

Cause of Hughes's Death Is Given as Kidney Failure

By JAMES P. STERBA
Special to The New York Times

HOUSTON, April 6 — He weighed 90 pounds. His body was frail and dehydrated. His face, partly covered by a beard and moustache, was emaciated. His frame, once 6 feet 4 inches tall, had shrunk two inches.

And physicians who observed an autopsy performed on him here today said that Howard R. Hughes died of kidney failure, a common cause of death.

Officials at Methodist Hospital, where the 1-hour-forty-minute autopsy was performed this afternoon, said that two personal physicians and an aide of the 70-year-old billionaire "have positively identified the body of Mr. Hughes."

"The preliminary autopsy findings demonstrated that Mr. Hughes died of chronic renal disease," said Ted Bowen, the hospital president, reading from a prepared statement. "Fingerprints were taken and are being sent to the F.B.I. for a confirmation of identity."

The covered body of Mr. Hughes, who died yesterday while being flown to Houston for medical treatment, was taken from the hospital's pathology laboratory after the autopsy to a local funeral home.

George H. Lewis, the funeral home director, said that the body would be buried in a family plot in a Houston cemetery, next to Mr. Hughes's parents. Mr. Lewis said that relatives insisted that the time and place of the funeral services not be disclosed. Dr. Joseph A. Jachimczyk, the Harris County Medical Examiner, said after observing the autopsy that there was "no suspicion whatever of any foul play."

Dr. Jack L. Titus, chief of the hospital's pathology department, performed the autopsy. Hospital officials said that it was performed at the request of Mrs. Frederick R. Lummis, Mr. Hughes's aunt and closest living relative. A death certificate was signed, they said, by Dr. Henry D. MacIntosh, the hospital's chief of internal medicine, who served as attending physician.

Mr. Hughes's personal physicians, Dr. Wilbur S. Thain of Logan, Utah, and Dr. Lawrence Chaffin of Los Angeles, and a Hughes aide, John M. Holmes Jr., identified the body as being that of Mr. Hughes. All three men accompanied him in a Lear jet from Acapulco to Houston yesterday. Mr. Hughes died at 1:27 P.M. in the jet. Dr. Jachimczyk said that the time of death, as reported by the two doctors, appeared to be correct.

Dr. Ethel Erickson, the deputy county medical examiner, who also observed the autopsy, said that Mr. Hughes looked "extremely shriveled" and "emaciated."

"He was very dehydrated because he didn't want to drink water," she said she had been told by his doctors.

Early today, Treasury Secretary William E. Simon ordered Internal Revenue Service agents "to seize the body and make sure that it was, for our purposes, Howard Hughes," a Treasury spokesman said in Washington.

The spokesman added that agents subsequently took fingerprints from the body, and that the prints would be sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for positive identification.

An F.B.I. spokesman said, however, that he was unsure whether the bureau had samples of Mr. Hughes's fingerprints in its files.

The Treasury spokesman said that the reason for Mr. Simon's order, for which he could not remember a precedent, was the I.R.S.'s need to establish with certainty that Mr. Hughes had died before it began to levy taxes on his estate.

Briefing newsmen after the autopsy, Dr. MacIntosh described the cause of death this way:

"Renal means kidney, two of them. Chronic means a long time. And failure means that that they don't work so well. The kidneys have the responsibility of getting rid of the waste products the body makes, and they come out in the urine. The kidneys are marvelous organs, and when they don't function very well, the waste products accumulate. And unless something is done about it, the patient will die. And this is what I think has happened.

"I would emphasize that ultimately the patient faces a time when nothing can be done about it. And we really have no way of altering the progressive

downhill course."

Methodist Hospital officials said that they did not expect to make any other information available on Mr. Hughes's condition at death.

"It was clear that Mr. Hughes liked to lead a life of secrecy," Dr. MacIntosh said. "I find no fault with the way he lived his life. As his physician, and as those who were associated with me in this matter, we all were determined that in this critically ill situation which we were anticipating, that we could do nothing more than to try to continue what we thought he would like."

Dr. MacIntosh said that there was no evidence of cardiovascular failure in "the big vessels that we could do anything about."

The kidney failures were "changes we expect in the aging process," he added.

Dr. Titus, who with a team was said to have performed the autopsy, did not talk with reporters.

Will Lummis, the lawyer son of Mr. Hughes's aunt here, was making funeral arrangements, but he declined to discuss them.

The autopsy began at 1:30 P.M. and ended at 3:10 P.M. in the basement laboratory. As he entered the lab, Dr. Jachimczyk told reporters that normal means of identification, including fingerprints, X-rays dental charts and personal identification by those who knew Mr. Hughes, were to be used.

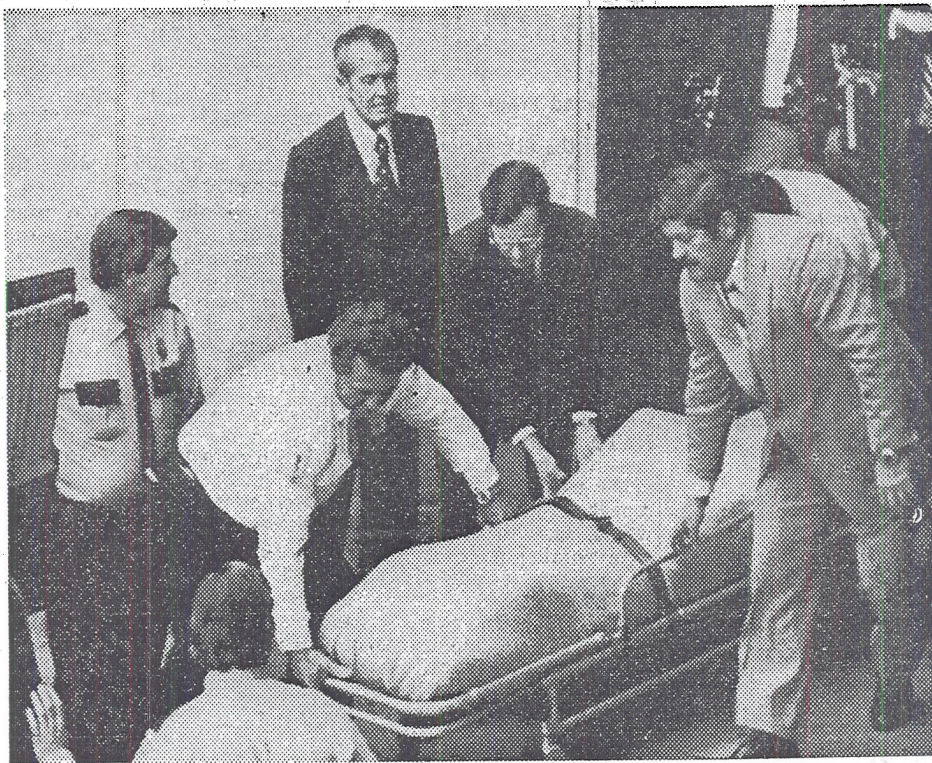
"As far as I'm concerned, it's an ordinary death," he said. "It's an extraordinary individual involved, perhaps, but the death is like any other death."

An article on the Summa Corporation appears on Page 49.



Associated Press

Dr. Joseph Jachimczyk, medical examiner, in Houston yesterday talking to reporters concerning autopsy performed on Howard Hughes.



United Press International

The body of Howard R. Hughes is taken to a waiting hearse from hospital in Houston