Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round

penthouse hermit. description of his final years as a WASHINGTON - From the tight, secretive, little circle around the late Howard Hughes, we have been given a

that we not identify them. about life in Hughes' inner sanctum. surrounding his death, however, have imposed on them. The circumstances They agreed to talk to us on condition persuaded a few to speak reluctantly circle has broken the absolute silence he Until now, no member of the inner

neglected." shriveled, dehydrated, with bed sores death of a pauper in to administer to Hughes, concluded: Montemayor Martinez, who was called and a bleeding tumor. Dr. Victor Manuel 'The patient had been seriously The nation's richest citizen died the emaciated,

hair and whiskers. witnesses have described Hughes as a after the billionaire vanished from Las llughes was submitted to the sheriff's office by Dr. Harold L. Feikes shortly wasted invalid, with unkempt, straggly Vegas more than five years ago. Other A strikingly similar description of

spoke in a muffled voice. black hat pulled down over his head. He who boarded Hughes' chartered plane in collar-length hair, a full beard and a December 1972, told us the recluse had Customs inspector Harold Sawyer,

the past six years. They described him witnesses who have seen Hughes during Yet we spoke to a half a dozen other

> talkative, with an uncanny memory of said he was cordial, alert, even as a tall, thin, distinguished man with a neatly trimmed Van Dyke beard. They past details.

impersonate Hughes. different states, or two different persons. Randall had been hired occasionally to 1960s a movie actor named Brooks Significantly, we discovered that in the Howard Hughes, either the same man in We have concluded there were two

protonged spells. refused to let the barber near him for into a neat Van Dyke. But other times, he sometimes he would submit to regular periods. He had a barber on 24-hour call; the real Howard Hughes at different The billionaire's intimates now tell us that the two conflicting descriptions fit haircuts and have his beard trimmed

complain about his health. call his doctor half a dozen times a day to fear of microbes. Sometimes, he would the early 1960s when he still lived in Bel Aire, Calif. He developed a hysterical Hughes began to-behave strangely in

examine Hughes, the eccentric billionaire sometimes wouldn't allow the ductor to touch him. From across the his mouth to give verbal answers in his that he wouldn't allow his doctor to open answers. Hughes was so atraid of germs and have the physician write down the bedroom, Hughes would ask questions But when the doctor arrived to

largely bedridden for the rest of his life. injury in London four years ago kept him urged him to move around until a hip living in a confined space. The aides

producer-director, one intimate told us. perspective of a hours at a time, viewing them from the Sometimes he would watch movies for 18 dozen movies to his retreats each week plane would also fly as many as two television on a large screen. A Hughes Bahamas so Hughes could watch U.S. Aides erected a special antennae in the

was always high because he was hard of recluse's favorite Westerns. The volume hear the reverberating sounds of the

graduation of all of his children because of his devotion to the Old Man. circle complained that he had missed the Hughes, regarded them as his adopted family. When it came their turn to leave families, he would invent excuses to keep them near him. One member of his him for a week to visit their own

—With Les Whitten

The aides who attended Hughes received huge salaries, as much as \$75,000 a year, to cater to his whims. He him outrageously, they tell us. liked to be babied, and they pampered

cookies and beef stroganoff were prepared to his exact specifications. press him. When he was ready to eat, they would make sure his favorite When he chose not to eat, they didn't

His body became stiff and brittle from

In the adjoining room, his aides could Hollywood

The "Old Man," as his aides called

to want to come out of his self-imposed Vancouver's Bayshore Inn under his own exile. He walked into the lobby of washer didn't seem to notice him. the drawstring on his pajama bottom. power, for example, pausing only to tie The hotel guests and a Japanese window There were times that Hughes seemed

a nearby airport. But an aide suggested across his balcony to watch the planes at never again looked out of his window. telephoto lens might be able to snap a that an enterprising photographer with a The curtains were drawn, and Hughes picture of Hughes from another building For a time, Hughes enjoyed staring

back to the U.S. conceded, was to fly the dying Hughes decision they ever made, one insider periodic stupors. Perhaps the only real instructions when he lapsed into his occur to them to disregard the not to send him to a hospital, it didn't obedient. When he issued instructions can offer is that they were strictly in the end? The only explanation they Why did his devoted aides neglect him

multimillion-dollar financial decisions. billion empire, why a guardian wasn't aides to help him. But U.S. authorities Hughes was competent to run his \$2 They want to know whether the quirky aren't satisfied with this explanation his own death by not allowing his closest In a way, Hughes may have ordered