

Hubbard body fingerprints to be verified

SAN LUIS OBISPO (AP) — Coroner's investigators plan to verify the death of Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard by matching fingerprints taken from a body at a mortuary here.

But the delayed announcement of the reclusive science fiction writer's death combined with a series of court battles against the wealthy church he founded prompted at least one opponent to claim the death reports may be a hoax.

Church officials announced Monday night that Hubbard, 74, died of a stroke Friday at his San Luis Obispo County ranch.

County Chief Deputy Coroner Don Hines said Tuesday he was notified of Hubbard's death at 7:30 a.m. Saturday, several hours after he reportedly died.

A death certificate signed by Hubbard's personal physician, Dr. Eugene Denk of Los Angeles, a will, and a certificate of religious belief from Hubbard asking that no autopsy be performed were turned over to the coroner's investigator who viewed the body, Hines said.

No autopsy was conducted, but investigators are trying to match fingerprints taken from the body at a local mortuary to identify it posi-

tively as that of Hubbard, Hines said.

The body was cremated Saturday and the ashes scattered at sea Sunday.

Boston attorney Michael Flynn, who has filed a series of lawsuits against the Church of Scientology, claimed the death reports may be a hoax to help Hubbard out of an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service in Los Angeles.

Flynn alleged that "there were going to be indictments announced against Hubbard in the next couple of days," but church general counsel John Peterson denied the IRS was conducting any investigation.

Robert Giannangeli, an IRS spokesman, said he could not comment.

In 1980 the IRS challenged the tax-exempt status of the church's California branch, claiming it owed \$1.4 million for the years 1970 through 1972.

The U.S. Tax Court ruled against the church in 1984, ordering payment of back taxes and penalties.

Hubbard left the church's Gilman Hot Springs compound in Riverside County, about 50 miles east of Los Angeles, in 1980 and had not been seen publicly since.