

# Huge Award for Ex-Hughes Aide

# HUGE AWARD

Los Angeles

Billionaire Howard Hughes was ordered yesterday to pay \$2.8 million damages to Robert Maheu, his former chief lieutenant, for publicly calling Maheu "a no good dishonest son of a bitch."

The amount was fixed by the federal court jury that had previously found that Hughes defamed the character of the one-time head of his Las Vegas empire.

Hughes, now in seclusion in the Bahamas, never appeared at the trial, which began in February.

Maheu was not in court either when the verdict was returned before U.S. District Judge Harry Pregerson, but his lawyer said Maheu considered it "a victory — a fair trial and just verdict."

Attorneys for Hughes' Summa Corp. said they considered the award "excessive" and said they would



UPI Telephoto

**ROBERT MAHEU**  
**\$2.8 million in damages**

file a motion for a new trial shortly.

The exact amount of the award was \$2,823,333.30.

The jury gave Summa Corp. \$47,703.63 in a counterclaim against Maheu.

Summa had asked for a \$4.4 million judgment against Maheu, charging that he had pocketed or misused the company's funds, property and services.

The case grew out of Hughes participation in a telephonic interview two years ago when he made the defamatory remark about Maheu and added that "he stole me blind." Maheu had been fired by Hughes two years earlier.

Maheu, 57, a former FBI

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agent, had sought \$9 million damages from Hughes, whose fortune is estimated at more than \$2 billion and who is regarded as one of the richest men in the world.

Lawyers for the defendant Summa Corp., which is wholly owned by Hughes, asked for damages of not more than \$100,000, arguing that Maheu had already been exonerated and his reputation restored.

Maheu spent weeks on the witness stand describing his relationship with the eccentric recluse whom he never met face to face over the 20 years he worked for Hughes, although at one time Maheu was being paid \$520,000 annually.

Maheu told the jury he had been "waltzed to the top of the mountain" by Hughes and recalled the billionaire as once having told him:

"I Howard Hughes, can buy any man in the world — or I can destroy him."

Their association began in the mid 1950s, Maheu said, and in 1960 Hughes became the sole client of Maheu's management consulting firm. In 1966 Hughes brought Maheu to Las Vegas to oversee operation of a string of hotel-casinos on the "strip" as well as other Nevada investments.

Maheu said he received his instructions from Hughes either by telephone or in written memos. He said that in one memo Hughes pledged "we would be together all the rest of our lives."

On Thanksgiving of 1970 Hughes disappeared from his penthouse suite at the Desert Inn and in December Maheu was informed by executives of the Hughes Tool

Co. that he had been discharged.

Maheu refused to believe that Hughes had agreed to his ouster, even raising the charge that the billionaire had been kidnaped. He sought \$50 million for breach of oral contract with Hughes.

Then in January, 1972, Hughes held a telephonic news conference from the Bahamas with seven reporters in Los Angeles to squash the authenticity of the Clifford Irving autobiography hoax.

During the news conference, Hughes confirmed he had fired Maheu and added the defamatory remarks.

Maheu claimed his reputation was so damaged that it destroyed a capacity to make at least \$300,000 a year. The defense argued that while the remarks were defamatory they were true.

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