

## Hubbard's Son Planning to Seek Inquest, Contest Will

By ROBERT WELKOS and JOEL SAPPELL, *Times Staff Writers*

A Boston attorney representing the estranged son of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard said Wednesday that he will request a coroner's inquest into the death of the reclusive multimillionaire and plans to contest the will Hubbard signed the day before he died.

Michael Flynn, who represents Hubbard's eldest son, Ronald DeWolf, said he sent a letter Wednesday to the San Luis Obispo County coroner demanding an inquest into Hubbard's death from a stroke last Friday at age 74.

In the letter, made public by his office, Flynn said he wants to know whether the science fiction writer's vast wealth "would provide a motive for individuals close to Hubbard to engage in potential wrongdoing."

Flynn insisted that he was not accusing anyone of wrongdoing but said Hubbard's closest associates should be "made to answer questions concerning all the circumstances surrounding" the death on a remote ranch in Central California.

San Luis Obispo County Sheriff-Coroner, George S. Whiting, said he would not comment on the possibility of an inquest until he received the request.

Flynn and the church have been locked in legal battles for years, with both sides

trading charges. Among other things, the church has accused Flynn of attempting to forge a \$2-million check on a Hubbard account. Flynn has denied the charge.

A church spokesman, The Rev. Ken Hoden, said the controversy swirling around Hubbard's death has been created by Flynn "for a very selfish purpose."

Flynn has millions of dollars in pending litigation against the church and Hubbard.

After a church announcement Monday that its spiritual leader had completed his theological research and "discarded his body," Flynn immediately suggested that the death may have been a "hoax," a disappearing act to scuttle legal actions pending against Hubbard.

On Wednesday, Whiting confirmed that the body his investigators photographed and fingerprinted Saturday morning at a San Luis Obispo mortuary was Hubbard's.

The fingerprints, Whiting said, matched those on file with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the state Department of Justice and an additional source he declined to name. Whiting also said a blood sample drawn from Hubbard showed no harmful levels of drugs.

Given the coroner's determination, Flynn has now shifted course, calling for

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an inquest and making it clear that he intends to challenge Hubbard's will on behalf of DeWolf.

Hubbard's will was dated one day before his death, according to Whiting. Flynn said he will attempt to have the will invalidated on grounds that Hubbard may have been coerced or mentally incompetent.

In 1983, Flynn tried to have the church placed in receivership, claiming on DeWolf's behalf that Hubbard was dead or incapacitated and that his riches were being plundered by church executives. A Riverside County court found that Hubbard was alive and capable of handling his own affairs.

Church officials said that although he had suffered a stroke the week before his death, Hubbard was lucid when he amended the will, providing additional money to some family members. Hubbard also left the church he founded three decades ago "tens of millions of dollars." DeWolf apparently received nothing.

### Getting Ready to Die

Church spokesman Hoden said Hubbard's will was dated shortly before his death because he had made a decision to leave his body and was getting his affairs in order.

Four days before his death, Hubbard also signed a certificate saying it was against his religious beliefs to have an autopsy performed. No autopsy was conducted, and his remains were cremated.

Hubbard died at 8 p.m. Friday in a luxury motor home parked on a remote ranch near Creston, about 30 miles northeast of San Luis Obispo, Whiting said. Hubbard was living in the motor home while the ranch house was being remodeled, church officials have said.

Seven people lived on the 80-acre ranch, where buffalo and llamas roamed freely. Among the residents was Hubbard's physician, Eugene Denk, who disappeared from the Los Angeles area in 1984, shortly after he was subpoenaed by a former Scientologist to testify in a case the church had brought against him.

### Diagnosis Is Stroke

Denk, according to Whiting, determined that Hubbard had suffered a "cerebral vascular accident"—a stroke. Hubbard's body remained at the ranch for 11½ hours before being transported to Reis Chapel, a San Luis Obispo mortuary. The mortuary, in turn, notified authorities.

Hoden said the delay was caused by two Scientology attorneys who ordered that the body not be removed before they arrived from Los Angeles.

Hubbard's passing, according to Hoden, has had an "enthusiastic, galvanizing effect. . . . We are going to expand like we never have before.

"In Scientology, we know that man is a spirit. And when his body or being dies the person himself does not die. L. Ron Hubbard is alive today."