

to help finance its youth and community service projects.

He also belonged to Eagles Lodge 1067, Moose Lodge 371, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1285, and the Coin Club.

A lifelong Democrat, he held a number of important community assignments, including service as a member of the Frederick County Plumbing & Building Code Committee, and the State of Maryland Property Tax Assessment Appeal Board for Frederick County.

He was proud of "Blue Berry Hill," his recreational home in Frederick, and was an avid baseball and football fan.

Mr. Stevens grew up on his

papers indicates that the money would go to Pindling personally. But spokesman for both the Pindling government and the Hughes organization vigorously denied it. Any such offer, they said, must have meant "financial support" for the Bahamas, not Pindling personally. They point out that, in any case, Hughes never opened the casino.

Hughes' next home away from home was Managua, Nicaragua, which is the fiefdom of Anastasio Somoza. The potbellied ruler controls every profitable industry in his tiny nation, from cattle farms and hotels to laundromats and houses of prostitution. He has an interest in the shoe factories, the cigarette companies, even the parking meters. The Somoza family has acquired just about half the country's private property.

Hughes offered to help the Big Banana save another of his pet businesses, Nicaragua's national airline. A secret

in Merry-go-round

BY JACK ANDERSON
With Les Whitten

tain several references to Pindling familiarly as the PM.

An August 6, 1974, letter from Hughes to Davis finally got down to cases. "Regarding the Honorable PM," wrote Hughes. "I truly admire his courage and the actions he has been brave enough to take." Presumably, this was a reference to Pindling's favorable attitude toward Hughes and his projects.

"I urge you to tell him this," Hughes instructed his attorney. "I would like to be of assistance. The question is: How much assistance does he need and how quickly?"

"It is very obvious to me, and I say again that he has been very courageous, and we both know this costs money, or credit, or financial support in one way or another. I repeat, how much of this does he need and on what kind of time schedule?"

The secret papers indicate that Pindling was willing to deal with Hughes, but the negotiations eventually broke down. The phantom industrialist next appeared in Nicaragua, where he set up housekeeping on an entire hotel floor provided by Somoza. Later, Hughes moved into Somoza's private headquarters.

The billionaire reciprocated for this royal treatment in cold cash, buying 25 per cent of Somoza's airline. When Somoza sought more financial support from Hughes, it merely strengthened the bond between them.

A top Hughes aide wrote warmly: "Meeting with Somoza, invite him as H.R.H.'s guest to Las Vegas or any other big city in the U.S. Fly him in an exec. type jet."

Unhappily, Somoza was losing money on his airline, which was paying \$65,000 a month on a British loan, Hughes was informed. But the men around Hughes found Somoza to be their kind of dictator.

"Somoza is a benevolent dictator, and he is still the most popular ruler in Latin America," a top aide wrote glowingly to Hughes. "He has excellent connections in the United States on both sides — Democratic and Republican."

But the higher Somoza's airliners soared, the lower the profits plunged. To entice more cash from Hughes, Somoza offered him an interest in a plywood factory, pharmaceutical plant or real estate. Somoza's requests placed a strain on the friendship between the dictator and the billionaire. "The General (Somoza) called today, and I did not take the call," an aide reported. "He obviously wants to know your reaction to our meeting."

"Since he feels he is in deep financial trouble with (the airline) — do you want to bail out and forefeight (sic) your stock? Are you interested in helping him financially save the airline?"

As a refuge for billionaires, banana republics can be expensive.

to bring his ill-gotten millions along with him.

Figueres also began to feel the same strange attraction for Hughes. On March 4, 1974, Figueres wrote to the recluse on presidential stationery. "I have read about you," he began. "I know you have no problem of residence in any country at this time, but nevertheless I want to offer you the hospitality of Costa Rica."

"Our country offers a wholesome climate and a great deal of individual freedom with security." The letter was delivered to Hughes, along with a memo from his attorney, Chester Davis, pointing out that Vesco had already made the move from the Bahamas to Costa Rica.

But Hughes remained in the Bahamas where he apparently received encouragement from Prime Minister Pindling. The secret Hughes papers con-