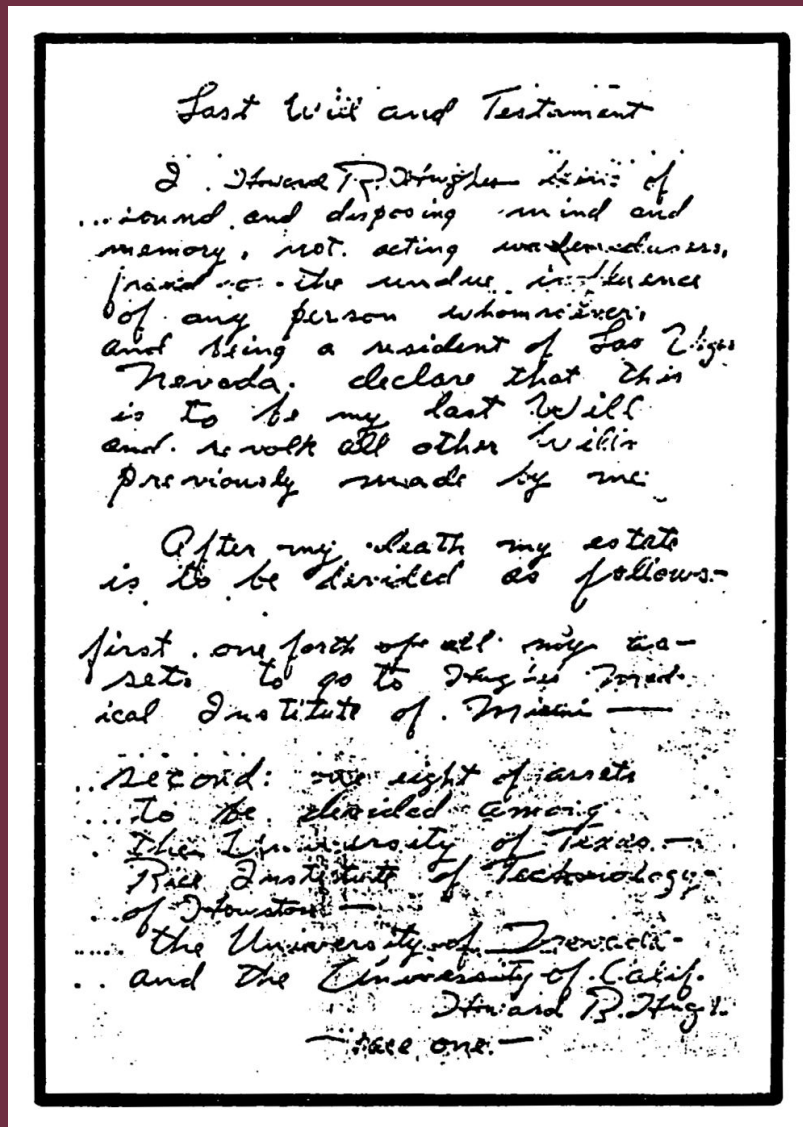


HOWARD HUGHES and the "MORMON WILL"



Did Hughes Really Leave \$100,000,000
to the Mormon Church?

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

Howard Hughes and the “Mormon Will”

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

1976
(Digital version 2024)

Utah Lighthouse Ministry
www.utlm.org



**Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0
International (CC BY-NC 4.0)**

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

HOWARD HUGHES and the “MORMON WILL”

After Howard Hughes' death there was a great deal of speculation as to whether he had prepared a will. A “world-wide search” was conducted, but on April 27, 1976, the *New York Times* reported: “Arlo Sederberg, a spokesman here for the Summa Corporation, . . . said that no will executed by Mr. Hughes had been found, either signed or unsigned.”

Two days after this was printed the Mormon newspaper, *Deseret News*, made a very startling announcement:

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The missing will of the late billionaire has been found . . . and part of his estate will go to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, radio station KFWB reported today. . . .

“Whether or not the will is the actual will of Mr. Hughes or is a hoax, we do not know,” the church said in a statement issued by its public relations director. . . .

In Salt Lake City, church officials called all news media and said a press conference would be held in the early afternoon for an “important” announcement. . . .

Some time ago the Houston, Texas *Chronicle* quoted Noah Dietrich, a former Hughes aide as saying the billionaire would leave the church much of his estate.

Robert Bennett, public relations director for Summa, and a member of the LDS Church, said he figures about 30 percent of Summa executives are Mormons. . . .

Mormons don't accept gambling so there are virtually no Mormon dealers or casino managers in the Summa-owned Las Vegas hotels and casinos, he said. (*Deseret News*, April 29, 1976)

The Church Section of the *Deseret News* gave this important information about the discovery of the so-called “Mormon will”:

A handwritten document that appears to be a will of deceased billionaire Howard R. Hughes was found in the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City Tuesday afternoon, April 27.

The controversial, three-page document bequeaths one sixteenth of the billionaire's estate to the Church, a similar amount to a Church member living in Willard, Utah, and other portions to charities and Hughes' aides and former wives.

The Church has taken no position on the authenticity of the document.

Mystery surrounds the purported will's appearance in the Church Office Building. At a press conference . . . Church Public Communications Department spokesmen gave this explanation of what is known. . . .

At approximately 4:50 p.m. MDT April 27, Daniel A. Hinmon . . . picked up a large package on his desk for mailing, also picking up, on the bottom of the large package, an envelope addressed to President Spencer W. Kimball.

The envelope was one available to tourists and others in the Temple Square Visitors Center and was addressed in ink to:

President Spencer W. Kimball
Church of Jesus Christ
Salt Lake City, Utah

The envelope was marked “Personal,” . . . Brother Grubb delivered the envelope to the secretary in President Kimball's office whose assignment is to open the mail, Noal Alleman, 47. . . . Inside she found a second envelope, appearing to show the yellowing stains of time, and a note which said: “This was found by Joseph F. Smith's house in 1972—thought you would be interested.”

On the face of the older envelope was the message in ink handwriting: “Dear Mr. McKay: Please see that this Will is delivered after my death to Clark County Court House, Las Vegas, Nevada. Howard R. Hughes.” . . .

Inside was a handwritten statement in ink describing the document as “Last Will and Testament” of Howard R. Hughes. . . .

Early Wednesday morning, April 28, the papers were turned over to Wilford W. Kirton Jr., legal counsel for the Church. . . .

The Church attorney contacted Leslie W. King, a handwriting expert from Bountiful, Utah, who has previously worked on a case involving Hughes' writing.

After spending three and a half hours examining the purported holographic (handwritten) will, she said there is “a good chance, a very good chance” that the document is genuine.

She emphasized, however, that it was a preliminary opinion and she could not be certain because of the time element and because comparison documents she was using were “photostats.” . . .

Following these investigations, the Church attorney, with Wendell J. Ashton, director of Public Communications, and others, delivered the purported will to the Clark County clerk in Las Vegas, Nev., Thursday, April 29, at the same time the church called the press conference in Salt Lake City. A press conference also was held in Las Vegas.

At the press conference, reporters questioned Jerry Cahill, press secretary with Public Communications, who noted that the Church does not know whether the will is genuine or not.

The church spokesman also later denied speculation that former Texas Gov. John Connally might have been connected with the will's appearance in Salt Lake City.

The former governor met privately with President Kimball the same afternoon the will appeared in the Church Office Building.

However, the visit, which dealt with a nonpolitical matter, was requested in a letter dated March 29 and received by President Kimball on April 1, four days before Mr. Hughes' death on April 5. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 8, 1976, page 3)

The reader will find a photograph of the first page of the purported will of Howard Hughes on the cover. It is taken from the *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, April 30, 1976.

Although a sixteenth of Hughes' estate—the amount which the will bequeaths to the Mormon Church—does not sound like much, when we consider how wealthy Hughes was it amounts to millions of dollars. An article published in the *Deseret News* on May 1, 1976, says that Hughes had a "\$2.5 billion empire." Wallace Turner calls it a "\$1.5 billion empire" (*New York Times*, April 30, 1976). The Church Section of the *Deseret News* for May 8, 1976, gives this information:

The Hughes' estate has been estimated at from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 billion dollars. Mr. Dietrich believes the lower figure is more accurate. He said, "Hughes took a whopping loss when he sold off the Hughes Tool Co. for \$130 million."

If we say that Hughes was worth \$1.5 billion, then the Mormon Church would receive about \$94,000,000. If we accept the higher estimate, however, one-sixteenth would amount to about \$156,000,000. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 30 says that "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will receive . . . about \$156 million." This money would be exempt from tax. The *Deseret News* for May 1 informs us that "Shares of the will going to tax-exempt organizations, including universities, the medical center, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, would be exempt from inheritance taxes."

At the time the so-called Mormon will was published we were working on the last part of our book *Mormon Spies, Hughes, and the C.I.A.* In this book we show that public relations for both the Mormon Church and Howard Hughes were handled by the Mullen Company. During the Watergate investigation it was revealed that the Mullen Co. had a relationship with the CIA. Further research showed that the Mullen Co. was purchased by Robert Bennett who is the son of former Utah Senator Wallace F. Bennett. When the cover of the Mullen Co. was blown, Robert Bennett went to work for Hughes' Summa Corporation. This, together with the fact that many Mormons worked for Hughes, led us to believe that there was a close relationship between Hughes, the Mormon Church and the CIA. When the Hughes will was first announced we felt that it provided additional evidence of this relationship. Although Church leaders did not make any claim as to its authenticity, the fact that they called a press conference and had the Church attorney personally deliver the will to the Clark County clerk in Las Vegas, Nevada, seemed to indicate that there was a good possibility that the will was genuine. We did not think that the Church would want to be publicly linked to Howard Hughes' money, some of which was obtained by questionable activities like gambling, unless the will was really authentic. At any rate, after making a careful examination of the contents of the will and the circumstances surrounding its discovery, we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that it is probably a forgery. Nevertheless, in the material which follows we will try to honestly examine both sides of the question.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* for May 12 says that "Handwriting experts have given conflicting opinions about the authenticity of that purported will, which contained numerous misspellings and was somewhat vague in its directions."

On May 1 the *Deseret News* reported the following:

LAS VEGAS—More handwriting experts are convinced the mysteriously-discovered will of Howard R. Hughes is genuine—opening the way for perhaps the longest probate trial in American history. . . .

"I know of at least two experts who think it's legitimate and I don't know if there are any who say it isn't," Rhoden said.

Support for authenticity of the will came Friday from Dietrich, from New York handwriting analyst Charles Hamilton, and from Henry Silver, a Los Angeles expert familiar with Hughes' penmanship.

Four days later, the *Las Vegas Sun* reported:

A handwriting expert said Tuesday the document purported to be the will of Howard Hughes is a forgery. . . .

"The handwriting is so undisciplined I think it was not a real stable person who did the forgery," Burezyk said. "It almost looks like it was an intentional ruse on the individual because the forgery is not good. It's not a high type forgery. The signature is a little closer. But the body of the letter is very different." (*Las Vegas Sun*, May 5, 1976)

On the same day the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed the following:

Mr. Rhoden said handwriting experts he has consulted stand firm in their belief that the will was written by the late billionaire. However, according to a *Chicago Daily News* story, fulltime graphologist Nicholas Burezyk, Chicago, said he believes the document found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Office Building April 28 was written by a woman.

"The handwriting looks feminine. It is not as disciplined as Hughes' handwriting," he said. He added there are "some on-purpose tremors" to make it appear an older person had written the will. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 5, 1976)

The following day the *Las Vegas Sun* reported:

The second handwriting expert to examine the purported will of Howard Hughes said Wednesday he believes the document is a "rank forgery."

After studying the document for more than three hours, John J. Harris, who was hired by three of Hughes' cousins, said he has a "strong feeling that the will is a forgery." . . . "You might even say it's a rank forgery," Freese quoted Harris as saying. . . .

The first expert to study the will, Henry Silver, told the *SUN* that he still feels the document is genuine. (*Las Vegas Sun*, May 6, 1976)

On May 8, 1976, the *Deseret News* printed the following:

LOS ANGELES (UPI)—The Hughes will is authentic according to a handwriting analyst who helped expose the Clifford Irving biography as a hoax.

"If it's a forgery, it's a perfect forgery—and that's impossible," declared A. Henry Silver Friday. . . .

Other analysts—hired by Hughes relations and others challenging the will—have called it a fake. One who examined the will in Las Vegas Wednesday termed it "a rank forgery." . . .

Rhoden said Silver would "stake his reputation" on the document's authenticity.

Silver, 85, said he never had been proven wrong in court in his many years as an expert witness.

"All the handwriting, including the signatures, were definitely written by Howard R. Hughes," Silver said, saying the billionaire's writing had "a pattern of consistent inconsistencies" that would be impossible for a forger to duplicate.

On May 15, 1976, the *Las Vegas Sun* reported:

A handwriting analyst hired by Noah Dietrich said Friday that the first purported Howard Hughes will was not written by the billionaire.

Although the expert would not go so far as to say it was a forgery, he did say that it appeared to him someone tried to copy Hughes' handwriting.

Charles Sachs, who studied the document for about five hours, told reporters that he compared the purported will with documents believed to have been written by the billionaire and found "striking similarities and striking dissimilarities."

Dietrich's attorney, Harold Rhoden, said he did not know whether he would go ahead and try to get the will admitted to probate. . . .

Dietrich was named in the will as executor of the Hughes estate. . . .

Sachs had a photocopy of one document that Hughes allegedly authored, he said, and he also worked from memos obtained from *SUN* publisher Hank Greenspun.

Sachs said that the handwriting on the memos and the photocopy appeared to be the same. The handwriting on the will and the handwriting on the memos, however, were different, he said.

"The probability is that the person who wrote the will did not write the memos," the expert said.

Greenspun, who has numerous memos believed to have been written by Hughes, allowed Sachs to examine seven of the memos which were all written within one month of the date on the alleged will, March 19, 1968 . . .

Sachs would not go so far as to say the will is a "rank forgery" as one other handwriting expert has proclaimed.

Wallace Turner was one of the first to cast serious doubt on the authenticity of the will. In an article published in the *New York Times* on May 3, 1976, he stated:

SAN FRANCISCO, May 2—Among many people who have studied Howard R. Hughes as closely as they could during his almost 20 years in seclusion, serious doubts have grown about the validity of the purported Hughes will that turned up mysteriously Tuesday. . . .

Handwriting identification is far from an exact science. When it is used in court, expert witnesses frequently take opposite sides on such matters.

Probably the most crushing blow for public acceptance of handwriting identification experts involved Mr. Hughes's handwriting. That came in 1972 when a little-known author, Clifford Irving, came to public notice with a manuscript he said was based on interviews with Mr. Hughes. It was to be called "The Autobiography of Howard Hughes."

Mr. Irving collected about \$650,000 in advance royalty payments from McGraw Hill, . . . Mr. Hughes was outraged and did everything but come out of his hotel to block publication. . . .

But the publishers moved serenely ahead. Mr. Irving had provided them with copies of handwritten letters he said he had received from Mr. Hughes . . .

As pressure mounted the publishers took the handwriting samples to Osborn Associates, a New York firm that specialized in examining questioned documents. The Irving material was compared with known samples of Mr. Hughes's writing, and the experts said it had all been written by the same person.

This was not so, as Mr. Irving explained before going to jail to serve a term for fraud. He had written the letters . . . The handwriting experts were wrong.

A comparison between the purported Hughes will and the writing and the memos identified as having been written by Mr. Hughes shows many significant differences visible to nonexperts.

One of the letters which Irving forged was "nine pages long and signed Howard R. Hughes" (*Hoax—The Inside Story of the Howard Hughes-Clifford Irving Affair*, by Stephen Fay, Lewis Chester and Magnus Linklater, New York, 1972, page 96). On pages 98-99 of the same book, we read as follows:

The letter clinched the question of authenticity once and for all as far as Harold McGraw was concerned, . . .

Then Ralph Graves seemed to suffer a small stab of doubt. He suggested to McGraw-Hill that it would be a good idea to have the most recent letter from Hughes analyzed by a handwriting expert. There was a man . . . called Alfred Kanfer, who had studied the letter Hughes had written to Bill Gay and Chester Davis a year earlier. Why not show it to him? . . . On December 2 . . . Kanfer concluded:

It can be stated that the two handwriting specimens were written by the same person. . . .

The chances that another person could copy this handwriting even in a similar way are less than 1 in a million.

On January 24, 1972, the following appeared in *Time* magazine:

The noted New York handwriting experts Osborn Associates have verified that the handwriting on those documents matches samples of Hughes' handwriting dating back to 1936. . . . Says Paul A. Osborn of Osborn Associates: "The evidence that all of the writing submitted was done by one individual is, in our opinion, irresistible, unanswerable and overwhelming."

On page 304 of the book *Hoax*, we read that because of the Irving affair "the whole art of handwriting analysis has suffered a setback to its status as reliable evidence . . ."

Since there is such a wide difference of opinion among handwriting experts with regard to the authenticity of the Hughes will, we think that it should be examined in the light of its historical setting. To begin with, the will is dated March 19, 1968. There are at least three claims made in the will that are consistent with this date: 1. Howard Hughes was living in Las Vegas at the time. 2. David O. McKay was President of the Mormon Church at the time. 3. Melvin Dummar was living in Gabbs, Nevada.

On the other hand, however, there are some very serious problems with the date of March 19, 1968. For instance, the will names Noah Dietrich as executor. Now, if the will had been dated before 1957 this would have been consistent, for it was Noah Dietrich "who guided the destiny of the entire empire for over thirty years" (*Hoax*, page 39). By 1968, however, Dietrich had left and Hughes considered him a real enemy. As early as April 30, 1976, Wallace Turner pointed out in the *New York Times*, the inconsistency of Hughes making Dietrich the executor:

If the will should be genuine, one of the big surprises in it is that Mr. Hughes designated Noah Dietrich, his top aide for almost 40 years, as executor.

Mr. Dietrich and Mr. Hughes split in bitter, personal feuding in 1957 and had no contact since that time according to the 88-year-old Dietrich.

Newsweek for May 10, 1976, refers to Dietrich as an "archenemy" of the Hughes empire. The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for April 30 said that "The will is dated 1968, 11 years after their association ended on unfriendly terms. Robert Maheu was Hughes' top aide in 1968, . . ." In 1972 Noah Dietrich actually published a very revealing exposé of Hughes' life and business dealings. It is entitled, *Howard: The Amazing Mr. Hughes*. Wallace Turner gives this interesting information:

Mr. Hughes and Mr. Dietrich quarreled and separated 19 years ago, ending almost four decades of close association. They had no direct contact since that time, Mr. Dietrich said yesterday.

Mr. Dietrich's earnings from his memoirs of the Hughes years, . . . were blocked from him by legal action filed by Summa executives and Mr. Hughes in 1972. When he left Mr. Hughes Mr. Dietrich had signed a promise not to write about his years there, according to documents filed in the court proceedings. (*New York Times*, May 1, 1976)

According to Dietrich's book, Hughes had threatened to sue him at the time he left, but it turned out that he filed a suit against Hughes:

Still, Howard pursued his small-boy vindictiveness. My office at 7000 Romaine continued to be padlocked. Many of my personal effects were in there: . . . I finally had to go to court, and get a mandatory order for the return of my possessions. . . . I began to get sore. He was having gumshoes snoop around my records in an attempt to catch me in wrongdoing. . . .

When I had tried to quit after my safari in 1956, Howard had pleaded, with me to remain. "Just stay another six months. . . . If you'll stay just six more months, I'll give you an extra million dollars . . ."

I stayed eight months. And of course the million dollars never appeared. So I sued him for it.

Howard had to appear for a deposition prior to the suit, and his attorneys kept pleading his ill health. . . .

The case never came to trial. Howard settled for \$800,000 . . . it severed me from Howard Hughes forever. (*Howard: The Amazing Mr. Hughes*, pages 297-299)

According to the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for April 30, 1976, Hank Greenspun stated:

"Although Hughes was supposedly mad at Dietrich at the time the purported will was written, he trusted him implicitly," Greenspun said. "He trusted Dietrich's good business judgment and he always turned to him in time of crisis."

The next day, however, Mr. Greenspun was expressing serious doubts about the matter:

If anyone should inherit from Howard Hughes for services rendered through all the years, it should be Noah Dietrich whose financial mind and expertise started the billionaire off to his immense fortune. . . .

For Noah's sake, I would love to see the will probated without challenge because his fees as executor might in some measure compensate him for the years of loyalty and service.

But I fear greatly that the will will not stand the test of reality. (*Las Vegas Sun*, May 1, 1976)

Initially, Dietrich himself was suspicious of the will:

A handwriting expert consulted by the church said the document seemed authentic. But Noah Dietrich . . . named executor of the will, was wary.

"The signature looks like Howard's and so does the rest of the handwriting," he said. "But I never knew him to misspell words and that makes me somewhat suspicious." (*Arizona Republic*, April 30)

After consulting with Robert Maheu and others, Mr. Dietrich became fully converted to the position that the will was really written by Hughes. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for May 2 said that Dietrich "would be entitled to \$40 million" for his role as executor.

The fact that Noah Dietrich was appointed executor of the will just does not make sense. Would a person appoint one of his worst enemies to such an important position?

Another problem with regard to making Mr. Dietrich executor would be his age. He was 17 years older than Hughes and would have been approaching 80 years old at the time the will was supposed to have been written. He is now in his late 80's.

Another thing in the "Mormon will" which has caused some people to be suspicious is the use of the words "spruce goose" when referring to Hughes' flying boat. Wallace Turner wrote:

A Summa statement said the executives would not "give a firm statement denying the authenticity of the will," but the statement said that there were several troublesome points, such as a reference to Mr. Hughes' huge, all wooden stored airplane as the "Spruce Goose," a name the Summa statement said the eccentric Mr. Hughes disliked. (*New York Times*, April 30, 1976)

Newsweek for May 10, 1976, reported that "Aides said that he detested the nickname Spruce Goose and never used it." The *Arizona Republic* for April 30 said that "a reference to the 'Spruce Goose'—a name for his wooden airplane that Hughes considered derogatory—raised suspicions of his former associates." The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for April 30 contained this information: "It refers to it as 'the spruce goose,' an originally derisive term which both Dietrich and the Summa spokesman agree Hughes despised and was never heard to use. 'He would come alive again if he heard his Hercules Flying Boat referred to as the spruce goose,'

the Summa spokesman said." *Time* for April 19, 1976, says that Hughes "constructed his plane from lumber; hence its nickname, the *Spruce Goose*." Noah Dietrich gives this information about the Spruce Goose:

Newspaper reporters referred to it flippantly as the Spruce Goose, or the Flying Lumberyard. . . . on the many occasions I saw the Hercules I never ceased to be astounded at its size. Its wings are slightly longer than a football field. Its tail is the height of an eight-story building. . . . Howard's plane was designed to carry 700.

The flying boat can claim any number of superlatives. The biggest airplane in history. The most money spent for one aircraft. The longest period under construction.

I would give it another distinction: it was Howard Hughes' biggest folly. (*Howard: The Amazing Mr. Hughes*, page 171)

According to Dietrich, the official name was "the HK-1, or the Hercules," but Hughes sometimes referred to it as the "flying boat." Dietrich quoted Hughes as saying the following:

. . . I designed every nut and bolt that went into this airplane. . . . If the flying boat fails to fly, I will probably exile myself from this country. I have put the sweat of my life into this thing. . . . My reputation is wrapped up in it. I have stated that if it fails to fly, I will leave the country. And I mean it. (*Ibid.*, page 209)

Since Hughes was so emotionally involved in the development of his flying boat, it seems very unlikely he would use the derisive term "Spruce Goose" when referring to it in his will.

The will itself says that "the spruce goose is to be given to the City of Long Beach, Calif. . . ." (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 8, 1976). Noah Dietrich, however, said that on September 17, 1953, a barge which was being towed broke loose and seriously damaged the flying boat. Hughes subsequently "filed suit for \$12,000,000 against the city of Long Beach, . . ." (*Howard: The Amazing Mr. Hughes*, page 213). When the city threatened not to renew his lease at the Long Beach hangar, Mr. Hughes used "devious" means to get city officials to change their minds. We wonder if Mr. Hughes would give Long Beach his flying boat after being at enmity with city officials.

On May 4 the *New York Times* pointed out another problem with regard to the Spruce Goose:

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. . . . Richard Q. Vawter, a public information officer for the General Services Administration. . . . 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.

After studying the will, we have come to the conclusion that most of the contents could have been written from material published after Hughes' death in April, 1976. For instance, the idea of appointing Noah Dietrich as the executor of the will could have come from newspaper articles. One article published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on April 17, 1976, contained this information:

LOS ANGELES (UPI)—Billionaire Howard Hughes wrote a will and it was placed in a safe deposit box in Hollywood, according to a one-time associate, Noah Dietrich. Attorneys for the Hughes estate have said a will has not been found.

Dietrich, of Los Angeles, who left Hughes' employ in 1957 after 32 years of service, insisted that a Hughes will had existed.

. . .

Mrs. Dietrich said, however, that Dietrich doesn't know if a will is in existence at this time, but knows one was written by Hughes in 1955. She said Dietrich saw Hughes sign it and give it to Nadine Henley. . . .

A spokesman for Summa Corp. said Miss Henley will make no comment on whether there is a will, or if there is one, where it might be.

Since the article does not tell that Hughes and Dietrich had become enemies, it would be very easy to make the mistake of listing Dietrich as executor of the will.

The will says that the biggest share of Hughes empire should go to Hughes Medical Institute: ". . . First one fourth of all my assets to go to Hughes Medical Institute of Miami . . ." This could have been suggested by the same article which told of Dietrich working for Hughes: "Dietrich had said earlier that Hughes had intended to leave the bulk of his fortune, estimated at about \$2 billion to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute of Miami, Fla." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, April 17, 1976).

The will also bequeaths "one sixteenth to Church of Jesus Church [sic] of Latterday Saints—David O. McKay-Pres. . . ." This could have been suggested by an article which appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on April 7, 1976:

LOS ANGELES (UPI)—The disposition of Howard Hughes' fortune will not be known until the will—if there is one—is filed for probate, but medical research and the LDS Church may get some of it. . . .

The Houston, Tex., *Chronicle* Tuesday reported that Noah Dietrich, 87, a former Hughes aide interviewed by the paper some time ago, said Hughes would leave the LDS Church much of his estate.

Time magazine for April 19 also suggested that the Mormon Church might receive some of Hughes' money:

If Hughes left a single will dividing his estate between his relatives and the institute—and perhaps some others, including possibly the Mormon Church—the various sides would be likely to fight anyhow. (*Time*, April 19, 1976, page 31)

The same issue of *Time* (page 24) tells of Hughes' work on his flying boat and says that "the Spruce Goose . . . sits in a specially constructed hangar in Long Beach." This could easily have suggested the idea of Hughes bequeathing "the spruce goose . . . to the City of Long Beach, Calif. . . ." The article in *Time* gives no warning that Hughes despised the term Spruce Goose."

The will also bequeaths "one sixteenth of assets to William R. Lommis of Houston, Texas. . . ." As evidence for the will it has been pointed out that this man is a "cousin who was not widely known as a relative" (*Ogden Standard-Examiner*, April 30, 1976). When we turn to the article in *Time*, however, we find him mentioned: "On the one side are Hughes' rather distant Houston relatives, . . . William Rice Lummis, is a member of the prestigious Houston law firm . . . which has handled the Hughes family's private matters for half a century" (*Time*, April 19, 1976, page 30). The *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 15, 1976, also mentions "William R. Lummis" and his mother as being appointed "temporary administrators of Hughes' estate, . . ." On May 1 the *Deseret News* pointed out that in the will the name "William R. Lummis, was misspelled 'Lommis.'" It is interesting to note that the *New York Times* for April 8 has three different spellings for the last name of William's mother: "Lummis," "Lommis," and "Loomis."

The will bequeaths "one sixteenth to be divided among Jean Peters of Los Angeles and Ella Rice of Houston . . ." *Time* for April 19 gave the information that these two women were once married to Hughes: "Hughes married twice . . . he wed Ella Rice, . . . from a prominent Houston family. . . . In 1957, he married Actress Jean Peters" (page 22). The *Salt Lake Tribune*, for April 7 also mentions both these women.

The will also gives "one sixteenth to be divided among my personal aids at the time of my death . . ." This could have been suggested by *Times'* reference (page 21) to Hughes' "five nurse-aides, four of whom are Mormons."

The will bequeaths one-eighth of Hughes' assets to four universities. All of them, however, are in states where it is known that Hughes lived and worked. Two are in Texas, one in California and one in Nevada. All of these states are mentioned in the article in *Time*. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 7 stated that Hughes at one time "gave the University of Nevada \$1 million to start a medical school . . ." It is interesting to note that the "University of Nevada" is listed as one of the beneficiaries in the will.

The will also leaves money for the Boy Scouts, the "key men" in Hughes' companies and for setting up a "scholarship fund for [the] entire country." The only thing in the will that would not be readily available from printed sources or easy to make up is the part that reads: ". . . one sixteenth to go to Melvin DuMar of Gabbs Nevada . . ." We will have a great deal more to say about this later.

As far as finding out what Hughes' handwriting looked like, there would be many possible sources. For instance, the article in *Time* for April 19, 1976, gives photographs of Hughes' writing. The book *Hoax* has a photograph of Hughes' writing and informs us that an issue of *Life* magazine (January 22, 1971) had "a full-color reproduction of the entire 'Dear Chester and Bill' letter, . . ." This is a letter Irving used to forge Hughes' handwriting. In this regard, it is interesting to notice an article which appeared in the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* on May 15:

A third handwriting expert has examined a purported Hughes will and says it is probably not genuine, but adds there are "striking similarities" with samples of the billionaire's writing.

But Beverly Hills handwriting expert Charles Sachs said all of the similarities in the purported will appeared in a photocopied letter—a message from Hughes to top aides Bill Gay and Chester Davis—which appeared in a 1970 [1971?] issue of *Life* . . . Sachs spent all day Friday comparing the purported will with examples of Hughes memos . . .

Harold Rhoden, . . . said: "The probability is that the person who wrote the purported will is not the person who wrote the exemplars," or examples of Hughes memos, . . .

Rhoden said "someone could make that [the ?] assumption" that the alleged will was copied from the *Life* magazine article.

"We came here today to prove something and we couldn't do it," Rhoden said.

The Church Section of the *Deseret News* for May 8, 1976, informs us that the will was written on "three sheets of yellow, lined, legal pad paper . . ." This type of paper could have been suggested from a statement saying that Hughes "wrote down his instructions in pen on yellow legal pads, . . ." (*Time*, April 19, 1976, page 31)

The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for April 30 points out that "The holographic will—so called because it purports to be written in one's own hand—contains no signatures of witness." The idea that Hughes might write his own unwitnessed will could have been suggested by the *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 7, 1976: "'Over a period of time, he talked to me about various forms of bequests,' Bautzer said, but he added that he was not asked to make up a will. He said he had the impression Hughes wanted to write his own will without an attorney."

Besides lacking witnesses, the will appears to have been unknown to Church officials prior to April 27, 1976. No evidence has been produced to show that President David O. McKay ever saw it; in fact, two of his sons have denied any knowledge of it. It seems logical that if the will had been delivered to McKay it would have been preserved in a safe. How, then, could it have been "found by Joseph F. Smith's house in 1972"? Would Church officials handle one of the most important documents in the world in such a careless manner?

The *Arizona Republic* for April 30, 1976, says that Wilfred F. Kirton, Jr. legal counsel for the Mormon Church, claims that "the inner envelope had a Las Vegas postmark, but the date was too blurred to read." The fact that "the date" is the part that is blurred tends to increase our suspicion concerning the authenticity of the will.

When we first heard of the will we felt that fingerprints might provide some important evidence as to whether the will was really written by Hughes. Unfortunately, the *Las Vegas Sun* for May 1 informs us that "Clark County District Attorney George Holt . . . said possible tests for fingerprints were ruled out because the three pages of legal sized paper had been handled by so many people since it appeared 'out of nowhere' on a desk of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City."

It is interesting to note that officials of Hughes' Summa Corp. "have said they do not accept as authentic the hand-written document which was left in mysterious fashion Tuesday in the Salt Lake City headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (*Deseret News*, May 1, 1976). According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, for May 19, the Summa Corp. has hired its own handwriting expert:

Attacks on the authenticity of the first purported will of Howard Hughes were heightened Tuesday when the document was pronounced a forgery by a handwriting expert hired by Summa Corp., which operates the late billionaire's properties. . . .

Lyndal Shaneyfelt of Alexandria, Va. . . . examined the so-called Mormon will Monday and Tuesday in Las Vegas and said it was "a good forgery as forgeries go."

On May 12, 1976, the *Salt Lake Tribune* said that "A second purported Howard Hughes will, leaving his fortune to relatives, charities and 10 'living Americans' identified only by Social Security numbers, was filed Tuesday by officials of the late billionaire's Summa Corp."

After this the floodgates were opened and bogus wills began to pour into the Clark County courthouse. On May 13 the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* reported: "At last count, there were six documents claimed by various people to be the one and only authentic Hughes will." One of the wills "bequeathed \$10 million to Clifford Irving and \$5 million to his wife, Edith. They have served prison terms for fraud in the production of a hoax autobiography of Hughes." On May 18 the *Salt Lake Tribune* said that "Nine more purported Howard Hughes wills surfaced Monday, making a total of 17 such documents."

Of these 17 the Mormon will is the only one that has received any serious consideration. Although we believe that the Mormon will is also a forgery, as yet we can give no definite answer as to who was responsible. Since the will was brought to Mormon Church offices in Salt Lake City, it is very possible that the forgery was committed by a resident of Utah. The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for May 1, 1976, makes it very clear that there are many people in Utah capable of committing such a crime:

ROY—A recent increase in counterfeiting by Utahns has made the Beehive state one of the nation's leading producers of counterfeit money, a Secret Service agent told the Roy Chamber of Commerce. . . .

Mr. Sherman said he "has no answer" why counterfeiting has increased so dramatically in Utah during the past couple of years but noted the state has ranked second or third in the nation in seized currency.

He also said that counterfeiting covers "illegally duplicating anything of value" and told merchants the bulk of counterfeiting involves fake drivers licenses, draft cards, high school diplomas, stamps, bonds, liquor labels and related items.

Since the will was found at Mormon Church headquarters and bequeaths money to the Church and to members of the Church—i.e., Melvin Dummar and Hughes' personal aides—the suspicion

arises that a member of the Church might be responsible. This theory might also help explain the fact that one-sixteenth of Hughes' estate is bequeathed to the Boy Scouts. The Mormon Church is deeply involved in this organization, and "about one in every 20 U.S. Boy Scouts is a member of the church" (*Deseret News 1974 Church Almanac*, page 55).

On the other hand, however, the will could have been written by an enemy of the Church in an attempt to discredit Mormonism and bring unfavorable publicity upon the Church. If the will proves to be a forgery it will probably bring a great deal of embarrassment to Church leaders, for although they took no position as to the will's authenticity, they did call a press conference and had their legal counsel deliver the will to Clark County Courthouse in Las Vegas.

While we feel that the will could have been written by someone who has some type of interest in or knowledge of Mormonism, we are confident that no high official in the Church would be involved in a scheme which has so many potential pitfalls.

There is one part of the Mormon will that stands out like a sore thumb and could provide the clue which will eventually reveal the identity of the forger. This is the part which reads: ". . . one sixteenth to go to Melvin DuMar of Gabbs Nevada. . . ." While some of the instructions in the will are a little unclear, the part concerning Melvin Dummar makes no sense whatsoever. Why would Hughes give 100 million dollars or more to a man who was never known as one of his friends or relatives? Mr. Dummar claims to have an answer to this important question. In the Church Section of the *Deseret News* for May 8, 1976, we find the following:

The Melvin DuMar of Gabbs, Nev., named in the will has been identified as Melvin Dummar, formerly of Gabbs, now a resident of Willard, Utah. . . .

A native of Cedar City, the Utahn is a member of the Church, a prospective elder who has recently returned to activity. . . .

He said that in January 1968, while he was living in Gabbs, he stopped to help "a skinny old man" on a dirt road in Nevada.

The 31-year-old Utahn, who operates a combination service station and store in Willard, said he was traveling toward Las Vegas and drove onto a dirt road between Tonopah and Baty "to use the bathroom."

Lying at the side of the road was the old man, who appeared to have been hurt in some kind of accident since he was bleeding about the face, the possible beneficiary said.

He offered to take the old man to the hospital, but was directed instead to the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas.

The old man didn't talk during the trip but in Las Vegas asked to be taken to the rear of the hotel. He also asked for the loan of some money, "I think I gave him a quarter," said the Utahn.

The old man requested his benefactor's name and announced himself as Howard Hughes, "but I thought, 'Oh sure,' and figured he was just some bum," said the stunned Willard resident. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, May 8, 1976)

We know that Howard Hughes lived in Las Vegas at the time this incident was supposed to have occurred, and it also appears that Dummar was working in Nevada at the same time. Since Hughes was living at the Desert Inn at the time, Dummar's story that he took him to the Sands Hotel sounds a little inconsistent, but this is possible because Hughes also owned the Sands Hotel. At any rate, members of Dummar's family claim that he did tell this story sometime ago. According to the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for May 7, Dummar's sister "recalled that her brother joked eight years ago about how he had picked up 'this bum who said he was Howard Hughes.'" The *Deseret News* for May 1 quotes Dummar's cousin Ronald Brown as saying:

"It was sort of a family story. I'd heard it before several times," Brown said. "We treated it as a joke." Melvin's brother Richard also "says he heard the story about Howard Hughes several years ago." (*Ibid.*)

Although it seems very unlikely that Hughes could have been found injured and bleeding in the desert in 1968, Noah Dietrich does mention the fact that during an earlier period in his life Hughes was mistaken for a "bum":

Howard had flown to Louisiana in the Sikorsky and had encountered some mechanical trouble. He docked the plane at Shreveport and wandered into town. He was unshaven and wore rumpled clothes and sneakers, and he carried a bottle of milk in a paper bag. . . . He talked of renting a car and driving to Florida. The gas station men became suspicious and called the police. . . . He was booked as a vagrant. . . .

Our man in Shreveport received a telephone call from the police station: "We got a hobo down here says he's Howard Hughes. You want to come down and take a look for yourself?"

My next contact with Howard was even more curious.

A man telephoned from Florida. . . . Howard had stopped at his home to stay a few days.

"I don't know what to do about him," the friend said. "Howard showed up here looking like a bum. Then he went out in the backyard and burned all his clothes." . . .

No word came from Howard until his return, six months after he had disappeared. He offered no explanation about his travels, and I asked him nothing. (*Howard: The Amazing Mr. Hughes*, pages 179-181)

Dietrich also says that Hughes "harbored an intense fear of being robbed. That's the reason he never carried any money around with him, and the legends multiplied about how he paid taxi drivers with IOU's and borrowed dimes from friends for telephone calls. Howard fostered those legends" (*Ibid.*, page 55).

Like Melvin Dummar, Clifford Irving claimed he had talked with Howard Hughes in a car:

February 13, 1971, Mexico: . . . An emissary of Mr. Hughes, . . . drove me to a mountaintop . . . where Mr. Hughes awaited me in a parked car. Mr. Hughes identified himself to me as Howard Hughes . . .

March 4, 1971, Puerto Rico: . . . Mr. Hughes and I met in a parked car within brief walking distance of the hotel and I drove Mr. Hughes, . . . to an area known as the tropical rain forest . . . We talked intermittently for several hours and then I drove the car back to the same parking place near the hotel and left Mr. Hughes in the car and went back to the hotel. (*Hoax*, pages 102-103)

Hank Greenspun, of the *Las Vegas Sun*, found Melvin Dummar's story no more palatable than the one told by Clifford Irving:

The likelihood of Melvin Dummar picking up Howard Hughes in the desert between Tonopah and Beatty in 1968 would bring about the same odds in any Las Vegas bookmaking parlor as Astronaut Neil Armstrong finding the billionaire up on the moon when he landed there for the first time in 1969. (*Las Vegas Sun*, May 1, 1976)

On the same day that Greenspun published his statement, Wallace Turner wrote the following:

During the period 1966-70, according to those close to Mr. Hughes, he never left a penthouse at the Desert Inn, a hotel with casino on the Las Vegas Strip.

"Whatever we know about Howard Hughes, we know that he did not go out and lie by the side of the road to be picked up by a gas station attendant," said one man familiar with Mr. Hughes's habits. But even he was not certain. (*New York Times*, May 1, 1976)

On May 12 the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* reported the following:

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (UPI)—A daily log kept by Howard Hughes' security guards shows that the late billionaire never left

his Desert Inn suite during four years of Nevada residence that would include the day he was supposedly picked up by a Good Samaritan named as a beneficiary in a purported Hughes will.

Sources with access to the log said Tuesday that when Hughes arrived by train from Boston on Thanksgiving eve of 1966, he went to his Desert Inn ninth-floor penthouse and stayed there until he left the place for good in 1970.

Even Noah Dietrich, who has been trying very hard to prove the Mormon will authentic, finds it difficult to believe Dummar's story:

Mr. Dietrich said later he "would not place too much credence in the (Mr. Dummar's) story."

"It doesn't sound like Howard to be out alone in the desert," he said. "Furthermore, he was not known to reward those who helped him. A Marine who pulled Howard out of his burning plane in Beverly Hills was never adequately rewarded." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 1)

We do not know how Noah Dietrich can reject Melvin Dummar's story and still believe in the authenticity of the will. We feel that the two stand or fall together. If we do not accept Dummar's story about helping Hughes, then how do we explain the presence of his name in the will?

W. A. Jones, who is head of Heir-Finders and represents some of Hughes' cousins, said "he wants Mr. Dummar to submit to a lie detector test on his story of once taking Hughes to Las Vegas and giving him a quarter" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 6).

We feel that any search for the identification of the forger should begin with Melvin Dummar's story about meeting Howard Hughes. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that Mr. Dummar had anything to do with the fraud. It could be that he really did meet a man who claimed he was Hughes and that an acquaintance or even an enemy decided to capitalize on it. Since Dummar is listed as the beneficiary of millions of dollars, however, some people suspect that he might have something to do with the writing of the will. As early as May 1, Hank Greenspun said:

It [the will] could easily have been the work of one of his aides . . . Or maybe some gas station attendant came up with the brainstorm. I am merely speculating without pointing any fingers, but truth has a way of surfacing. (*Las Vegas Sun*, May 1)

Mr. Dummar probably caused some people to suspect him because of his strange behavior after the discovery of the will was announced. The *Ogden Standard-Examiner* for April 30 reported the following:

WILLARD—Melvin Dummar, 31-year-old service station operator here who might be heir to \$156 million from the estate of Howard Hughes, was reported under a doctor's care today after going into hiding. . . . the pressure of worldwide attention and publicity has apparently been too much for the former Nevada resident . . .

Mr. Dummar was reported under a doctor's care today following a night of extreme agitation.

Mrs. Gay W. Pettingill . . . said Mr. Dummar "had been crying all night." Her husband is the bishop of the LDS Ward Mr. Dummar attends. . . .

Mr. Dummar and his wife Bonnie both called Bishop Pettingill. Thursday asking for advice following revelation of the apparent good fortune.

Melvin's father, . . . does not even know where his son is.

On May 1 the *Deseret News* printed this information:

Dummar went into hiding Friday after being besieged by newsmen and a family friend said he was in shock and under sedation after receiving the news . . .

The 31-year-old Utahn had scheduled a news conference Friday, but failed to show up. Gay Pettingill, a Mormon bishop, talked to newsmen instead . . .

The following day the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

WILLARD. . . . Melvin Dummar, . . . said his life "has become a nightmare" since the Hughes will was announced. . . .

The way it is, said Melvin, he and his family have been besieged by promoters, media people and others. . . .

The former milkman has been under a doctor's care and nearly broke down three times during the barrage of questions. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 2)

Another article on the same page contained this information:

A man who has befriended Melvin during his shock the last two days is Gay Pettingill, bishop of the Willard 3rd LDS Ward—"Melvin's bishop."

He described the whole family as "good church members." "Melvin attends priesthood meeting and I have been close to the boys coming into the priesthood," said the fruit farmer.

Sometime later Mr. Dummar appeared on television and was questioned about his story. He controlled his emotions very well and made a good impression. At any rate, newsmen began to search into his life, and on May 1 the *Las Vegas Sun* printed an article entitled, "HUGHES 'HEIR' ACCUSED FORGER." The following is taken from that article:

Dummar, according to informed sources, was arrested Nov. 11, 1968 on a charge of forging a payroll check from the Basic Refractories Inc., a mining company, located in Gabbs, Nev.

After pleading innocent and asking for a jury trial, Dummar, then 24, was tried in the Fifth Judicial Court in Mineral County and found not guilty in July, 1969.

The *SUN* source said Dummar was accused of taking the check in Gabbs, and cashing it in Hawthorne.

Three days later papers in Salt Lake City began to discuss this matter:

Mineral County, Nev., Dist. Atty. Larry G. Bettis said Monday evening that Melvin Dummar, . . . was tried but not convicted on a forgery charge in 1969.

Mr. Bettis said Mr. Dummar was charged with forging a payroll check for \$251.36 written on Basic Refractories, Inc. in Gabbs, Nev., a magnesium plant where the Willard, Box Elder County, service station operator worked in January, 1968. While there he said he picked up an injured "skinny old bum" . . . who said he was Howard Hughes . . .

Mr. Bettis said a three-day trial started July 22, 1969, in Hawthorne. . . . ended with a hung jury. "Both sides stipulated to a dismissal, which was granted the following Sept. 11," said the district attorney. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 4, 1976)

The same day the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* printed the following:

Dummar said Monday, "I realize that since this all happened people are going to dig up anything about me from the time I was born until today. I'm only human. That's all I can say.

"I wasn't convicted," he added, and then refused to discuss the matter further. . . .

Dummar also once wrote a song, "A Dream Can Become a Reality," but the song never sold. It was written in 1968, the same year he reportedly found Hughes in the desert and later gave him a quarter.

Two days later (May 6) the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* reported:

A 31-year-old service station operator . . . said Wednesday if the purported will of Howard Hughes that leaves him around \$150 million is a forgery, "I didn't have anything to do with it." . . .

He said, . . . he has been upset about some of the media digging up the alleged forgery charge and publishing it. Dummar said the main reason is that he "never did" forge any checks. The charge was not forgery, but passing a payroll check knowing it was "false, altered, forged or counterfeit."

On May 4, 1976, the Mormon Church's *Deseret News* printed an article entitled, "Probate Lawyer Denies Dummar Could Forge Will." In this article we find the following:

It's "not in the realm of possibility" that Melvin Dummar, 31, could have forged the hand-written Howard Hughes will, a lawyer working on the case said today.

Harold Rhoden, attorney for Noah Dietrich, named as executor in the will, made this comment after stories appeared saying Dummar was charged and cleared of forgery in Nevada in 1969.

"I know what people are thinking when they hear the kid has a forgery rap in his past," he said.

"Dummar's past has absolutely nothing to do with the validity of the will or this young man's right to inherit his share of it," Rhoden said.

Roger Dutton, Ogden, an attorney for Dummar, said stories about his client's past are "journalistic muckraking," . . .

The lawyer also indicated that Dummar would not be giving interviews to the press in the future.

"He has a marketable commodity in his life story and has already been approached with some offers," Dutton explained.

In another article on the same page, William B. Smart, the Editor and General Manager of the *Deseret News* admitted that his paper had the information about the check-passing charge before the *Las Vegas Sun* published it, but had decided to suppress it:

We regard the publication of the old check-passing charge against Dummar as a violation of professional ethics and of all standards of fair play.

Our reporters, in an intensive investigation that has provided the most comprehensive coverage of this case, learned last Friday about the charge against Dummar. We checked it out completely, obtaining the text of the criminal information on file—something no one else seems to have done. The text makes it clear Dummar was not charged with forgery, as is now being reported, but of passing a payroll check knowing it was "false, altered, forged or counterfeit."

Our editors met Friday morning to decide what to do with the information.

These facts were clear:

1. Dummar was not convicted; the jury could not reach a decision.

2. We could find no reason to believe there was any connection between this charge and the case of the Hughes will.

3. Publishing the information would titillate the public appetite for the sensational but at the expense of unfairly defaming Dummar.

After careful consideration, we decided not to publish. We still consider this the correct decision.

The *Las Vegas Sun* also learned about the old charge and published it Saturday morning. The wire services, it first appeared, agreed with our standards of fair play, since they did not pick up the story for national distribution. But Monday night CBS broke the story, the wire services picked it up and it was in the national and local press this morning. . . .

We deplore this reckless, unfair, and insensitive exploitation of an irrelevant incident from a man's past. (*Deseret News*, May 4, 1976)

On May 4 the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* reported: "It was also revealed Monday that Dummar was charged several months ago in Ogden, Utah, with possession of stolen goods. This case was

also dismissed." A week later. (May 11) the same paper printed an article which contained the following:

BRIGHAM CITY—Melvin Dummer, . . . will not be charged with receiving stolen property, Box Elder County Attorney O. Dee Lund said today.

Mr. Lund said his office has determined that a search warrant issued in Weber County and executed at Mr. Dummer's Box Elder residence last January lacked jurisdiction and therefore the case could not be prosecuted. . . .

The warrant authorized the search of Mr. Dummer's station and residence in Willard. During the search, seven rifles and guns were confiscated, Mr. Wallace said.

Weber County filed a charge of possession of one allegedly stolen rifle against Mr. Dummer in January. The charge was dropped Feb. 6 because the only link of Mr. Dummer to the rifles was in Box Elder County, he said, and Ogden City Court Judge Stanton M. Taylor ruled that was not within Weber County officials jurisdiction. (*Ogden Standard-Examiner*, May 11, 1976)

On May 5, 1976, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed the following information:

The *New York Times* quoted Mr. Dummer Tuesday as saying he intended to press for the one-sixteenth share of the \$1.5 billion estate allotted him in the purported will.

The *Times* said Mr. Dummer . . . was willing to testify in any court to help substantiate the authenticity of the will.

The *Times* said Mr. Dummer's attorney, Roger S. Dutson, said he had instructed his client to stop talking with reporters. "There are many things we are not going to discuss," Mr. Dutson said.

Lyndal Shaneyfelt, a handwriting expert who worked for the FBI at one time, has compared the handwriting on the Mormon will with that of Melvin Dummer, but "his examination was inconclusive" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 14, 1976).

Since "the Hughes hitchhiking story" was known by Melvin Dummer's family before the will was discovered, some people have speculated that some of Dummer's relatives might be responsible. On May 24, 1976, *Newsweek* printed the following:

Last week the questions were directed less at Dummer, . . . than at two of his relatives. Barely a day after word of Dummer's inheritance became public, Ronald Brown, a California cousin, arrived at his doorstep to announce he was prepared to act as Dummer's "financial adviser" . . . Dummer and his lawyers quickly sent Brown home to California. Now it turns out that Brown's mother, Bonnie Dummer (who was married for the fifth time in 1972 to Melvin's uncle, Richard Dummer), may have had access to scores of Hughes documents, including his signature, through her job on an Orange, Calif., publication called *Millionaire*.

Hobby: Millionaire is published as a hobby by Edward Kelly, a printer, and distributed free to 30, 000 mostly very rich readers. Bonnie Dummer wrote several articles for the magazine, one boosting a defunct business of Ronald Brown's. Kelly says that during Mrs. Dummer's seven years with *Millionaire* she could have seen "trunkfuls" of Hughes memorabilia and manuscripts he was collecting for a book. "I don't say she did it [forged the will]," said Kelly. "But there's no reason she couldn't have."

At her home in Bellflower, Calif., . . . Mrs. Dummer denied forging the will—then became incommunicado. . . . Other relatives noted that the Hughes hitchhiking story had been floating around the family for eight years. "When [Brown and Bonnie Dummer] talk about getting money," one said, "everything is in the millions or hundreds of thousands. Nothing's ever realistic." (*Newsweek*, May 24, 1976, page 30)

The information concerning Ronald Brown and his mother Bonnie Dummer apparently came out earlier on an NBC news report. Melvin Dummer claimed that his aunt would not commit such a crime:

Dummer also said he feels it is "cruel" to dig up information about his aunt Bonnie Dummer who figures in speculation that his relatives fabricated the first will. . . .

Speaking of his aunt, . . . Dummer said, "She is just not someone who would do a thing like that." . . .

Bonnie Dummer is the mother of Ronald Brown who arrived in Utah shortly after the first will was reported. Brown said he would act as Dummer's advisor.

Dutson said he was not invited and he was quickly invited to go back to Southern California. (*Ogden Standard-Examiner*, May 12, 1976)

We have previously quoted Ronald Brown as saying that he had heard the Hughes hitchhiking story "several times" (*Deseret News*, May 1). In the same article we find the following information about Brown:

Melvin heard the news Thursday afternoon, became excited and highly emotional, according to his cousin, Ronald Brown, 31, a Los Angeles financial a [*sic*] consultant, and "had to be sedated."

Brown, who flew into Salt Lake City Friday night for a press conference at the airport, said Melvin had to be taken in to seclusion with his wife, Bonnie, and their our children. . . .

Brown he thinks the will is real. So do Melvin's parents, . . .

Brown said he has been called on the phone and approached by "hundreds of people who want Melvin's help, especially money. It is unbelievable" . . . (*Deseret News*, May 1, 1976)

The *Las Vegas Sun* for May 2, 1976, gave this information:

Ronald Brown, Dummer's cousin from Los Angeles where he is a financial consultant, directed the news conference. He told Dummer not to answer any questions about the will or other matters except his reactions to being picked by Hughes to share in the estate.

We have previously discussed the fact that the postal stamp on the envelope which contained the Mormon will is blurred so that the date is unreadable. Some people now feel that this stamp could hold the key to the question of the authenticity of the will:

Harold Rhoden . . . told the court he hoped the iodine tests would bring out markings of a postal meter stamp imprinted on the back of the envelope. . . .

The stamp, he said, "might lead that envelope right into Hughes' den" but he also acknowledged that it could disprove the will's authenticity.

The letters "Mar," standing for March, are visible on the stamp, Rhoden said, but an identifying meter number has been obliterated. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 22)

CONCLUSION. Although we would really like to believe that the Mormon will is authentic, the more we study it the more convinced we become that it is a forgery. Those who are interested in the relationship between Mormonism and Howard Hughes may enjoy our new book *Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A.*

