

DICK HANNAH DIES; PUBLICITY MAN, 60

Served Howard Hughes and Set Up Talk on Irving Hoax

By WILLIAM M. FREEMAN

Dick Hanna, the publicity man who represented Howard Hughes, the billionaire recluse, for nearly two decades, died Thursday evening at his home in Los Angeles. Mr. Hannah, who had been recovering from open-heart surgery, was 60 years old.

He was a vice president of Carl Byoir & Associates Inc., the New York-based international public-relations concern. He joined its Los Angeles office in 1952 and was assigned to the Hughes account four years later.

Mr. Hanna had met Mr. Hughes several times, although not in recent years. He often talked with him on the telephone. He was one of the very few Byoir executives who had met the elusive Mr. Hughes.

Four years ago, when Clifford Irving said he had written an autobiography of Mr. Hughes, based on taped interviews with the industrialist, Mr. Hannah arranged a telephone talk with Mr. Hughes on one end and seven newspapermen on the other. It was in this conversation that Mr. Hughes denounced the book as a fraud.

The men chosen for the assignment were older men who had met Mr. Hughes or talked with him and were likely to recognize his voice.

Form of "Name Dropping"

The Byoir organization had had the Hughes account since 1946, and over the years it was often said that his public-relations men had been known to offer "lavish sums" to persuade a writer to drop any project involving Mr. Hughes.

At the time of the Irving hoax, Mr. Hannah said it was not Byoir's work to suppress legitimate news. He added, however, that Mr. Hughes felt that the only legitimate news concerning him was in the form of "accounts of his companies' accomplishments."

"He doesn't like personal publicity," Mr. Hannah said. "He values his privacy. So we don't encourage reporting about him personally. Yet, with a man as famous as he is, wild, fantastic, completely erroneous stories keep springing up. Like the report that he has eight-inch long fingernails, that he weighs 97 pounds, that he has hair halfway down his back.

"We do see our role as try-

ing to suppress stories like those, trying to kill them. But not with pressure, just by trying to convince reporters that what they've heard is wrong."

As the only official contact for newsmen with questions about Mr. Hughes, his whereabouts, his views, his comments on governmental actions or litigation, Mr. Hannah was unfailingly polite, even when awakened in the middle of the night, as he answered—more often than not—with a "no comment."

William Richaard Hannah had had a career in journalism and as a Hollywood publicity man before joining Byoir.

He was born in Glendale, Calif., June 21, 1915, and had worked as a reporter and editor for The Los Angeles Times, The Los Angeles Examiner and The Hollywood Citizen News. He also had handled publicity for Paramount Pictures, Republic Studios and the Grand Central Aircraft Company of Glendale.

He was a member of the Aerospace Writers Association of America and had spent three years as a combat correspondent with the Marines' Second Division.

He leaves his wife, the former Vicki Washington, and a sister, Shirley Park.