

Dupe

'The Last of The Giants'

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By David C. Berliner

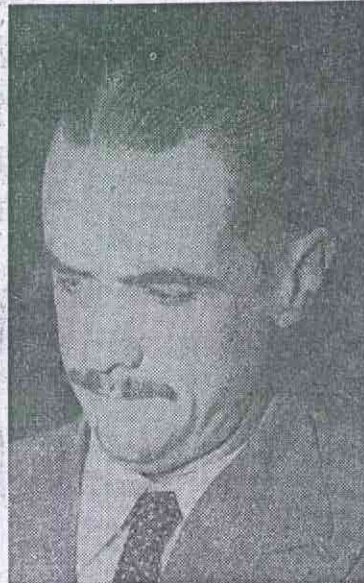
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NEW YORK—Death has finally brought Howard Hughes to life.

The doors have swung open, the dam has split wide, the shades have been pulled up, and every cliché and wild story that ever seeped through to form the legend of the enigmatic billionaire is now pouring out in a torrent of revelations. World, meet Mr. Howard Hughes.

"There were so many things written about him that weren't factual," Gordon Margulis, the man who became one of his closest personal aides and carried him to the waiting plane that would take him to a hospital dead-on-arrival said Sunday. "You know, he was the last of the giants. Years ago, anybody who wanted to see anybody in the royal family found it was practically an impossibility to get near them. And the same was true for guys like Henry Ford and Winston Churchill.

"Unfortunately, I saw this giant deteriorate. These days, kings and queens walk around in jeans. It's a whole different world. Those glamorous days he lived in have disappeared and



Howard Hughes

he seemed to have disappeared with it."

The observation is warm, even sensitive. It is hardly the sort of response that might be expected from a solidly built, 45-year-old Londer with a cockney accent who served as the chief

See HUGHES, B3, Col. 1



Hughes book collaborators, from left: Gordon Margulis, James Phelan and Mell Stewart.

HUGHES, From B1

bodyguard for one of history's wealthiest men.

But there it is, and there was Margulis, a deceptively gentle and easygoing man doing his very best to be relaxed as he started out on a nationwide tour to promote a newly published book, "Howard Hughes: The Hidden Years" he has collaborated on.

With him are Mell Stewart, a 47-year-old Mormon with a penchant for clasped hands and wry observations, and James Phelan, investigative journalist extraordinaire, who put together the account from first-hand revelations supplied by the two men.

Their story is harrowing. Their story is amusing. Their story is bizarre, insane, fantastic, so unreal as to be fiction, so mad as to be true.

It is a tale once whispered as gossip, then shouted as gospel by Clifford Irving. Howard Hughes with waist-length hair and fingernails inches long. Howard Hughes addicted to drugs he injected himself. Howard Hughes — the Howard Hughes, the dashing playboy, the aviation genius—emaciated, out-of-touch with the world around him and unaware of the world beyond.

Now he is dead. Now the lawsuits begin with wills and more wills. Now the truth, so garbled and shredded and covered with moss will be probed and picked at so that someone, sometime in the distant future, will know who this man of mystery really was. And so, here are the authors, genial

self-proclaimed rebels in the mighty Hughes universe, telling it like it was.

"Let's face it, everybody needs money," Margulis said, leaning back in his chair so that the jacket of his gray leisure suit slid open to reveal a colorful blue-print shirt. "We were on the lower end of the salary scale, making only \$20,000 a year, but I stayed on because I thought that, in my mind, anyway, I'd one day be able to get him out of his shell. I certainly hope we make money from this book (the advance has been put at \$250,000 divided equally three ways) and I hope people get to see who this man actually was."

In this age of kiss-and-tell, of Elizabeth Ray and Fanne Foxe and of everyone who ever slept at the White House, it is refreshing to hear authors concede that money was their motive . . . at least in part.

"Mr. Hughes was a brilliant giant, a very fine engineer, a great man in aviation and wonderful for intricate details," said Stewart, who served, in effect, as the recluse's private nurse. "I felt that the taxpayer had a right to know where the money was being spent. Hughes Aircraft was No. 8 in the country in the dollar amount of its government contracts, you know."

"I just felt it was in the interest of justice to make his lifestyle known to the public so it could understand his motives and why he did things like he did . . . It's true he had a lot of fetish ideas, but he had a fantastic mind."

A fantastic mind, gone, apparently,

to the stars. Fetishes? Enough to drive a psychiatrist to his own couch. Filthy, yet obsessed by the fear of germs from others. Afraid of people he didn't know. Magnetized by the same feature films that he saw over and over again with the "mushy" pats edited out or speeded through the projector. This from the ladies' man, the lothario, the heartbreak kid.

"This man simply fell apart," said author Phelan, who over the years had written six major magazine articles on Hughes and was an acknowledged expert on the subject before he was approached by intermediaries to join with the two former aides.

"There were details about his personal deterioration that I didn't use. I thought this was a poor, sad man, and — while I wanted to indicate the extensive nature of his deterioration, at the same time I wanted to leave some semblance of his dignity to him."

In those words—slammed face-to-face with a report in the book that Hughes once spent 72 consecutive hours on the toilet because of constipation problems—lies the outline of the horrifying enigma of the man who was trapped and isolated by the terrifying limitations of his own mind.

"There's a man who has a great empire and lost complete control of it," Stewart said, carefully adjusting the lapels of his solid, sedate blue suit. "Here's a man who didn't even know where his office was . . . and now the court fights will go on for years."

World, meet Howard Hughes.