

New Doubts Cast on 'Hughes Will'

By Wallace Turner
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Las Vegas

Among many people who have studied Howard R. Hughes as closely as they could during his almost 20 years in seclusion, serious doubts have grown about the validity of the purported Hughes will that turned up mysteriously Tuesday.

"I think it's a phony," said Hank Greenspun, publisher of the Las Vegas Sun, in an interview in his office.

He pointed out that memoranda in Hughes' own handwriting dated two and three days before March 19, 1968, the date of the will, showed his mind consumed with the problem of buying the Stardust Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Copies of scores of these memoranda have been in the possession of the New York Times for several years. They were written to Robert A. Maheu by Hughes when the billionaire lived in a penthouse on top of a hotel building at the Desert Inn, one of the Las Vegas Strip enterprises Hughes bought in the late 1960s.

Hughes recognized his inability to concentrate fully on more than one project at a time, as shown in a postscript of a memo on March 16, 1968, when he asked Maheu to defer dismissing an employee until the Stardust purchase had been disposed of. "I just simply have a one-channel mind," it said, "please forgive me."

The memos around the time the will allegedly was written give a picture of a man deeply immersed in problems far beyond those involved in working out a three-page will.

The memos provide many examples of Hughes' handwriting during the period when the will supposedly was drawn, and handwriting comparisons raise further questions about the validity of the will.

In addition to gambling empire whether an employee dismissed for purchase mining Hughes a