



Sullivan 1/29

"SOME OF YOUR COLLEAGUES HAVE NOTICED THAT YOU'RE DEVELOPING A MORE INVOLVED THAN-THOU ATTITUDE!"

On the Line

Having Lunch With Hughes

By Bob Considine



Howard Hughes, the best-known non-person in the world — with the possible exception of Nikita Khrushchev, the Loch Ness monster and the abominable snowman — declined today to answer my simple request for an exclusive interview. Pretty cheeky of him, wot?

I explained to the Nassau bellhop who answered the phone that there was nothing in it for me, except perhaps a little old Pulitzer Prize, which is not hockable. But the kid still clammed up. "Big man who lives upstairs ain't there," he said.

Everybody ever associated with Hughes has been struck dumb by the experience. And that fact, it seems to me, is the most remarkable thing of all about the enigma of the odd billionaire. Who enforces this rule of silence? How can a trusted employee and confidant, let's say his father's old friend and Howard's comptroller, Noah Dietrich, or an ex-wife, Jean Peters, or the chief of Hughes' Nevada operations, former FBI man Bob Maheu, or even one of Hughes' Mormon male nurses, secretaries, bodyguards and chauffeurs not yield to what must be colossal offers for their stories? Everything that has been written about Hughes for years has been pure speculation or outrageous fiction.

We have been assured that he is disfigured and does not wish to be seen; that he has become so "germ" conscious that he walked around his Desert Inn (Las Vegas) penthouse with his shoes encased in empty Kleenex boxes; won't let anybody use his expensive Aero-Commander executive plane because it has "germs."

Here, however, are four true Hughes stories:

Item No. 1. — One day at his 9,000-foot jetstrip at Culver City, Calif., waiting for a Hughes' plane to fly us to Palm Springs, I noticed a parked executive B-25 and asked whose it was.

"Noah Dietrich's," a Hughes man said, dropping his voice.

"But they broke up recently, didn't they?"

"That's right," he said, "and Mr. Hughes has given us instructions to let the plane just sit there until it rots."

Three or four years later I was at the strip to take a test ride in a great little helicopter the Hughes' engineers — or perhaps Hughes himself — had developed. And there sat the remains of Dietrich's plane. Its tires were flat, its sleek fuselage was rusty, and a cheap bit of cheesecloth fluttered over its dirty windshield.

Item No. 2. — Jim Austin, the president of Northeast Airlines, a company Hughes courted after selling his TWA stock for \$525 million, got a call one day from a stranger who said, "Mr. Howard Hughes wants to talk to you by phone. Naturally, he can't speak through your switchboard. What is your private number?" Jim said he didn't have a private phone. In 20 minutes a half dozen men marched in and installed one. Hughes, whose investments made Austin a millionaire, never called.

Item No. 3. — A writer friend of mine in Los Angeles dropped Hughes a note stating that he had been offered \$5,000 by a magazine if he could get an interview with Hughes. Hughes wrote him a letter saying, in effect, "I don't want any publicity." He enclosed a check for \$5,000.

Item No. 4. — I thought not long ago that my 22-year quest for an interview had finally been granted. Bob Maheu invited me to lunch at the Hughes' executive office. I was picked up by a somber young Mormon in a somber sedan. En route he asked me what I'd have for lunch. In my confusion, I said, "A ham on rye." He picked up a car phone and said, "LX-9, this is M4C. The individual who is coming for lunch will have a ham on rye."

Mr. Maheu was most suave as he led me into a magnificent private office with a desk shaped like a soaring wing. As we had a drink he kept looking over my shoulder at the door behind me. Suddenly I heard the door open and I trembled as Maheu jumped up and smiled. I lumbered to my feet and found my knees shaking as I turned to meet what I was sure would be the world's richest and most mysterious man.

It wasn't Howard Hughes. He never showed. It was a Japanese waiter with my lousy ham sandwich.

On The Right Side

Holy Innocents Meditation

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



Father Neil Miller and I became friends during his tenure at St. Michael's parish in Lyons, seven miles west of Clyde. Despite the talk about generation gaps, we enjoyed one another's company, and I was edified by his knowledge and even more so by his quiet patience. When I heard his long-sick father died on December 20, I said to our Sisters: "I can't go to the funeral, but I do want to go to the wake in Corning."

After the wake I stopped to see Fathers Thomas Brennan, Joseph F. Hogan and Gerald McMahon, a trinity of orthodox and devotion that would cheer Athanasius and Aquinas, and which does cheer and give courage to The People. They might be considered dubiously by people who think Holy Father is just another Bishop and who rejoice in undergrounding the Mass. At 9:30 I said: "I'm tired and better get back." "Stay over night. You can leave early enough in the morning." That made sense, so I did.

The 10 p.m. TV news from New York came on. Amid the news of disasters, fires and wars, came a report on abortion by Dr. Jean Pakter, director of maternity for the N.Y.S. health department. It is estimated that 125,000 abortions will be perpetrated in this State by the end of one year of legal sanction of the deed. Forty percent of the women presenting themselves are from out of State. Nearly half are unmarried. Nearly all the unborn are destroyed within their mother's womb. However: "twenty six have been aborted alive in New York City, and one baby girl survived and after four months of care is up for adoption at the wish of the mother."

On December 6, when the pastoral letter on abortion was read from the pulpits of our State, I was told that "many people were offended by the strong rhetoric of the pastoral letter." (I am always curious about the meaning of the term "many people".)

For the life of me I cannot imagine any words adequate to describe the deliberate destruction of the unborn child. Recently I finished "Auschwitz, the most dreadful book I have ever read. It is an eye-witness account of the Nazi concentration camp, written by a Jewish doctor, Niklos Nyzsli. (Auschwitz — Fawcett Crest Book — 67 West 44th St., NYC 10036. 75 cents.) In uneasy detail Dr. N. describes the orderly prepara-

tion for the execution of four million Jews, with some Gypsies and Poles added; the shameless denuding of the victims; the efficient execution in the gas chambers; the treatment of the corpses, including the yanking out of gold-filled teeth; the carting away of the bodies; and the finale at the crematoria. Making an honest parallel between the destroying of Jews, Gypsies and Poles and the destroying of unborn children, I do not know of any rhetoric which can convey the reality.

In a somewhat different context, University of Chicago Professor Bruno Bettelheim concludes his preface to "Auschwitz: This book is most of all a cautionary tale, as old as mankind. Those who seek to protect the body at all cost die many times over."

Monday, December 28 was the Feast of the Holy Innocents. For centuries we have recalled the killing of the little

babies by "cruel Herod." God knows, Herod was cruel. He married ten times. He executed his own sons Aristobulus, Alexander and Antipater. He ordered the execution of the babies of Bethlehem. Many historians think he was insane.

What virus has heized men of today who reprobate Auschwitz, My Lai, — and let's not forget the not-mentioned Hue! — yet calmly accept the destruction of today's innocents? This destruction is not by madmen, but by respected medical men, nurses and technicians. The babies are not torn from the arms of anguished mothers, but presented for destruction by their mothers!

No. The Bishops' Pastoral could not begin to say in words the reality of today's attack on human life. And I think that the "many people" who thought the Bishop's Pastoral too strong are a negligible group among decent Protestants, Jews, humanists and most Catholics.

Salting the Earth

In Retrospect

By Father John Hempel

Looking back upon what I have written in this column during the past year it would seem that too often I have appeared negative, flaying out at a society that never solves the problem of massive poverty. If any rationale justifies such an approach it would be that the problem is much more obvious to those who are frustrated daily in their efforts to resolve this ugly and tragic situation.

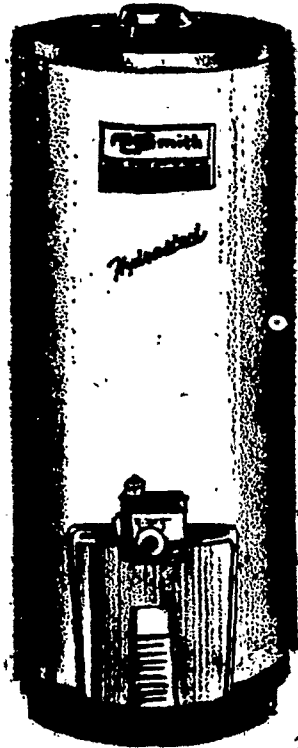
But we must admit that many have tried to take the problems seriously; many have wanted to erase the stigma of people deprived of the very essentials of human existence. I must admit that I have been most impressed by those who have shown a great compassion for the suffering of others; by those who have tried to understand why poor people especially minority people, find it so difficult to find the key that unlocks the prison of traditional poverty.

Those who have helped in our efforts to bring about a change in the lives of poor people are too numerous to mention. However, I must acknowl-

edge again the effort made in East Rochester in its declaration of a week of "Human Concern." A truck was acquired to meet the immediate needs of people for household equipment and now, the East Rochester Rotary has made storage space available. St. Louis parish in funding staff for urban ministry, St. Thomas More in its contributions to the Secular Mission, St. Ann's in its support of the Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation and other individuals and groups have all played their part in making it possible for us to meet at least some of the issues plaguing a large segment of our society.

Thus, we can say that even though so much was undone, much was done. Hopefully, the educational phase of the Campaign for Human Development will be well received so that next year at this time our sense of accomplishment will be even more optimistic. Hopefully, the year 1971 will even find us the poor and more intelligently answering this anguish within more receptive to the cries of our society.

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