

# Heirs seek bigger share of trusts

## Siblings discover mother adopted twin brothers

**Lydia Buhl Mann and C. Henry Buhl III v. Carlos and Pedro Morrison, as co-personal representatives of the estate of Lydia Morrison**

When Palm Beach resident Lydia Morrison died in Los Angeles last summer, her son and daughter expected to split \$120 million from a pair of trusts set up by their grandfather.

But after her death, Morrison's chil-

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dren say they discovered that their mother had adopted twin brothers, illegally, in New York in 1973.

The adoption could reduce the inheritance of Morrison's natural children by half. As a result, Lydia Buhl Mann and C. Henry Buhl III are suing their mother's adopted sons, Carlos and Pedro Morrison, the co-personal representatives of Morrison's estate.

Mann and Buhl, both New York residents, are represented by **James Weber**, a solo practitioner in West Palm Beach. "I'm not trying to be difficult, but I have no authority to talk about that suit," Weber said. "In litigation like this, I just can't comment."

Morrison's estate has retained **James Pressly Jr.**, a partner in the 80-lawyer West Palm Beach firm **Gunster, Yoakley, Criser & Stewart**.

"We believe the complaint does not state a cause of action because there is no legal authority anywhere for the proposition that an adoption should be set aside when the motive of the party filing litigation is to gain money," Pressly said. "And the factual allegations are without merit."

Mann and Buhl, who filed their suit Feb. 23 in Palm Beach County Circuit Court, allege that Morrison's New York adoption of Carlos and Pedro Morrison was illegal because neither she nor the twins were residents of the state at the time. They also say the adoptions were



James Pressly Jr., left, represents the estate of Lydia Morrison, who adopted twin brothers in New York. Morrison's natural children may have to share \$120 million with their new-found siblings.

designed to reduce their share of the proceeds from a pair of trusts established by their grandfather, Louis Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn trustees have held up the distribution of the principal until it is determined whether the twins are each entitled to a quarter of the fortune.

Mendelssohn was an architect and engineer from Germany who co-founded and became chairman of the Fisher Body Corp. of Detroit, which was taken over by General Motors Corp. in 1926. He died in 1935 at the age of 80.

Before he died, though, Mendelssohn created a pair of trusts, the income from which was to provide for his daughter, Lydia Morrison, during her life. After Morrison's death, the principal in the two trusts was to be distributed equally to her children.

Plaintiffs Mann and Buhl are Lydia Morrison's children from her first marriage, which ended in divorce in 1957. She subsequently married Thomas Morrison, who died in 1974. Lydia Morrison died last Aug. 23 at the age of 82.

Morrison also left the bulk of her personal estate to Carlos and Pedro Morrison. She willed only a ruby flower pin and matching earrings to Mann and \$5,000 to Buhl. Mann and Buhl had contested Morrison's 1987 will in Palm Beach

County probate court, but dropped their challenge in January.

— Mark Hansen