

Doubts voiced on Hughes will

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Noah Dietrich, the former top Howard Hughes aide who was named executor of the late billionaire's purported will, set out on the legal road toward probate Friday, though still voicing doubts about the will's authenticity.

Dietrich, 87, who handled Hughes' financial affairs for 32 years, met with his Los Angeles lawyer and an attorney from Las Vegas, Nev., where the document was filed Thursday. The two attorneys will serve as co-counsels, said Dietrich.

He said he would file petitions of administration both in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, "so I won't have to make so many trips to Nevada."

It is up to Dietrich, said court officials, to offer proof of the will's authenticity by means of handwriting experts and other experts before the will can be executed. The filing of petitions of administration is the first step in bringing the document before the court.

It was Dietrich's estimate that the estate divided up in the handwritten document, delivered mysteriously to

Mormon church officials, is presently worth about \$1.5 billion.

But he said he had serious doubts about the story of a service station owner, named as a beneficiary in the will, who says he picked Hughes up in the Nevada desert in 1968 and drove him to Las Vegas.

"It doesn't sound like Howard to be out alone in the desert," Dietrich said in an interview.

"Furthermore, he was not known to reward those who helped him. The Marine who pulled Howard out of his burning plane in Beverly Hills was never adequately rewarded."

On Thursday, when the will was filed, Dietrich initially said he had doubts about the will's authenticity because it contained several spelling errors. Dietrich said it was unlike Hughes to misspell words. Later, after seeing a photocopy of the handwritten document, Dietrich said he had "no question" that the will bore the handwriting and the signature of Howard Hughes.

The service station owner, Melvin

Dummar of Willard, Utah, was scheduled to hold a news conference Friday but it was postponed. A spokesman for Dummar, Ron Brown of Los Angeles, who said he is Dummar's financial adviser, said Dummar was under sedation.

A figure of \$150 million has been mentioned, but the dollar amount that Dummar would receive has not actually been calculated — the document gave one-sixteenth of the Hughes estate to Dummar.

Another one-sixteenth was to go to the Mormon church, one-fourth to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute of Miami and the rest to two former wives, key executives of his companies, four universities and charitable causes.

A source close to Hughes' financial interests said that despite the appearance of the document Thursday, a worldwide search for a will or wills was continuing "in areas where we know Hughes had been, including Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Texas, particularly the Houston area."