

SFChronicle JAN 15 1977 CIA

# Former Aide Says Hughes Was Hooked on Drugs

Elko, Nev.

Howard Hughes was a lonely, unhappy and vindictive man who often was in a drug stupor in his final years, a former aide said yesterday.

Melvin Stewart, who worked as a male nurse attending the billionaire from 1968 until two days before his death in April, 1976, said, "He didn't have any friends."

The billionaire had lost control of his own fortune, Stewart said, and quoted Hughes as often having said, "I'm an unhappy son of a bitch."

Stewart gave an insight into Hughes' final years in an interview. He was in Elko to testify in the \$142 million slander of title suit by Las Vegas publisher Hank Greenspun against Hughes' Summa Corp.

Hughes, once regarded as quite a lady's man, had no interest in women after he went into seclusion, Stewart said.

"He never talked about women," Stewart said. "When he was watching movies and they started making love, he would say, 'Skip the mushy parts.' He lived a celibate life."

Stewart signed on as Hughes' part-time barber in 1961 in Southern California and received \$1000

for the first haircut and shave he gave. In 1968, Stewart worked full-time as a male nurse, attending Hughes' bedsores, changing his sheets and grooming him.

When Hughes was being readied to meet Nevada Governor Mike O'Callaghan in London in 1973, Stewart said, it took four hours to give him a haircut and shave and trim his toenails and fingernails. He said Hughes received a haircut only once every two or three years.

"He was the original hippie with his long hair," Stewart said.

He said Hughes was kept a virtual prisoner in his final years while the officers and aides of his company made the decisions. Hughes got drugs — as much as he wanted — and would inject them in the groin, Stewart said.

"Hell, no, he wasn't in control," said Stewart when asked if Hughes ran his empire of gambling casinos, real estate, aviation and other interests. Hughes was enticed to leave the Bahamas for other hideaways when his top aides told him the drug supply was drying up in Freeport, Stewart said.

Stewart did not identify the drug involved.

He said there was collusion to

control Hughes. Stewart said false information was related to Hughes about the success of his Nevada casinos, which actually were losing money.

"He didn't know what was happening in the casinos," Stewart said. "The real power in the organization was Frank Gay, who became president. Yet Hughes saw Gay only once in 15 years."

Stewart said the top aides were all loyal to Gay because he gave them generous salaries — \$110,000 a year, a \$10,000 bonus and a new car every two years. For his job, Stewart said he received \$25,000 a year. He said Summa Corp. owes him \$11,000.

Stewart said he became ill in Acapulco two days before Hughes' death and went home to Cedar City, Utah. At that time, Hughes was dying from malnutrition and other ailments, Stewart said.

He said he offered to spoon-feed Hughes but was stopped by senior aide John Holmes who, according to Stewart, said, "If we start now, we'll have to feed him the rest of his life. We don't want to do that."

Stewart was fired from Summa Corp. Sept. 15, 1976, and now lives with his wife and four children in Utah.

United Press