

## INVESTIGATION

1-25-86/0730 Hrs., Saturday

Writer received a phone call at home from Mrs. Irene Reis, representative of the Reis Funeral Chapel, San Luis Obispo. Mrs. Reis reported that she had just received information of a death that had occurred in rural Creston the preceding night, January 24, 1986. Mrs. Reis reported that the decedent's physician and attorney were at the residence. Mrs. Reis thought it was somewhat out of the ordinary because the death reportedly had occurred Friday evening and no one was contacted until Saturday morning. For this reason, Mrs. Reis reported the death to the Coroner's Office. Mrs. Reis provided writer with the names and addresses of the decedent, the physician and the attorney. A phone number of the residence where the decedent was located was also provided, (805) 239-1715.

Writer telephoned the residence and spoke with Dr. Denk regarding the decedent's medical history. Dr. Denk reported that he had been residing at the ranch and treating the decedent for the past two years. He described the decedent as having displayed signs of Dysphrasia for about eight days and indicated that there was little doubt in his mind that the terminal event was a CVA. Writer told Dr. Denk that his clinical diagnosis seemed proper; however a Deputy Sheriff would be responding to view the death scene. This was quite agreeable with Dr. Denk and he would be standing by awaiting the Deputy's arrival.

Writer asked Dr. Denk if there were any family members present. He asked me to hold on and he would put the decedent's attorney on. That he would be able to supply that information. Mr. Cooley answered the phone and introduced himself as the decedent's attorney. Mr. Cooley told writer that there were no family members present. That the decedent's wife was residing in Los Angeles. Mr. Cooley further reported that the decedent and his wife had been separated for a long time, however their marriage status was married. Writer asked Mr. Cooley if the decedent had executed a Last Will and Testament. Mr. Cooley stated that he had the decedent's Will in his possession. That a Mr. Norman F. Starke, 1404 N. Catalina St., Hollywood, CA, was named as the Executor. Mr. Cooley was advised that a Deputy Sheriff would be responding to the residence and if possible, writer needed a copy of decedent's Will for the records. Mr. Cooley said that this would be done and the phone call was terminated.

Writer then telephoned the Sheriff's Department and spoke to Deputy Donn Hugh. He was given directions to the ranch and requested to send a Deputy to view the death scene. An additional request was made for the Deputy to telephone the Executor named in the Will and obtain his permission to release custody of the ranch to Mr. Cooley. Deputy Charles Gassett was assigned to respond to the death scene and investigate.

Upon completion of this assignment, Deputy Gassett telephoned writer to report his observations. Deputy Gassett reported that there was nothing suspicious about the scene, but that the copy of the Last Will and Testament revealed that the Will was dated January 23, 1986, one day prior to decedent's death. My immediate reaction to this information was whether decedent was in sound mind at the time he signed the Will as Dr. Denk had told me of decedent's clinical history which supported a possible neurological problem.

At this point writer decided to reconsider the matter and instead of permitting the doctor to certify the cause of death, writer ordered an autopsy be performed. This decision was not based on whether or not Dr. Denk had properly diagnosed the immediate cause of death,

but to avoid possible questions pertaining to the cause of death and whether or not the decedent was of sound mind when he signed his Last Will and Testament, should this Will be challenged in a civil court. If this should occur, the immediate cause of death would perhaps be another question at issue, if no autopsy was performed. Writer requested Deputy Gasset to bring a copy of the Will to Reis Chapel and writer would meet him there.

Writer then contacted the Reis Chapel and requested to be contacted when decedent's body arrived at their facility. Later that morning writer received word that the body had arrived at the mortuary. Writer responded to the mortuary to continue the investigation. Present at the mortuary were Attorney Sherman D. Lenske and Attorney Earl C. Cooley. Writer explained the concern over the recent signing of the Will and that writer's intentions were to schedule an autopsy as a measure of prevention against any questions regarding the immediate cause of death, in the event the Will was challenged.

At this time Mr. Lenske presented writer with a Certificate of Religious Belief as set forth in Government Code Section SS27491.43, reading in part:

"I, LaFayette Ronald Hubbard, declare: (1) I am a resident of the State of California and over eighteen (18) years of age. (2) Based upon my religious beliefs, I object to any and all post mortem anatomical dissections or other autopsy procedures being conducted on my body. Such autopsy procedures would violate my religious convictions.

In witness whereof, I have executed this Certificate of Religious Belief this 20th day of January, 1986."

The document bore the signature L. Ron Hubbard, Sr. The document also contained the following witness signatures:

1. Patrick D. Broeker, Star Route Creston, Creston, CA. 93432.
2. Anne M. Broeker, Star Route Creston, Creston, CA. 93432.
3. Stephen J. Pfauth, Star Route Creston, Creston, CA. 93432.

Writer posed the question in request form for permission to conduct a toxicology study to rule out the question whether or not the decedent died as a result of a lethal dosage of medicated drugs or any other substance. Both attorneys had no problem with this process being performed. The attorneys stated that they did not want any problem with the Coroner's Office dealing with the cause or manner of death, but they had an obligation to the decedent's bequest that his religious convictions not be violated. They asked if it would be of any assistance if Dr. Denk responded to the mortuary to answer any medical questions writer may have. Writer requested that he respond for that purpose.

Writer was also presented with the original Will and permitted to read the 13 page document. After reading this document, writer telephoned the Commander of the Detective Bureau, Lt. John Hastie, and briefed him on the circumstances of how writer became involved in this case, the recent signature and date on the Will, the decedent's clinical history reported by his regular physician and the Certificate of Religious Belief. Lt. Hastie was further informed that the body showed no signs of violence or abuse and that permission was granted by both attorneys to conduct a toxicology study in lieu of an autopsy. Lt. Hastie suggested that the on-call Deputy District Attorney be notified and informed of the circumstances.

Writer placed a phone call to the on-call Deputy District Attorney which was Assistant District Attorney Dan Hilford. Mr. Hilford was appraised of the circumstances. Mr. Hilford advised that on the basis that there were no signs of violence on the body, and that the medical history was consistent with what the doctor diagnosed for a cause of death, to complete the toxicology process. If the toxicology was clear, writer should release the body.

County Pathologist Dr. Karl E. Kirschner was called to the mortuary to perform an external medical inspection of the decedent's body and draw blood and urine for the purpose of performing a toxicology study. Blood was drawn from the body, but urine was unable to be obtained due to the bladder being evacuated. Refer to the attached medical inspection report and attached toxicology report for additional information.

A total of 13 photographs were taken of the decedent by writer during this medical inspection process. Fingerprints were also obtained from the decedent as well. By the time the medical inspection was completed, Dr. Denk and Mr. David Miscovige, representative of the Author Services in Los Angeles, arrived at the mortuary. Mr. Miscovige had brought with him a copy of a 1982 Last Will and Testament and a Codicil to a Last Will and Testament dated 1983. Both documents contained the signature L. Ron Hubbard, Sr. The contents of the 1982 Will were basically the same as the most recent Will. The 1983 Codicil appears to be an amendment to the 1982 Will, setting forth his religious belief against an autopsy being performed on his body after death.

Writer explained to Dr. Denk what was transpiring in this investigation and why. Dr. Denk stated that he had no objection to the performing of toxicology studies. He reported that the only medication he had given the decedent was Vistaril and vitamin B-12. The aforementioned attorneys requested that these tests be performed immediately because they chose to cease further action toward proceeding with the cremation process until the Coroner's Office was satisfied that the decedent died of natural causes and not by some lethal drug overdose. Dr. Denk requested to accompany writer to the Sierra Vista Hospital Laboratory and witness the tests performed. Writer, accompanied by Dr. Denk, took the specimen to the Sierra Vista Hospital where the toxicology studies were performed. The results of the toxicology studies revealed no presence of any substance that would be contributory of the decedent's death. Dr. Denk accompanied writer back to the mortuary and writer thanked the attorneys for their understanding and cooperation. The body was released to their custody.

#### 1-27-86/Monday Night

A news release was made by the Church of Scientology in Los Angeles. Following this news release, news media generated news releases to the effect that there was some question as to whether or not the person who expired in Creston on January 24, 1986, was really LaFayette Ronald Hubbard, Sr. Because of this, the investigation included the process of fingerprint comparison.

#### 1-29-86/Wednesday Morning

Writer received a phone call from Attorney John Peterson inquiring if what he heard in a news release, that the death was still under investigation, was true. Mr. Peterson was advised that because of the news media saying there was some question if LaFayette Ronald Hubbard, Sr. was really the person who died in Creston, the Coroner's Office decided to establish positive identification through fingerprint comparison. Mr. Peterson offered to assist in expediting this process by bringing to San Luis Obispo, a certified copy of L. Ron Hubbard's, Sr. latent fingerprints that he had access to. His offer was accepted.

At 1300 hours, Mr. Peterson, Attorney Lawrence E. Heller, Mr. Norman Starkey, the Executor, and Mr. David Miscavige arrived at the Sheriff's Department with the documents. Received from Mr. Peterson were documents described as:

1. A certified copy of a latent fingerprint card from the F.B.I.
2. A United States Navy Certificate of Satisfactory Service card depicting the decedent's name and right index print.
3. A Special Officer identification card depicting a photo and right index fingerprint, issued by the Office of the Chief of Police, Los Angeles.
4. A United States passport dated April 12, 1984, issued by the passport agency in Los Angeles.

These items were presented to the I.D. Technician, Detective C. Feierabend, for comparison. Det. Feierabend examined these documents and found them to compare to the prints obtained from the decedent. Det. Feierabend further reported that he had confirmed all 10 fingerprints in a telephone conversation with the office of the F.B.I. Refer to Det. Feierabend's supplement report for additional details of this process.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Investigation into this death revealed no signs or evidence supporting that the decedent, L. Ron Hubbard, died as a result of suicide or foul play. This office is satisfied that the true identity of the decedent is LaFayette Ronald Hubbard, Sr. Writer concludes that this case is deemed not a coroner's case, therefore jurisdiction was waived and the Certificate of Death was certified by the attending physician, Dr. Eugene Denk G-33017.



/s/ Jon Hines, Chief Deputy Coroner  
Coroners Division

Jn/0377f