

# Hughes' Last Days



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**T**HE Howard Hughes mystery has taken an ugly turn.

The late billionaire, once a daredevil pilot and a dashing Hollywood producer, became a living skeleton in his last years, a grotesque, shrunken dehydrated shadow of the man he had been.

The Mexican authorities told us he died of criminal neglect. Now the U.S. authorities are trying to determine whether his aides enriched themselves while they let him languish.

The key to the mystery is contained in the private papers that the Mexican authorities confiscated, at our instigation, from his last penthouse prison in Acapulco.

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**T**HE PAPERS include a fascinating daily log of the billionaire's activities. He spent his last years watching a constant round of movies. He alternated between his bed and a lounging chair; he nibbled his food, sometimes taking hours to complete a sparse meal. The routine was punctuated by painful, often prolonged trips to the bathroom.

It is clear from the papers that Hughes was both the prisoner and the warden. He imprisoned himself in blacked-out penthouses from the Bahamas to Nicaragua, from Vancouver to London.

He issued the orders, and they were obeyed explicitly. Sometimes the orders involved monumental, million-dollar matters.

One staggering order, it turned out,

was to construct a huge new Las Vegas hotel-casino complex surpassing all others in magnificence. He had just the right name for it: the Howard Hughes.

But most of the billionaire's orders were much more mundane. Typical were these instructions, which he issued on Dec. 23, 1971: "His head pillow is to be inserted with the hard blue-green pillow next to his back and the open end of the pillow case on his right (not the left as before). Also, carry the pillow by the bottom seam."

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**H**IS DOCTORS provided him with drugs, which they warned were harmful. These nostrums, apparently, gave him his only release from his confinement. His last conscious act, according to witnesses, was a feeble, pathetic attempt to inject a hypodermic needle into his shriveled arm. He finally dropped the syringe helplessly.

Yet the fading Hughes constantly sought medical advice which he seldom heeded. His doctors urged him to exercise, to regulate his activities, to eat more nourishing food. He never did.

In July, 1973, aide Lever Mylar was helping Hughes to the bathroom in the London penthouse. Suddenly, the fragile Hughes lost his footing, crashed to the bathroom floor and broke a hip. It was the last time he would walk.

Both doctors and aides tried to persuade Hughes to exercise and get back on his feet. But he just lay in bed and dreamed of his past deeds.