

Trouble dwells on 'Blood' line

By LEE KELLY

American Statesman Staff

On a dark Houston night in 1975, Ash Robinson sat in his River Oaks home, ruminating on the nightmarish events and circumstances that led to his socialite daughter's mysterious death.

Hours earlier, a woman named Lilla Paulus had been convicted and sentenced to prison for hiring an assassin who killed Robinson's former son-in-law, plastic surgeon Dr. John Hill, three years after Joan Robinson Hill's death in 1969.



Ash Robinson

Robinson had no doubt — back then or today — that Hill was responsible for his daughter's death of massive infections of unknown origin. Hill's second wife, Ann Kurth of Austin, testified in court Hill told her that he fed Joan contaminated pastries and injected her with bacteria. Kurth's testimony resulted in a mistrial in the murder case against Hill, who was shot dead three weeks before his second trial.

On that night five years ago when Paulus was convicted, Robinson hoped speculation that his money had paid the gunman to kill Hill finally would end.

The accusations continue.

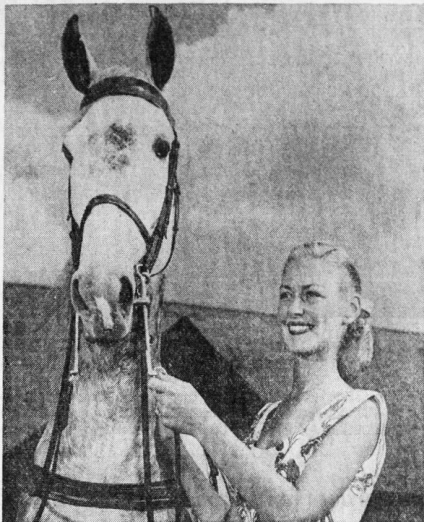
Robinson blames their survival on the 1976 best-selling book, "Blood and Money," and he is involved in litigation once again to clear his name. He has filed a \$20 million libel suit against author Thomas Thompson and the publishing companies that released the non-fiction book that retells the story of the Robinson-Hill deaths.

Last week, before a pretrial conference in Houston, an ill Robinson said, "This has been going on for 11 years and the end is in sight."

Not likely, for a sequel to "Blood and Money" could be titled "Suit and Countersuit." A seemingly endless number of court cases have sprung from the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Houston's well-bred and rich.

In one case in 1977, Robinson was found not liable for causing Hill's death in a civil action brought by Hill's survivors.

Others, in addition to Hill's \$20 million suit, include a



Joan Robinson Hill and her prize-winning horse, Belinda.



Tommy Thompson



Ann Kurth: among the suers and the sued.

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