

Father's estate linked

Mexicans sue Hanigans, asking for \$3.8 million

The three Mexican laborers who say they were abducted and tortured on a ranch near Douglas last year have filed lawsuits, asking more than \$3.8 million in damages, against the men they accuse of mistreating them.

The three men filing the suits are Bernabe Herrera Mata, Manuel Garcia Loya and Eleazar Ruela Zavala.

The targets of the three suits, filed yesterday in U.S. District Court, are Thomas and Patrick Hanigan and the estate of their late father, George Hanigan.

The Hanigan brothers were found innocent on Oct. 7 by a Cochise County Superior Court jury of criminal charges that they brutally abused the three Mexicans. George Hanigan also was charged in the incidents, said to have occurred on Aug. 18, 1976, shortly after the three Mexicans entered the United States illegally. However, the elder Hanigan died of heart failure before the case went to trial.

The acquittal of the Hanigan brothers, members of a prominent family active in ranching and business, ignited protests that led to a request that federal prosecutors reopen the case. That request is under con-

sideration by the U.S. Justice Department.

Critics of the verdict, including officials of the Manzo Area Council in Tucson, contend that a combination of hostility toward Mexican aliens and shoddy police work contributed to the jury's finding.

Wes Polley, who successfully defended the Hanigans on the criminal charges, said he would not be their attorney for the civil suit.

Frank Watkins, a Tucson attorney who is representing the estate of George Hanigan, said last night he was unaware that a suit had been filed against the estate and he had not been contacted by the Hanigan brothers.

The arguments made in the civil lawsuits are similar to the ones presented at the Cochise County trial.

The suits maintain that the three Mexicans were accosted at gunpoint, tied up, stripped, burned and cut, threatened with castration, robbed and shot.

The three are being represented by Phoenix lawyers John J. Flynn and Andrew R. Sherwood and Douglas attorney Michael J. Herbolich.