

A Vow on the Bible In the Hughes Case

Las Vegas

Melvin Dummar swore on a Bible yesterday that he is a devout Mormon who fears "the wrath of God" and was telling the truth when he testified a mystery man dropped off a will in which Howard Hughes named him to receive millions of dollars.

The 31-year-old former gas station operator from Ogden, Utah, who had earlier been threatened by the judge with a prison sentence if he failed to tell the truth, remained steadfast in his story during a second day of questioning in district court.

Harold Rhoden, co-executor of the so-called Mormon will, asked Dummar if he is a devout Mormon.

The attorney asked if the witness would feel the wrath of God if he lied.

"Yes," Dummar replied again.

Rhoden then walked to the witness stand with a leatherbound Bible in his hand and demanded of the witness:

"Raise your right hand. Do you swear this testimony about how that will was left at station was true?"

"I do," Dummar answered, standing in the witness box.

The attorney further prodded, "If it meant eternal damnation in hell, would you stick with this story?"

"Yes," Dummar answered.

"This is my last chance to give you an opportunity to recant," the attorney said. "I urge you to tell the truth. I warn you if you don't come clean you may leave this courtroom in handcuffs and go to jail."

Dummar answered strongly,

"That's the way it happened. I don't know why he picked me. That's how it happened."

During a recess, Clark County District Attorney George Holt told reporters he had seen no criminal conduct on Dummar's part.

Dummar still faces cross-examination by a lawyer representing Summa Corp., the administrator of Hughes' \$2.5 billion fortune, and another attorney for distant relatives of Hughes.

The Hughes forces are battling to discredit the "Mormon will," which was found at the church headquarters in Salt Lake City three weeks after the billionaire's death April 5. The will leaves one-sixteenth of the billionaire's fortune to Dummar.

Dummar testified earlier that a neatly dressed mystery man, who he said was in his 40s, of medium build and about 5-foot-10, drove up to his combination gas station and grocery last April 27 and engaged him in conversation about Hughes.

The man, according to Dummar, said a will had been found near the house of John Smith, a former Mormon church president, in 1972. Dummar said he thought nothing of the conversation and the man left a half hour later, leaving an envelope behind on a counter.

Dummar said he steamed it open and was startled to learn it was a Hughes will naming him to receive millions of dollars. Then he resealed it and drove to Salt Lake City to drop the document off at the church headquarters.

Church officials delivered the will for probate in Las Vegas. The will is the 33rd alleged last will and testament of Hughes to be filed, but is the only one to be probated.

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