

...in the dispute.

Judge says he believes church founder is alive

ASSOCIATED PRESS

RIVERSIDE, Calif. — A Superior Court judge said Friday he is "convinced" that Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard is alive, despite claims he is dead or mentally incompetent.

Judge David Hennigan said he was not sure the author was alive until he read a seven-page legal declaration from Hubbard saying he keeps his whereabouts a secret because his life has been threatened.

"I am not a missing person," Hubbard said in the declaration. "I am in seclusion of my own choosing."

My privacy is important to me, and I do not wish it or my affairs invaded."

The document, signed and fingerprinted by Hubbard and authenticated by handwriting and fingerprint experts, was filed Thursday with the court. The judge is considering a civil lawsuit by Hubbard's estranged son who says his father is either dead or mentally incompetent.

The judge said he had been leaning toward a judgment in favor of the son, Ronald DeWolf, and appointment of a trustee to manage Hubbard's affairs.

Hennigan gave DeWolf's attorney three weeks to try to disprove the authenticity of the document. At that time, Hennigan plans a final ruling in the case.

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