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Hubbard Still Alive, Judge Rules

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A seven-page "legal declaration" purportedly written by L. Ron Hubbard, the reclusive founder of the Church of Scientology, apparently convinced a Riverside judge Friday that the science fiction-writing religionist is alive, contrary to assertions by Hubbard's son that he is dead or mentally incompetent.

But Superior Court Judge David Hennigan was asked to also consider "new evidence" filed in the court Friday by the son which alleges that Hubbard's signature was forged on documents transferring his Scientology trademark rights to the church.

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HUBBARD: Judge Accepts Scientologist's Document

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The attorney representing Ron DeWolf, 48, Hubbard's estranged son who has asked the Riverside court to appoint him trustee of his father's multimillion-dollar estate, said the alleged forgery of Hubbard's name "establishes again significant questions . . . as to whether or not Mr. Hubbard's assets are indeed being misappropriated and converted and whether a trustee should be appointed." Hennigan did not comment on that matter.

Hennigan said that until Friday he had been leaning toward a judgment in favor of DeWolf and of appointment of a trustee. The judge said, however, that the declaration, apparently signed and fingerprinted by Hubbard and authenticated by handwriting and fingerprint experts, had convinced him that Hubbard is not a missing person.

The separate papers filed by Cheong alleged that Hubbard's signature had been forged on documents conveying Hubbard's trade and service marks to Religious Technology Center, a corporation formed by top Scientologists.

In DeWolf's original probate petition, he alleged that some of these same Scientologists were systematically looting his father's estate.

But in the Hubbard declaration filed Thursday, Hubbard said his affairs are being handled properly by financial advisers and that he is in good health.

"I am not a missing person," the Hubbard declaration said. "I am in seclusion of my own choosing. My privacy is important to me, and I do not wish it or my affairs invaded in the manner permitted by this action."