

Tolson Papers Signed by Secretary

Deposition Claims FBI's Mohr Sought Estate Control

By Scott Armstrong
Washington Post Staff Writer

An FBI secretary has testified that, under instructions from then assistant FBI director John P. Mohr, she signed the name of associate FBI director Clyde A. Tolson to documents giving Mohr control over both Tolson's finances and the estate of J. Edgar Hoover.

Dorothy S. Skillman, who was Tolson's secretary at the FBI, testified that shortly after Hoover died in May, 1972—leaving an inheritance of more than \$500,000 to Tolson—Mohr brought her a power of attorney and a bank

agreement and told her that Tolson wanted her to sign his name to them.

She testified, in a court deposition filed last week, that she went ahead and signed Tolson's name to the documents without ever discussing the matter with Tolson. Two other high FBI officials, Nicholas P. Callahan and James B. Adams, also signed the documents as witnesses to Tolson's signature.

Callahan since has testified in a court deposition that he doubted that the signature was actually Tolson's, even though it was "similar to signatures of his in the past," because he

knew Tolson had had a stroke that enfeebled his writing hand.

Hoover had died on May 2, 1972, and Tolson had resigned from the FBI the next day. Tolson spent most of the next three years in virtual isolation at Hoover's home, which was part of his inheritance, until he also died on April 14, 1975.

Mohr, who had been the FBI's third ranking executive, resigned in June, 1972. Callahan, who had become associate director, the No. 2 FBI job, was fired last week by the present FBI director, Clarence Kelley. Adams now is in the No. 3 FBI job.

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documents in complex litigation over Tolson's estate. In sworn answers to interrogatories in this same litigation, Mohr has testified about the power of attorney that he has "no recollection of seeing this signed." He was not asked about the bank agreement.

In her deposition, Skillman testified that Tolson had given her his oral authorization to sign his checks and thank you notes. In addition, she testified, she had signed his name to another power of attorney, to his letter of resignation from the FBI and to his application for retirement benefits. She testified that she could not recall whether Tolson specifically had authorized her to sign these documents.

Before Tolson died, he signed a last will and testament and subsequent codicils—all drafted by Mohr, according to testimony in court depositions—that named Mohr as executor of his estate of approximately \$540,000, much of which is cash, real estate, investments and art that Tolson had inherited from Hoover.

This will divided Tolson's estate among philanthropic organizations and many former FBI colleagues and friends. Under the will, Mohr received

weakened.

Tolson allegedly signed two wills drafted by Mohr within three months after Dorothy Skillman signed Tolson's name to the power of attorney and the bank agreement giving control of his finances to Mohr. Lamensdorf apparently is trying to use questions about the authority of the earlier financial documents to challenge the validity of the two wills.

Lamensdorf has not alleged that the will or codicils are themselves forged. His position is that Tolson was in such poor health that he either did not understand or was unaware of their contents.

Central to Lamensdorf's position is Mohr's possible influence over witnesses to the documents. The wills and codicils were all witnessed by FBI employees, including Callahan and Adams, who all had been promoted within the FBI by Mohr.

The Washington Post first reported last March that a number of present and former FBI officials were under investigation in the Justice Department's probe of alleged financial corruption inside the FBI.

Among the subjects under investigation are relationships between Mohr

JOHN P. MOHR
... "no recollection"

and other FBI officials and suppliers of equipment to the FBI, the use of FBI supplies and personnel for the personal benefit of bureau officials. Mohr's handling of the Tolson and Hoover estates, the operation of the FBI retirement fund, the destruction of Hoover's private files, and the conduct of a prior internal FBI investigation of Mohr.

Sources in the Justice department have reported for several months that Attorney General Edward H. Levi had had severe reservations about the nearly total dominance that former Hoover aides—all associated with Mohr—have retained inside the FBI.

In March, sources close to Levi said that Levi wanted Kelley to replace Callahan, Adams, and Thomas Jenkins in their top-level FBI jobs. Levi and Kelley denied the report. However, Kelley fired Callahan last Friday for undisclosed reasons only weeks before Callahan's planned retirement.

Secretary Signed Name of Tolson

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Callahan and Mohr are among a number of present and former FBI officials who now are being investigated by the Justice Department in connection with allegations of financial corruption, according to government sources.

The power of attorney to which Dorothy Skillman testified she signed Tolson's name was dated May 22, 1972, and conveyed to Mohr complete control over Tolson's finances. The bank agreements, dated May 25, 1972, created an "agency account" under Mohr's control in the name of "J. Edgar Hoover Estate" at the trust department of the Riggs National Bank.

Skillman and Callahan have both testified about the signing of these documents in complex litigation over Tolson's estate. In sworn answers to interrogatories in this same litigation, Mohr has testified about the power of attorney that he has "no recollection of seeing this signed." He was not asked about the bank agreement.

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\$26,000 from Tolson's estate; Mohr's daughter received \$1,500, and Dorothy Skillman received \$27,000.

In addition to his legacy from Tolson, Mohr also would normally collect from Tolson's estate substantial fees as its executor. At the moment his fee is entangled in litigation over the validity of the will.

Opposing Mohr in that litigation is Tolson's older brother, Hillory A. Tolson, who was disinherited in the Tolson will and codicils drafted by Mohr.

Hillory Tolson's attorney, Rolland G. Lamensdorf, has been attempting to show in pretrial depositions that Clyde Tolson was incompetent at the time he signed the will and codicils drafted by Mohr. He also is trying to prove that Mohr exercised substantial and undue influence over Tolson's actions while Tolson was physically and mentally weakened.

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