

An Obituary For Hollywood
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A cloud fell over Hollywood last night. The beloved cinematic star, Charles A. Hughes, “Charlie Chuck” to his younger fans, passed away in the earliest hours of today. Shortly after 1 AM, a loud gunshot was heard coming from Hughes’ apartment. It is believed that the former actor committed suicide by placing the barrel of a shotgun into his mouth and firing with his foot. He is assumed to have died instantly. All that was found on his person was a copy of an old contract from the 1950’s.

Born in Golden, Montana, a small town miles from anywhere, Charles Hughes’ voyage to Hollywood is a classic tale. He was drawn to Los Angeles by the dream of being a great actor like his hero Cary Grant. Arriving at the Warner Bros. front gates in 1953, at the age of 21, Charles Hughes was wide-eyed and unprepared for the world that lay before him. He quickly adapted to life in the land of constant sunshine, and within a year, he landed his first major role as Tom Squire in the classic war film *Summer’s Day*. The movie was a huge success and garnered much critical and public acclaim for Hughes. This launched Hughes into the Hollywood eye, and he continued his success in cinema all throughout the decade. As the 1960’s approached, however, the tastes of the general public changed, as well as the style of movies that were produced. Charles Hughes’ lighthearted, all-American fare was becoming antiquated, as the new generation began to lean towards more thought provoking films. With the occasional bit role, Hughes was able to maintain a respectable lifestyle, however, but by the end of the decade, and through the 1970’s, Hughes was forced into working entry level jobs and had moved into a small apartment in the San Fernando Valley. Things changed again, though, in 1982, when Hughes was resurrected as a host for a children’s television show entitled *Mr. Chuck’s Garden*. Cast in the role of the elderly Charlie Chuck, the caretaker of a puppet filled garden, Hughes became known only as the silly old man from a kiddy-show, and his respectability and self-worth were somehow dragged even lower than they were during his unemployed years. Since the show’s end in 1987, Hughes continued to live in anonymity, with only the occasional teenager recognizing him from their youth. Never wanting to waste government funds by collecting unemployment, Hughes made ends meet by taking a job at the local grocery store, but until his death, Hollywood never paid him notice again.

Never married, Charles Hughes was fully devoted to his true love – the movies. Even during the times when Hollywood was choosing to ignore him, he never ignored her. During his adult life, he was dedicated to visiting a movie theater at least once a week, sometimes stopping by the dollar-theater to watch the classics when no modern picture caught his interest. But, he loved Hollywood. He loved movies, and they broke his heart. This is why he chose to end his life. In Hughes’ opinion the Hollywood of today has eroded itself. Turning on a television anymore, will find you staring at the pretty face of a 20 something young star. In a bit of irony, this is much how Hollywood was when Charlie Hughes first entered it – a cookie-cutter world of beautiful people. And, though he was kept out of it by his previous acting experiences of the 1950’s, Hughes admired the revolution that occurred during the 1960’s and 1970’s. He often hoped that Hollywood, as a whole, would look back to those times, and to set itself straight again. Not to simply be rebellious for rebellion’s sake, but to inject variety of

substance into the movie business again. There are still good movies made today, some may even venture to be great, but the fact of the matter is – that Hollywood is slipping, once again, into a paper-cut-out world. Most of the ‘stars’ of today are simply that – stars. Young, beautiful people eager to become famous are forced into acting to do so, instead of it being the other way around.

When they found Charlie Hughes’ lifeless body, the contract from *Summer Days*, his first role, was resting in his hand. Stained with blood, he had written his own obituary on the back with the request that it be placed in newspapers in lieu of any other written remembrances of him. Officially, it will most likely be stated by the coroner that Charles A. Hughes died from the massive trauma that occurs when one blows a hole through their own head with a shotgun. In reality, however, Charlie Hughes died of a broken heart. Hollywood had ignored him for most of his life, and perhaps now, with his sudden and tragic death, he will have their attention. Perhaps now, Hollywood will change the err of their ways. Though, Charlie knew before he died, they won’t.

-C.A. Hughes