was wielded in his name in finance, politics and technology. For example, on January 14, 1975—in a single day’s shopping—he ordered his technical advisor to purchase, among other things, four airlines, a newspaper, all the land around the hotel he was staying in and the entire Lockheed Jetstar II Program: At least once, the Mexican Files show, he put a Senator on “alert” to do his bidding. He had no fewer than 30 satellites circling the earth at one point when he was debating whether or not to use one or more of them to get himself better TV reception in the Bahamas.

We were also able to obtain one 11-month segment of the log of Hughes’s daily activities. The log shows that some reports printed elsewhere in the press—but never before documented—were true, as Hughes executives claimed. For example, when the original Hughes Tool Company (ToolCo) name was sold, along with his drill-bit division, *Fortune* reported that Hughes had met with two representatives of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith, the firm handling the transaction. The log contains a notation that Hughes really did not hold that meeting (after a four-hour cleanup by his barber, Mel Stewart, necessitated by the fact that Hughes ignored conventional grooming practices most people observe, such as cutting hair and toenails). Over the years many Hughes observers had come to the conclusion that he never saw anyone but his aides. The log

shows that on occasion Hughes met people from the outside world and conducted normal business.

Hughes executives routinely put out misinformation for years, allegedly to protect their boss's interests, even in the early days, when Hughes was vital and active. Although the Mexican Files corroborate some of Summa's stories, these documents also contradict in critically important ways many of the claims made by Summa executives.

A few of the highlights of this remarkable set of documents:

- The Mexican Files seem to indicate that as late as mid-1975, Nadine Henley was in possession of a typewritten Hughes will she believed to be genuine and the documents appear to indicate that she knew of a second, handwritten one. Nearly a year after Hughes's death, as we go to press, Summa has not produced a will.
- Hughes aides were obtaining drugs for him that internal memos refer to as "not on legal use."
- Hughes expressed an interest in talking to the Senate Watergate Committee, but Chester Davis firmly told him not to because of the possible consequences of letting Hughes—under the influence of drugs—ramble on about "political deals," as Davis put it.
- Hughes wanted to help his friend William Randolph Hearst by putting up part of the ransom money for Hearst's daughter, Patricia when she was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army. Bill Gay and Davis emphatically opposed Hughes until he finally gave up his interest in the case.
- As Watergate neared its denouement with the resignation of Richard Nixon, Hughes dictated a memo to Davis saying he wanted him to destroy all "our files on our CIA relations," as well as "everything we have on Nixon, Ford, Laxalt and O'Callaghan." Paul Laxalt is a U.S. Senator from Nevada and Mike O'Callaghan is the current governor of Nevada.
- On January 1, 1974, Hughes's cash reserve was \$230,000,000—that's readily available spending money—giving some indication of the magnitude of the world of Howard Hughes.
- Hughes once ordered his attorney Davis, to "put 90 detectives on Greenspun's tail alone, to be followed 24 hours a day." Hank Greenspun, publisher of the *Las Vegas Sun*, was printing stories Hughes didn't care for.

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#### THE MEXICAN FILES

*Chester—Pse [sic] send a personal note from me to Mr. Ludwig (just orral [sic] not written through Mr Ludwig's chief representative—but with no other man present—) as follows: "It has been a pleasure to do business with you."*

HANDWRITTEN MEMO FROM HOWARD HUGHES TO CHESTER DAVIS

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APRIL 5, 1976, ACAPULCO PRINCESS HOTEL, THE 20<sup>TH</sup> -FLOOR PENTHOUSE SUITE: Howard Hughes was dying. He was on oxygen and doctors had already looked at him and made it clear that he was long overdue getting into a hospital's intensive-care

unit. One of his aides, Gordon Margulis, was later quoted by James Phelan in his book *Howard Hughes: The Hidden Years* as saying, “It was plain that we’d have to move Hughes somewhere and that meant that we’d have to clean him up so he wouldn’t look so dreadful.”

A jet ambulance was chartered to fly Hughes to Methodist Hospital in Houston. His doctors, who had rarely treated him in the past, would be aboard, along with Holmes. For more than a decade, Holmes and other aides had shuttled Hughes from the top floor of one hotel to the top floor of another, from Las Vegas to Nassau to Nicaragua to Vancouver, back to Nicaragua, to London and to the Bahamas, before ending up in Mexico. These moves had always been made with the utmost secrecy, to shield Hughes from public view and throw up a smoke screen of confusion of confusion around his activities and lifestyle. Nobody was to know for sure exactly where Hughes was, what he was doing, why he had moved. The ideal situation among his aides was one in which no one outside the close knit little group knew anything. One of the reasons for the extraordinarily tight security was to prevent the press, the public and the Government from discovering Hughes’s condition, which could have caused an upheaval in the management of his multibillion-dollar empire. And over the years his people had developed security precautions as methodical and obsessive as those of some small, elite, tactical insurgency group.

The entourage invariably left behind not a trace of what had gone on in those floors of hotels they rented, nothing even the cleverest of analyst could turn into a lead about what Hughes was up to. According to a highly placed intelligence source, after their departure from one foreign country some years before, a squad of trained government investigators descended on the raft of Hughes suites, sealed them off and went over them with every tool then at their disposal to see if there were some shred of evidence that Hughes had been there. They were unable to find so much as a single human fingerprint in the entire set of suites. Someone had meticulously swept clean and wiped down the entire hotel floor, inch by inch.

So it was no wonder that now, even as he lay dying, some serious measures were being taken to ensure that no one knew anything of their activities in Mexico. For example, security consciousness had become so much of a part of the aides’ lives that the first step, when it became apparent that Hughes had to be taken to the

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hospital was to register him under an assumed name.

Gordon Margulis, the Hughes functionary charged with such tasks as seeing that Hughes ate, lifted Hughes onto a stretcher on the morning of April fifth. According to the autopsy report (the contents of which, though not part of the Mexican Files, we were able to obtain), Hughes weighed 92.4 pounds, the normal weight of a ten-year-old boy. Meanwhile, the 20<sup>th</sup> floor of the Acapulco Princess was in complete pandemonium.

The scene was this: Columnist Jack Anderson had alerted the Mexican government that Hughes’s name had been forged on the entry visa used to get him into Mexico. The Mexican authorities were in the very process of preparing their search warrant for Hughes’s penthouse at the Acapulco Princess. The aides —particularly any of them responsible for the forgery— had to get out of there with the utmost speed or possibly face

jail. But first a decade of Hughes's files—a virtual mountain of paper—had to be destroyed. There was no time to box it in transfer cases. The loss of those documents was grave, but not so serious as the loss everyone would sustain if an outsider were to see them. The papers were the key to unraveling the truth about the last ten or fifteen years of Hughes's life, which his aides and executives had worked so hard to conceal. They were documentary evidence, not just a man's word or hearsay. Even when Margulis and another aide, Mel Stuart, deeply disturbed by the neglect that eventually killed Hughes, broke the vow of secrecy and told writer Phelan their poignant story of Hughes's life. Hughes executives were able to wave them off, saying that they had “told us of all sorts of dire things that are in the book. But I don't think we will pay much attention to them.

This new offhand denial of even the word of two longtime insiders would not stand up to the files that were on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor of the Princess ever got out. They not only detailed the financial wheeling and dealing that was the Hughes empire's bread and butter, they also documented that many of the strange things people had been saying about him over the years were true. Yes, he had fingernails inches long. Yes he let his hair grow for years at a stretch. Neither did he shave, although he retained a barber. Hughes was out of control by that point and the Mexican Files clearly show it. Not only was he on drugs and in a constantly befuddled, dazed state in which it took him hours to eat a simple meal of chicken and dessert, but also he frequently did virtually nothing but sit and stare at a movie or television screen, the sound blaring to compensate for his bad hearing—sometimes so loudly his aides had to rent the floor below his penthouse to keep other hotel guests from complaining. Floods of memos—sometimes as many as a dozen a day on the same subject—indicate that he at least had the intention of getting some business done. Yet nothing seems to have come of most of those plans and schemes. There is also some evidence that his wishes and orders were ignored. He wanted, for example, to change the name Summa. In 1972, without consulting Hughes, Gay named Hughes's major holding company (the former ToolCo) Summa. Hughes didn't like the word Summa at all and wanted his own name included in the title. Several memos and notes contained in the Mexican Files show his executives, for some unfathomable reason, simply ignoring his pleas for a different company name. “Do you see any reason why we cannot change the word Summa to HRH Properties at the end of this year?” he dictated in 1974. Another series of dictated orders and responses contains this “Can we change the Summa name now?” The response to that from Davis is a handwritten “yes,” but nothing was done. At the bottom of Hughes's query is the note, “Don't spend any more money on name Summa.” A February 24, 1974, list of matters to be handled from Hughes reads, “1. How soon could HRH change the name Summa to a new name containing his name? Will not conflict with the new Hughes Tool Company?” Somehow, with all this, the name to this day remains Summa. This seems to suggest a fairly clear answer to the question: Was Hughes in control of his empire? At one point he was shocked to learn that he did not own the Silver Slipper, when for years he had thought he had purchased that casino.

Even though Hughes had so little control that he couldn't name his own company and didn't know the full range of his company holdings, the press was successfully fed the story that Howard was a normal functioning executive who worked like a horse and simply liked his privacy. The press, by and large, was happy to accept that story.

Though it is now widely known that Hughes was barely competent most of the time and critically ill part of the time, even as late as December 1975, he still had periods in which he exhibited his great ambition and desire to do something more exciting than sit in front of a television set. Johnny Holmes told a grand jury, for example, that Hughes wanted to pilot a plane again for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday —December 24, 1975,— and that elaborate preparations were being made to carry out his wish. It sounds impossible that Hughes could have piloted a plane, a scant four months before his death, but the Mexican Files bear out Holmes’s sworn testimony. Jack Real, Hughes’s technical advisor, was charged with the task of getting Hughes’s approval for the mechanics of the flight, the type of aircraft, the pilot who would take Hughes up, and so on.

Holmes’s testimony had to do with the fact that there were plans for an airborne birthday party for Hughes at which his old friends would be gathered for a nostalgic flight. There is no evidence of this in the Mexican Files nor of his physical condition during the month of December, though Holmes told the grand jury that at that point, Hughes weighed about 135 pounds, which means he would have to had to lose 43 pounds in less than four months.

In any case, the characterizations of Hughes as robust and healthy were routinely accepted by the press. *Time*, as we pointed out in part one, had described his jaunty departure from Las Vegas in 1970 this way:

“Hughes pulled an old sweater over the white shirt that he wore open at the neck, donned a fedora and walked to the rear of the Penthouse...[He] eased his tall, thin frame through a long unused fire door and walked the nine stories down an interior fire escape to the hotel parking lot.” Nevertheless, recently, with no mention of it’s revision of history, *Time* changed it’s story to read: “He was lying face up on the stretcher” —exactly what we had reported months earlier. The Mexican Files corroborate the fact that Hughes was not about to sashay down even one flight of stairs. As early as 1970, his weight was in the 90’s (although before his death, he did manage to gain back some weight). The point is that a convincing case can be made that Hughes was, as early as 1970, legally incompetent to handle his own affairs.

In spite of Hughes’s deteriorated condition, his executives and aides maintained that all was well. It was easy to do this as long as there was no evidence to the contrary. But the suites at the Acapulco Princess contained thousands of pages documenting the pitiful condition Hughes was in —and a good deal more.

With this kind of information floating around —Hughes aides making up to \$110,000 a year and scoring dope for one of the world’s richest men— there was no question that someone would have to stay behind and clean up after Hughes departed for Houston. Rumors were one thing; documentary evidence was another.

For this reason it was standard operating procedure to keep a shredding machine in Hughes suites. Before Hughes’s ambulance was even rolling on April fifth, that machine was going around the clock, eagerly gobbling up everything in sight. The shredding continued for

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*“more than 30 Hughes wills were logged in...none with the stamp of approval of Hughes’s Summa Corporation.”*

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nearly two days, as bags of the world’s most expensive confetti were manufactured and carted off. But even the diligent little machine couldn’t swallow a decade of paper so quickly. It finally overheated and expired. Before the aides could decide what the next step was in ensuring the security they were conditioned to maintain, a group of Mexican lawmen showed up in the hotel lobby armed with a search warrant and asked one of the aides, who was stationed at the elevators, to take them to the penthouse. The aide stalled. He knew what was upstairs. But faced with the police, he had to do something. Finally he called upstairs on the house phone, but the *federales* realized he was passing the message—in code—that the worst had happened, that the police were going to take over the Hughes suites. The authorities at that point dispensed with the formalities and rushed to the 20<sup>th</sup> floor and arrested three aides, Clarence Waldron, Eric Bundy and Clyde Crowe, on suspicion that one of them had forged Hughes’s signature on his visa. That was just 40 hours after Hughes was reported to have died. On April ninth, the authorities photographed the suites and their contents. And on April tenth, they removed everything, including the files, to the police department. And the dam burst. The flood of information that comes out of the Mexican Files answers some very important questions. But for everyone it answers, it raises ten more.

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#### THE WILL

*Evidently Nadine believes the will she has is the true will.*

—MEMO TO HOWARD HUGHES  
OUTLINING AN AIDE’S  
CONVERSATION WITH  
NADINE HENLEY

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It was inevitable immediately after Hughes’s death was reported, pranksters flooded the mails to the Las Vegas probate court with his “wills.” Hughes was barely in the ground before the estate was involved in the battle of information and misinformation that had always plagued it during Hughes’s lifetime. Most of the wills were immediately dismissed as not worthy of any serious attention. One, for example, left \$10,000,000 to Clifford Irving and \$5,000,000 to Edith Irving. Newspapers around the country enjoyed the fun, but Nevada officials cursed the duty of arriving at some approximation of the truth about Hughes’s last order for the disposition of his multibillion-dollar estate.

The official stance was that the state was going to tolerate no nonsense concerning Hughes’s will. Anyone caught adding to the state’s troubles would be prosecuted. Privately, however, officials admitted that Howard Hughes was about to do to the American court system in death what he had done throughout his life: tie it up for years. “Lawyers who aren’t even born yet are going to get rich off the fight over Hughes’s estate,” one of the more pessimistic officials complained, seeing his 1976 Christmas holidays go up in smoke as even the preliminary proceedings dragged on into the new year.

The preliminary proceeding were focused on the so-called Mormon Will, so named because it mysteriously appeared at Mormon Church headquarters in Salt Lake City and left enormous sums to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church).

Among its many peculiarities was the fact that it named as a beneficiary one Melvin Dummar, a service-station operator in Utah. Dummar said that in the desert one wintry night he had picked up a man who claimed to be Howard Hughes. Dummar gave the man a quarter. The central problem with that will, which on the surface could have been dismissed along with the others, was that some of the world's leading handwriting experts wrote reports on it—some of them running to 40 and 50 pages—saying that it appeared to be Hughes's handwriting. Harold Rhoden, the attorney for its executor, Noah Deitrich, had an obligation to push it on through the courts to see if indeed it was the real Hughes will. (Deitrich was Hughes's top executive for 32 years, credited by some with virtually building Hughes's multibillion-dollar empire. He and Hughes had a falling out in 1957) Recently, Dummar's thumbprint was found on the envelope in which the will was delivered, and Rhoden got him to admit that he had left the will at the Mormon Church. Dummar still maintains that he had nothing to do with forging the will and the handwriting experts still say it looks like Hughes's handwriting. But the will's chances are slim. Rhoden, who pilots his own airplane, made this analogy in a recent interview with us: "I get the feeling that I'm in an airplane and the wings have come off, the tail has come off, the cockpit is in flames and I'm two inches away from the ground and I think I'm in trouble. I haven't actually been hurt yet. But I do think it is, shall we say, imminent." So the Mormon Will seems likely to go the way of all the others. And there are plenty of others.

By the end of 1976, more than 30 Hughes wills were logged in, oddly, none of them with the stamp of approval of Hughes's own Summa Corporation. Summa let word out that it was conducting a massive search for Hughes's will, employing investigators in several countries to comb through bank records. Internationally, Summa employees would sift through the miles of paper and tons of belongings that had survived Hughes. Summa did not reveal the fact that Bill Gay, now the president of Summa—what insiders call the maximum leader or the prime minister—had secretly hired Peter Hurkos, a world famous psychic who is employed by police departments around the world to help locate missing persons, to locate a Hughes will.

Among Hughes insiders, a wide variety of unlikely sounding rumors—which were taken seriously by many Hughes executives—was developing. Howard left his will in the possession of a man in Switzerland, one source said; Howard left his will in a safe deposit box, another said. The box had two key-holders, Hughes (under an assumed name even Hughes executives didn't even know) and a Hollywood actress who has never been publicly linked to Hughes. The actress and Hughes, the story went, had maintained a long, serious affair and had kept up communication even after Hughes went into hiding. So it goes.

Also odd was the fact that no will mentioned the normal things that most wills mention. For example, Hughes must have had some personal effects. Didn't he have something—maybe a memento of his Flying Boat or his around-the-world flight—that he cared about?

In any case, the scramble was on and the stakes went far beyond his billions of dollars. They included control of all the records of Summa and Hughes activity going back to the Twenties. What if someone with no loyalty to the current Hughes regime were declared legal owner of Hughes's records and decided to track down where Hughes's money had gone over the years? When, some years ago, the IRS and Congress tried to investigate



where Hughes's money was going, they admitted it was one of the most confusing, demanding jobs they'd ever had, so circuitous and convoluted were the ways in which hundreds of millions of dollars were being moved, apparently in a deliberate attempt to baffle investigators. The question is, why? What was going on that required that kind of secrecy? Was it just more Hughes paranoia? Possibly. But one  
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## HOWARD HUGHES *(continued from page 106)*

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*"What does it mean that Nadine Henley apparently not only had one will but knew of another handwritten one?"*

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memo in the Mexican Files seems to hint that there was genuine concern about keeping certain matters hidden for reasons that went beyond Hughes's whims. When the IRS targeted the Bahamian banks for a major investigation aimed at uncovering the millions from organized crime, rich businessmen, celebrities, commodities traders—people with fortunes they wanted removed from the United States surreptitiously—one of Hughes's aides typed up a "Reminder" to Hughes:

Chester called and wants to discuss the accounts at Castle Bank and Trust [in Nassau]. He thinks these will be under investigation sooner than anticipated and there is no need to ask for trouble. He thinks there are other people dealing there who could also bring an investigation down on us by association.

Hughes had been one of the country's grandest long-distance runners when it came to sprinting away from investigations of any kind, so this was routine business for Davis, Hughes's main attorney. But now Hughes was dead. The running days were over. It was finally time to stand and fight it out. Summa management was facing a new experience: a showdown with the American Government when Summa did not hold all the cards. There was a very wild and dangerous card out there and it probably began with the misleading words "Being of sound mind and body...."

As we go to press, the courtroom battles over the authenticity of the Mormon will continue, already at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees. Summa maintains that the will is a fraud, and after its own proclaimed massive search for a will, it has failed to come forth with one it endorses. This may be one of the strangest twists in the whole Howard Hughes story, because as recently as the summer of 1975, an aide sent this memo to Hughes:

Re: Your Will

While we were in Las Vegas, Nadine sent you a note. You told me that the note was about your will and Nadine thought you should review it. You instructed me to tell Nadine that you were aware that your will should be updated but that you could not spend the time necessary at that time.

Evidently Nadine believes the will she has is the true will and she must have been given instructions in the past by you to keep it secure. If the handwritten will is the real will, it could be that you had it updated later to the one Nadine has.

At any rate, wouldn't it be prudent to have Nadine send you *the one she has* [emphasis added] under sealed cover and then have whoever holds the handwritten one sent to you in the same method. You alone can compare one with the other and make whatever changes you deem necessary in your best interest.

It would appear from this memo that Nadine Henley knew of the existence of two wills, one in her possession and one in the possession of a person the author of the memo does not seem to be able to identify. One will is holographic and the impression given in this memo is that the other is not. Hughes responded to the memo. At the bottom of the page, one of the aides wrote, "Will get down to constructing new will as soon as possible. Will use West and Mintz to draft it." Milton West and Seymour Mintz were two Hughes attorneys.

The questions raised by this memo are fascinating. What does it mean that Henley apparently not only had one will but knew of another, handwritten one and that now, a year after Hughes's death, Summa is still refusing to admit this? What possible content could these two wills have that would keep Summa quiet all this time? Did Hughes "get down" to it and draft a new will in the last months of his life as he said he would?

#### THE LOGS

*Thursday*

*10 August, 1972*

*1:30 AM B/R*

*3:15 " Chair*

*Inst:*

*He doesn't want*

*To be permitted*

*To sleep in the*

*Bathroom any*

*More.*

#### FROM THE LOG OF HOWARD HUGHES'S DAY TO DAY ACTIVITIES

Depositions were taken last December in the case of the Mormon Will. One of the people deposed was Johnny Holmes. Asked if there happened to be any logs or records of Hughes's activities from 1966 to 1970, Holmes denied under oath that he knew of any such records.

We had been told months earlier that there were logs kept and then routinely destroyed after a certain time. We have further been told by a highly placed government source that there are years of logs that still exist. Some of them survived the shredding purge. Even though it was previously denied, Summa insiders now admit that Holmes and other aides kept detailed logs. We were able to obtain a copy of one fragment covering 11 months that was brought out of Mexico.

If there were no logs kept from 1966 to 1970, there was an abrupt change in practice in 1971. Buried in the Mexican Files is an account of Hughes's activities, sometimes detailed to the nearest five minutes, from 10:45 AM Sunday, October 31, 1971 through 4:40 PM Sunday, October 1, 1972. One day is marked "No record was kept for this day,"

and one page covering several days was wiped out by a faulty run through the photocopier. Otherwise, the log is intact for that period.

In some religions, it is forbidden to speak the name of God. In the Hughes empire, it was all but forbidden to write the name Howard Hughes. He was known as He, Him, The Stockholder, HRH and The Boss. In this entire 11month log, not once is his name entered.

Interestingly, Summa executives, because of all the security surrounding them, have led people to the conclusion that anything they say is meant to mislead. But the Mexican Files, especially the log, indicate that some of the events previously questioned by journalists actually happened the way Hughes's officers said it did. For example, The ToolCo meeting already mentioned: Hughes's appearance was so bad most of the time that normally Mell Stewart, his barber, would be called in just before Hughes saw anyone. The entry for one morning reads, in part (note: we have reproduced the logs—as closely as width column allows—as they were typed, including inconsistencies):

*Sept.*

*25,72*

*Monday -*

*3:45AM Mell Stewart in.*  
*5:30 “ Mell out (Light*  
*Trim on beard*  
*Only)*  
*5:40 “ Mr. D. Sedlmayr*  
*& J.C.Ivey in for*  
*signature. Wit-*  
*nessed by C.*  
*Waldron & G.*  
*Francom. Ray-*  
*mond Holliday &*  
*Mickey West*  
*Were in the*  
*Livingroom.*

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## **HOWARD HUGHES** *(continued from page 154)*

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*“To prove the world that he was alive and well, Hughes allowed U.S. Ambassador Turner Shelton to go along.”*

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*6:15 “ Mr. Sedlmayr &*  
*Mr. Ivey left for*  
*The airport with*

*OTD papers.*

So Howard Hughes *did* meet with people, *did* sign papers himself on occasion. In this case, he talked with the two men for 35 minutes.

That 11-month period in 1971 and 1972 was a particularly social one for Hughes. On another occasion, dictator Luis Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua wanted to meet Howard Hughes and it seemed like an acceptable idea to Hughes. Just to prove to the world that he was alive and well, He allowed U.S. Ambassador Turner Shelton to go along. On Saturday, March 11, 1972, at 11 at night, the job of getting Hughes ready began:

11 “ *Mel in to trim  
hair, beard, and  
toenails*

*Sun., Mar. 12*

3 AM *Finished and  
B/R (shower)*

8:30 “ *B/R*

9 “ *Chair*

10 “ *Dessert*

12:15PM *Finished dessert*

12:45 “ *B/R*

1:30 “ *Bed & Sleep*

9:45 “ *Awake and B/R*

10:45 “ *Chair*

*Mar. 13, 72*  
*Monday*

10:00PM *Departed from  
Intercontinental  
Hotel, Managua,  
Nicaragua.*

10:30 “ *Arrived at  
Airport*

10:45 “ *Had a meeting  
On airplane with  
Pres. Somoza  
& Shelton*

*Mar. 14, 72*  
*Tues.*

12:30 “ *Departed from  
Managua,  
Nicaragua via  
Gulfstream II.*

4:00 “ *Arrived Los  
Angeles, refueled.*

4:45 “ *Departed from  
Los Angeles.*

7:30 “ *Arrived Van-*

couver Airport.  
 8:15 “ Arrived aa  
 The Bayshore  
 Inn Hotel.  
 11:10PM Food: Chicken  
 Only.  
 Mar. 15, 72  
 Wed. 1:15 AM Finished eating  
 chicken.  
 6:15 “ Food: Dessert  
 only.  
 6:30 “ Wants Dick—  
 Hannah to come  
 To Vancouver.  
 7:20 “ Finished eating  
 dessert.  
 7:45 “ Asleep  
 5:30PM Awake, B/R  
 7:10 “ Chair T.V.  
 Mar. 16, 72  
 Thur. 4:45 AM Food: Chicken  
 only.  
 6:30 “ Finished eating  
 chicken.  
 3:30 PM Food: Chicken  
 only.  
 4:30 “ Finished eating  
 chicken.  
 Mar. 17, 72  
 Fri. Note: No record  
 was kept for this  
 day.  
 Mar. 18, 72  
 Sat. 3:50 AM Food: Dessert  
 only.  
 5:00 “ Finished eating  
 dessert.  
 6:30 “ Asleep  
 9:50 “ Awake. B/R.  
 3:20 PM Chair. Asleep.  
 9:15 “ Awake. B/R.  
 9:45 “ Chair reading  
 papers & T.V.  
 Mar. 19, 72  
 Sunday 4:15 AM B/R.  
 4:40 “ Chair. Reading

*newspapers*  
*Note: Instructions regarding*  
*newspapers:*  
*Outline the*  
*article, clip on*  
*the page: for easy*  
*location of*  
*article. Keep the*  
*newspapers*  
*intact.*

So, although Jack Anderson correctly reported that Hughes had at least one double, an actor named Brooks Randall, it wasn't Randall whom Samoza and Shelton met. It was a freshly barbered, showered, rested and fed Howard Hughes. It was Hughes in the best shape he was ever to be in.

But those occasions when Hughes had "Mell in" to groom him were rare. The rest of the log is a litany of

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clipped, bloodless references to a truly abnormal lifestyle. As early as 1971, Hughes's world had been reduced to a darkened hotel room. There were no secret nights out, as was sometimes reported. His activities had been reduced to "Chair," which meant he was sitting in his reclining chair, usually "screening" a movie, and to "B/R," the bathroom. Hughes had a terrible constipation problem that kept him in the bathroom much of the time. For example, Thursday, February 3, 1972, contains the notation "4:10. B/R—success." What can be said of one of the world's great industrialists when he is reduced to having his executives make notations of his bowel movements?

Hughes's diet during that period consisted almost exclusively of chicken and dessert though he occasionally would have a glass of orange juice with some rum and sugar in it.

In one five week period, he watched *Topaz* and *Funeral in Berlin*, two rather ordinary spy movies, a total of 30 times. That was one of his pleasures, watching movies or T.V. Sweets was another. He could be very picky about his desserts. In the log for a day in 1971 identified only by the words "Merry Xmas" is a marginal note, "Wants to start orange tarts again. Also wants to change the Napoleons so there is cake between custard rather than the flaky piecrust material they now have. The custard and frosting should remain as is."

But "the Man's Goodies" was how aides characterized Hughes's medications, according to Margulis and Stewart in their account. This once shrewd and brilliant man was kept in a confused daze by drugs. The drugs Hughes used were coded in the logs, apparently with ciphers such as "#4's," "C's," "BB's" and "22-1-1-1-," or some variation of digits separated by dashes or commas. Medical sources we consulted said that since Hughes had taken massive doses of phenacetin, according to the autopsy, and since he was found to have codeine in his system at death, the #4s might be Empirin number 4, which is the strongest Empirin compound containing phenacetin, aspirin (A.S.A),

caffeine and codeine. Phenacetin is a common painkiller. The Cs according to medical sources, could be simple codeine tablets, which come in varying doses. And the Es could be references to simple Empirin, which is phenacetin, caffeine and aspirin, with no codeine. These are all pain-killing drugs. Since Hughes was known to have numerous injuries from airplane crashes, this is one possible explanation, though there may be other interpretations of these codes. (Interestingly in a recent interview at the Desert Hospital in Palm Springs, Noah Dietrich told us that when Hughes was critically injured in a 1946 plane crash, he refused even conventional painkillers because of an aversion to drugs. “If I’m going to die,” Dietrich remembers Hughes saying, “I want to know it.”)

There seems, however, to be general agreement, both inside and outside Summa, that these references are to drugs of some sort. Notes such as “8 c’s” and “(23 left)” point to a drug. On December 17, 1971, at 2:50 P.M., there is the marginal note: “John must somehow acquire additional #4’s,” presumably referring to Holmes. The log for Wednesday, March 8, 1972, has a five A.M. entry: 22,1,1 & 1 (He considers this a normal dosage).”

The excerpt below should illustrate what the day-to-day life was like inside the mole cave where they kept the man whose earlier life reads like a Da Vinci biography:

*Friday*

*17 Dec. 71*

9 “ Screening  
ARABESQUE  
10:15 “ B/R  
10:40 “ Chair 8 c’s (23  
left)  
11:30 “ Chicken  
1:00 PM B/R  
1:20 “ Chair—  
“ARABESQUE”  
reel #3.  
2:50 “ B/R—John  
must somehow,  
acquire addi-  
tional #4’s.  
3:25 “ Chair—  
5:00 “ B/R—called  
Gordon  
5:50 “ Chair—Resumed  
Screening  
“DEADLIER  
THAN THE  
MALE.”  
6:40 “ Food: Chicken  
only.  
7:35 “ Finished eating.  
8:00 “ B/R

8:20 “ Chair. Screening  
“DARING  
GAME”.  
9:45 “ B/R  
10:15 “ Chair. Resumed  
screening  
“DARING  
GAME”. Reels  
1 & 2  
11:10 “ B/R  
11:45 “ Chair. Screening  
“TENSION AT  
TABLE ROCK”.

*Saturday*  
*18 Dec. 71*

12:50AM B/R  
1:05 “ Chair  
1:30 “ Food: Chicken  
& dessert  
3:30 “ Finished  
3:40 “ B/R  
4:30 “ Bed and asleep  
9:20 “ B/R and awake  
11:30 “ Chair  
11:45 “ 10 #4. 32 left.  
5:00 PM Food: Chicken  
only.  
6:10 “ B/R  
6:30 “ Chair. Screening  
“WRECKING  
CREW”. 5BB’s  
7:00 “ B/R  
7:20 “ Chair. Resumed  
screening  
“WRECKING  
CREW.”  
7:00 “ B/R  
7:20 “ Chair. Resumed  
screening  
“WRECKING  
CREW.”  
7:40 “ Food: Dessert  
only.

*Saturday*  
*Dec. 18, 71*

8:30 PM Finished eating



8:35 “ 24-1-1-1.  
8:45 “ B/R  
9:00 “ *Bed. Asleep*

Perhaps the most revealing entry in the log, as far as making it poignantly clear what kind of condition Hughes was in, is this segment:

*3 September 1972*

1:15 “ *Finished dessert,  
B/R.*  
3:15 “ *Chair.*  
6:00 “ *B/R*  
11:00 *Fell of [sic]  
Toilet.*

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## DRUGS

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*Suppose you had the tablets that I  
know you obtain, and started muttering  
about some of the political deals we, or  
rather, you have had.*

—MEMO FROM CHESTER  
DAVIS TO HOWARD HUGHES

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The aspect of Hughes's life that was perhaps his most highly classified and closely guarded secret was his interest in drugs. Hughes had taken his first tentative steps into LSD research as early as 1969, when he ordered a thorough literature search and report on that drug. The Mexican Files show that his interest in drugs of various kinds went beyond the purely academic. By the mid-seventies, he was in no condition for any type of pursuit that required extended concentration. The files show long-term use of legal as well as possibly illegal drugs and what could be considered criminal activity on the part of whoever obtained the illegal drugs for him.

As mentioned, there are frequent notations in the logs for what appear to be drug doses. And as shown, the logs indicate that Hughes spent an abnormal amount of time in the bathroom. According to doctors we consulted, this would be a natural result of codeine abuse. Codeine can cause severe constipation, as can all opiates. The Mexican Files indicate that Mell Stewart, Hughes's Barber and male nurse, was called upon to administer enemas to Hughes. Also, the logs have several entries that read,

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“the big ‘E’.” which the doctors we consulted immediately recognized as a notation for an enema. This is to be distinguished from other “Es,” which appear to indicate Empirin.

There was apparently some concern on the part of Hughes's aide, Chuck Waldron about acquiring drugs for Hughes. A memo directed to Hughes reads:

*You slept well again even though you seem to suspect [sic] us all the time. Either you want to sleep or you do not. But try not to think that we want to control you or what you do. Chuck does not like having to get some of these things for you. Nor do any of us but because it is you we will do anything. But remember that some of these uppers are not on legal use yet and we could be in some form of trouble that would take all Chester's skill. Why not try and sleep without this help and then your mind may clear a little and show yourself that we will look after you and your interests.*

According to a physician, "not on legal use yet" seems to indicate not necessarily a drug that is specifically outlawed but one that is under experimental use or has not been approved for general consumption by the FDA or other governing body. The odd references in the log to dosages such as 22-1-1-1, and so on, may be either an internal code used by the aides or a coded lab number sometimes used with experimental drugs. Bearing in mind that this was taking place in another country, it is possible that some of the drugs had names that wouldn't be familiar to an American. "Hallucinogens would go with the type of behavior exhibited," one physician said. "Watching movie after movie over and over, for example."

Another memo seems to indicate fairly clearly that Hughes was using some sort of depressant or sedative:

*Chuck told me that he gave you the Bombers and did not know whether you actually took them or not. He said you were so sleepy and groggy that he did not want to awaken you to try to find out. He did not try to keep you from taking them. Of course no one wants you to take any but we don't try to take them away. When you use words and phrases such as "putting you to sleep," "permitting you to go to sleep," etc., you imply that we have some kind of control over what you or your mind tells you to do. The fact is re: the bombers is that you slept more today without any than you did yesterday with six and that has happened many times in the past. You seem to delight in blaming us if you do not achieve the sleeping results you want, which vary. Sometimes you are happy with 10 and sometimes you are not happy with an over-all "down" period of 20 hours.*

Here and in other memos, Hughes seems to be taking massive doses of depressants, in this case, six. Almost any downer manufactured in this country is meant to be taken in quantities of no more than one or two, especially for a man with only 90 or 100 pounds of body weight. Another memo:

*You slept 12 hours without any bombers two days ago and have shown a remarkable improvement in alertness ever since. Inasmuch as you are sleepy now, how about sleeping without any until you wake up to urinate in 2—3 hours, then take just two tablets, which would take care of the balance of your sleeping period?*

There are references to drugs and sleep throughout the Mexican Files.

There is only one major problem involved and that is heavy usage of the item to the extent that you are not in any condition, either physically or mentally in any 24 hour period to enjoy the day or make any business decisions. One day runs into the next without proper nutrition.

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Even his general counsel, Davis, sometimes treated him like an addled old man. Terry Lenzner, an assistant chief counsel for the Senate Watergate Committee, wrote to Davis about making arrangements to get Hughes's testimony regarding contributions to Nixon's campaign. Though the committee had no way of knowing it, Hughes responded favorably. He indicated a willingness to talk. The entire set of circumstances surrounding this is difficult to fathom. For one thing, Hughes didn't even know what Watergate was and what happened there until approximately 20 months after it had made headlines around the globe. As an aide or executive wrote to him in one memo:

*Jack Anderson is not going to retract any statements made in any of his articles because he never flatly accuses anyone "just heard," "been told," "rumored," etc. No one today is beyond reproach, even Billy Graham, the Pope, etc. There is no such thing as "Credibility" since this Watergate incident started about two years ago. You just learned about it in London about four months ago, when I had to explain that we had to move from London in the very near future.*

Davis' apparent annoyance with Hughes was not unfounded. Hughes's desire to answer the questions of Senate investigators could have resulted in disaster. That desire is difficult to comprehend, since so many people wanted to serve him with subpoenas and legal claims if he ever surfaced. Nevertheless, he maintained his interest in speaking to investigators until Davis finally put his foot down:

*I have taken note of your comments but do not fully understand what it is you expect of me. When I told you that we have so far resisted the efforts of the IRS, SEC and the Senate Watergate Committee from seeing you, it was for your own good.*

*These people would love the opportunity to get to grips with you personally and they would not be easy to shake. They are all after publicity for themselves and giving you a bad time is one way to get it. We must know exactly what it is they want to know and then we will know how to deal with the matter.*

*Also, you are aware that I do not want to let you meet with these people because you are in no fit state to stand up to them, either mentally or physically. But it is very hard to get you to understand this. You are your own biggest danger at the moment. Suppose you had the tablets that I know you obtain, and started muttering about some of the political deals we, or rather, you have had. This could be trouble and I want no part of this. Neither do you, so leave it all to Bill Gay and myself in the future.*

Translated into English, Davis didn't want Hughes, speeding his brains out or downed out on his bombers, answering questions posed by the single largest assembly of clever, hostile attorneys in the history of the country—each and every one of whom could have some very penetrating questions to ask about political deals especially since that was the subject of the investigation at hand.

That Hughes was taking drugs in serious quantities and that it was having some effect on him not only is clear from the Mexican Files, it is privately admitted in Summa. What is not clear is why he was taking them. And what, exactly, were the drugs? Who ultimately, will bear the burden for the drugs that weren't "on legal use" (If they were obtained and used abroad, there is no violation of U.S. Law?)

The most interesting aspect of Hughes's drugged condition is that it seems to have pushed him toward incompetence. Also contributing to the evidence of Hughes's incompetence was the fact

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that he suffered from renal failure. According to Hughes's autopsy report, his kidney failure appears to have been caused by phenacetin poisoning. While the drugs Hughes took certainly contributed to his abnormal behavior, so, apparently, did his condition. "People who have kidney failure," we were told by a medical source with knowledge of this type of ailment, "often develop a type of dementia or even brain damage. It's a result of the type of materials that accumulate due to kidney failure. People who are uremic can be very flaked out and act very strange. This means that your kidneys are not eliminating certain poisons and that these poisons change your behavior. Since Hughes behaved strangely from the beginning, his condition could have only made him worse."

Hughes's obsessiveness with minute details of trivial matters follows perfectly the role model of the renal patient. "You are a very sick patient," a physician said, "and you become paranoid and demanding. You are very specific about what you want and how you want it done."

Upon reading some of Hughes's instructions about how to place his pillows under his head or how to prepare his food, a doctor commented: "I have seen chronically ill patients make seemingly irrational demands exactly like that. People feel helpless in those situations and this gives them a measure of control over their lives. Hughes had clearly lost control, at least near the end. He apparently became aware of this at some point. His demands, especially if met by his aides, would have given him some comfort in the feeling that he could still direct the course of his life."

The ramifications of this are rather startling. For example, if Hughes signed a will while incompetent, the will would be invalid. Now that even Hughes executives are willing to concede that Hughes was drugged and was in very poor condition, any business deals that are questionable or illegal could conceivably be blamed on Hughes.

## THE CIA

To: Chester

*He wants all our files on our CIA relations destroyed. This is also to apply to everything we have on Nixon, Ford, Laxalt and*

*O'Callaghan. He wants this done immediately and any taped conversations are also to be handled this way.*

—MEMO FROM HOWARD HUGHES  
TO CHESTER DAVIS, MARCH, 1974

This one little note brings up many intriguing questions. It was written just as a rash of burglaries, including a break-in at Chester Davis' office struck the Hughes organization. The most widely reported of these break-ins was at the former Hughes communications center at 7000 Romaine Street in Los Angeles, where papers relating to the CIA ship, Glomar Explorer were stolen. The question of how one simply destroys a raft of CIA-Hughes files brings up the further question of whether or not there was any relationship between the burglaries of CIA files and Hughes's order to have files destroyed.

The fact that the memo is directed to Davis is also curious. Davis has never been linked to the CIA, but this memo seems to indicate that he was close enough to the agency to have the authority to destroy documents supposedly proprietary to the CIA— or at least that Hughes had that impression. Since the agency is involved in national security, it would seem proper for it to keep control of all files of this nature. Where then, does Davis fit in?

Does Chester Davis have CIA ties? All memos we have seen in the Mexican Files that were sent to Hughes relating to the Glomar Explorer, for example, come from Davis. As general counsel, would he be the appropriate person to be explaining to Hughes about an alleged mining venture—which is how the Glomar was described in the memos to Hughes— or would it be one of Hughes's executives who handled that kind of business?

Did Davis actually follow Hughes's order to destroy the CIA files? How much did Hughes himself know about the CIA business his companies were doing? The Mexican Files make it apparent that many things were hidden from Hughes—or else they were simply not explained to him because he was too difficult to deal with. Davis' characterization to Hughes of the Glomar as a mining vessel indicates that either it was actually doing deep ocean mining, contrary to all the press stories that it was not, or Hughes was being lied to about the fact that the ship wasn't even his but belonged to the CIA, and the fact that it wasn't doing any mining except supposedly for a Russian submarine. One memo indicates that Lockheed's Missile Division was also involved with the Glomar project. From the memo, it seems the Lockheed Missile Division was going to do some deep ocean mining itself—or so Chester was telling Hughes. Several people familiar with the Glomar project have

suggested the ship may have been involved in looking into the possibility of planting, as one intelligence source put it, “flowers on the ocean floor. These flowers would have tails of fire and would bloom into radiant fireballs several miles in diameter. The name of this flower rhymes with thistle.” This rather poetic suggestion about the Glomar has been denied by an intelligence source who was aboard the Glomar during its missions.

## THE FINAL DAZE

With deep sincerity,

H.R.H.—

—HANDWRITTEN MEMO  
BY HOWARD HUGHES

A good west-to-east cruising altitude for a small, private jet aircraft is 27000 feet. It was there, we are told, that Hughes moved his lips once for the air ambulance pilots to see and drew his last breath—up in the air, out of reach of Mexican law, out of reach of all authority, where all his life he had longed to be. It was poetic justice. Remember who he was to the American public before his image was irrevocably tarnished, the romantic, flashy figure he cut, a contemporary legend who, at one point, had more Hollywood starlets hanging onto him than any other man alive. He was the aviator in his leather flight jacket and snap-brim Stetson, the premier test pilot of the Thirties, who set a world speed record that went unbroken for years. He was a man who would settle for nothing less than miracles. Remember the fearless, lanky warrior who marched into a hearing in 1947 and faced down the entire United States Senate over charges that he had some underhanded dealings with defense contracts as well as with the love of his life—the Hercules HK-1 Flying Boat. They said his boat would never fly and Hughes response was, “If the Flying Boat fails to fly, I will probably exile myself from this country. I have put the sweat of my life into this thing.... I have stated that if it fails to fly, I will leave this country. And I mean it.

Among the world’s largest airplanes—significantly larger than a 747—Hughes’s Flying Boat had so many acres of control surface that new hydraulic systems had to be invented—by Hughes—to handle the weight loads. No human hand could otherwise move the stick. The plane was so new and complex that only Hughes knew it intimately enough to sit at the controls. They said it would never fly.

It flew.

“It just felt so buoyant and good.” Hughes said.

Yet he ended up in exile, plaintively telling his aides to ask Chester “how long this IRS thing will keep us out of the country,” his country, the one for which he built satellites and weapons of war and lasers. How long, he wanted to know, before he could see his home?

The answer was forever, Howard, Forever.