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*The Hills in 1968 photo*

## *Did heiress die of toxic shock syndrome?*

NEW YORK (UPI) — Joan Robinson Hill, the heiress whose mysterious death 11 years ago was the first in a chain of violent deaths involving the family of oilman Ash Robinson, may have died of toxic shock syndrome, CBS-TV says.

In its Saturday night newscast, CBS outlined the series of deaths — some believed to be possible revenge killings — that occurred following Mrs. Hill's sudden death in 1969. It said that ironically, officials now believe she may have died of the infection related to the use of tampons.

Mrs. Hill, a Houston socialite, died four days after she was stricken with fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, low blood pressure, kidney failure and severe shock — the same symptoms associated with toxic shock syndrome, CBS said.

The cause of death was listed as "death by fulminating infection ... the specific origin of which could not be determined," CBS said.

Her husband, Dr. John Hill, was indicted for the murder of his wife, who was Robinson's only daughter, but there was a mistrial.

In 1972, Hill was shot to death by an intruder in his home, and the small-time burglar who admitted the slaying, Bobby Vandiver, told police he did it for money.

Before he came to trial, Vandiver died in a shootout with police. But a Houston madam and a prostitute who claimed she knew Robinson were convicted of making a payoff to

Vandiver.

Three years ago, the third Mrs. John Hill filed a civil suit for more than \$7 million, attempting to link Robinson with the death of her husband, but the jury said Robinson was not guilty.

The series of violent deaths involving the families became the subject of author Thomas Thompson's book, "Blood and Money."

Now, CBS said, Hill's defense lawyer, Richard "Racehorse" Haynes, believes he has found a terrible irony.

"I'm not a doctor, but I'm satisfied in my own mind that Joan Robinson Hill met her death, unkindly as it was, as a consequence of what we now know to be toxic shock."

Dr. Joseph Jachimcyk, Houston's Medical Examiner, reviewed autopsy records and told CBS he agrees that Mrs. Hill had some of the same symptoms of toxic shock, but not others, so he is sticking by the 11-year-old finding.

Dr. Paul Radelat, a Houston forensic pathologist who was involved in the Hill autopsy, agreed she had many toxic shock symptoms, CBS said, and he added that "there are findings in the autopsy that indicate that Joan Robinson Hill was at the menstrual portion of her menstrual cycle or had just ceased to menstruate."

Dotties Oates, a close friend of Mrs. Hill, told CBS the deceased regularly used tampons.

CBS says Haynes wonders if a different medical verdict might have prevented a series of tragedies.