

## Witness 'Who Was There'

# Hughes' Signing Dispute

### Las Vegas, Nev.

An aide who said he had been with Howard Hughes for 20 years and seen him almost daily for the past five years testified that he personally witnessed the billionaire sign a document firing the chief of his Nevada operations.

Levar B. Myler, who identified himself as a "special assistant" to the billionaire, said Hughes signed a proxy on November 14 dismissing Robert A. Maheu, who had been Hughes' right hand man in Las Vegas for four years.

The signing took place in the Desert Inn Hotel in Las Vegas, Myler said. The witness said that Hughes subse- quently went to the Britannia Beach hotel in Nassau, the Bahamas, and from there issued instructions that the proxy be released.

Hughes disappeared from the Desert Inn on Thanksgiving Eve without a word to Maheu.

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Maheu was fighting in a Nevada District Court to prevent his ouster, vowing not to give up "until I hear differently from Mr. Hughes."

Handwriting expert Charles Appel Jr. testified previously yesterday on behalf of Maheu that Hughes' purported signature on the proxy was a "simulation or imitation."

The proxy had been presented by a group of the Hughes Tool Co., headed by vice president Frank W. Gay

and general counsel Chester W. Davis as the main basis for terminating Maheu's employment.

Appel, who had been a colleague of Maheu in the FBI in Washington for a number of years, was asked by Maheu's attorney, Morton Galane, about the signature on a proxy giving Gay and Davis power to act for him in changing Las Vegas personnel.

"It's a very good representation," Appel said. "It would pass any bank teller and other business associates would accept it, but it's deficient. It's extremely skillful but it's different."

"Is it a forgery or isn't it a forgery?" asked Galane.

"It is a forgery," Appel said. "He (Hughes) didn't sign it," Appel replied. "It could have been an authenti-



AP Wirephoto

CHARLES APPEL JR.

An earlier witness

icated or requested forgery. By forgery, I mean only a

simulation or imitation."

Appel had testified previously that a handwritten letter from Hughes complaining that the Nevada turnover was bringing "bad publicity" also was not the billionaire's writing.

Davis called Myler as first witness to refute allegations that Hughes had not actually signed the proxy.

Myler, a portly, gray-haired man in his 50s, said he was in "face to face" contact with Hughes almost daily in the past five years.

Myler testified that Hughes signed the proxy on November 14 in one of the two bedrooms on the ninth floor Desert Inn penthouse. He said Hughes was sitting in a chair and holding four yellow notepads on his lap as a base while signing.

United Press