

# Fingerprint Casts Doubt on a Hughes Will

Los Angeles

FBI tests have found Melvin Dummar's fingerprint on the envelope containing what now appears to be a forged will of Howard Hughes that was left mysteriously in Mormon Church world headquarters last April, a Los Angeles court was told yesterday.

Dummar is the 31-year-old Willard, Utah, gas station operator named in the handwritten "will" for a 1/16th share of the multi-billion dollar Hughes estate.

He now faces possible criminal charges by the Nevada attorney general.

Nevada Attorney General Robert List said

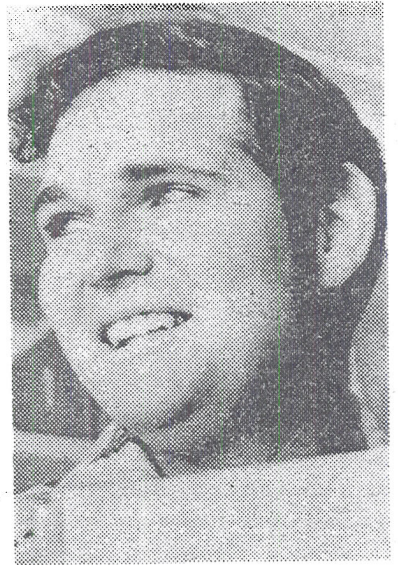
yesterday that criminal charges would probably be filed in connection with the will.

List, whose office has been investigating the validity of the will since October, declined, however, to say against whom the charges would be filed or what they would be.

The latest development in the mystery was unveiled before Superior Court Judge Neil A. Lake here by lawyers on opposite sides of the will contest.

Harold Rhoden, the attorney supporting the contested will, told the court yesterday that he received information last week that a law

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MELVIN DUMMAR  
He's a beneficiary

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enforcement agency had found Dummar's fingerprint on the outer envelope holding the purported Hughes will found in Salt Lake City.

He did not state his source.

Rhoden said he would withdraw sponsorship of the will if the information was confirmed. But first, he will ask a Las Vegas court today to delay the scheduled January 10 trial of the will's validity and to order the Nevada attorney general to produce the fingerprint evidence at a hearing.

Rhoden is the attorney for longtime Hughes associate Noah Dietrich, who was named executor of the Hughes estate in the Mormon will.

Dummar's attorney said yesterday in Ogden that someone may have tried to forge his client's thumbprint on the envelope.

"We simply deny that Melvin Dummar ever handled that letter or had anything to do with the writing of Howard Hughes' will," said lawyer Roger Dutson.

"That thumbprint is not Melvin's Dummar's unless there is some advanced technological method available that we don't know about that could have placed it there."

A strong statement about the suspected forgery was made to Judge Lake by James Dilworth, a Houston attorney representing Hughes' maternal heirs and Summa Corp., holding company for the late billionaire's empire, told Judge Lake that Summa and the Hughes relatives had begun an investigation of the contested will early last May.

"It has been our belief for

months that Mr. Dummar has and had to be involved in the forgery of this will," Dilworth told the judge.

Dilworth said it was his group's investigation that found that Weber State College in Ogden, Utah, the school attended by Dummar, had copies of books and a magazine containing Hughes lore and samples of his handwriting.

These were the books, "Hoax" and "The Bashful Billionaire" and a 1971 Life magazine article on Hughes.

Dilworth said his people got the librarian to lock up the materials for safekeeping.

He said he was unable to obtain a satisfactory private agency to check the fingerprints on the Hughes material.

"Last fall we were able to prevail upon the Nevada attorney general . . . to get these documents and send them to the FBI to have them determine if Melvin Dummar's fingerprints were on them," he added.

Dilworth said his group also "prevailed on" the Mormon Church to turn over the outer will envelope to the Nevada attorney general for the same purpose. As reported by the Times, the church delivered the envelope to authorities October 13.

"We are informed," Dilworth told the court yesterday, "that Melvin Dummar's fingerprints do appear . . . on the book ("Hoax"), on the church envelope in which the will was found and the Life magazine (with the Hughes article)."

The attorney told reporters after the hearing that the FBI concluded its fingerprint tests for the Nevada attorney general about ten days ago.

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