

NY Times CIA
**G.S.A. Says It Held
Title to Seaplane
In Hughes' 68 'Will'**
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WASHINGTON, May 3—A

Government spokesman said today that the Spruce Goose, a celebrated airplane bequeathed to the city of Long Beach, Calif., in a will attributed to Howard R. Hughes, was owned by the General Services Administration at the time the will was purportedly written.

The plane, a mammoth, eight-engine seaplane built of wood, came into the agency's possession in 1949 when it took over the holdings of the War Assets Administration, according to Richard Q. Vawter, a public information officer for the General Services Administration.

Mr. Vawter said he found it odd that a will dated March 19, 1968, would attempt to give away an airplane that Mr. Hughes would presumably have known belonged to the Government.

Until last year, the spokesman said, the G.S.A. had leased the Spruce Goose to Mr. Hughes for \$800 a month. The plane was transferred last year to the

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U.S. AGENCY SAYS IT OWNED PLANE

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Smithsonian Institution, which then traded it to Mr. Hughes for \$800,000 and another airplane.

Mr. Hughes designed and built the flying boat during World War II, when a shortage of metal dictated the use of wood. The plane, dubbed the Spruce Goose by the press, was built to carry hundreds of troops to Europe, flying above the marauding German submarines in the Atlantic. It has a wing assembly of 320 feet, a hull three stories high and a tail assembly eight stories high.

The Government invested \$18 million in the plane, and Mr. Hughes said he invested \$23 million of his own funds. The plane flew only once—on Nov. 2, 1947, when, with Mr. Hughes at the controls, it got about 50 feet off the water for a one-mile run.

At last report, the plane was in a guarded hangar in Long Beach. A provision in the purported will reads: "The Spruce Goose is to be given to the city of Long Beach, Calif."

Congressional hearings into the construction of the costly flying boat were reported to have been one of the factors that led to Mr. Hughes's withdrawal from the public eye—a withdrawal that later became total reclusion.

Initial Moves

The purporte will turned up last Tuesday at the world headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. Initial moves have already been made to carry out the provisions of the document by Noah Dietrich, an 87-year-old former Hughes aide.

A probate court will ultimately have to rule on the authenticity of the document. It has already been reported that the purported will contains some unusual elements.

One of these is the naming of Mr. Dietrich as executor; he and Mr. Hughes quarreled and separated 19 years ago.