

Novel Bond Hike Asked

By ALAN CITRON ^{8/2/79}
Orleans Parish District Attorney Harry Connick has filed a motion in Criminal District Court to have convicted arson conspirator Gordon Novel's bond quadrupled on grounds "he can not be trusted to obey the orders of a court of law."

If the requested is granted, Novel's bond will be raised from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

Novel was convicted in Judge Frank A. Marullo Jr.'s court last January of conspiracy to commit arson and sentenced to three years in prison. At that time, Hugh Exnicios, Novel's attorney, requested his client be granted a suspensive appeal, allowing

Novel to be released on bond pending an appeal to the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Marullo granted that request July 16, setting Novel's bond at \$25,000. On July 20, Ralph Bowers of River Road Porsche Audi Inc. posted the bond, and Novel was released.

Connick has charged Novel made "false and misleading" statements about his residence and has already skipped bond once before. In addition to the bond readjustment, Connick has requested Novel be made to establish a residence in Orleans Parish.

Asked about Connick's petition Wednesday, Exnicios said, "The man is an idiot. I think that tells everything."

Exnicios said Novel is living at his Metairie law office "until he finds permanent quarters" and added Marullo was "eminently fair" in setting the bond.

Novel was convicted of conspiracy to commit aggravated arson on a downtown church Mardi Gras of 1976.

The state alleged Novel tried to burn the church down because the structure, protected by a city moratorium on demolition, interfered with his plans to erect a high-rise complex on the site.

"That's a Twilight Zone Mickey Mouse tale. That's all it is," Novel said

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in response to Connick's motion. "Why doesn't he make it \$10 million?"

Prior to the arson case, Novel was convicted of possession and interstate transportation of unlawful electronic surveillance devices in 1970 and of a federal firearms conviction in 1977.

On Jan. 18, 1977, he was forced to forfeit a \$40,000 surety bond when he failed to appear in court for his trial, claiming he was recuperating from a heart attack in an Atlanta hospital. Upon his return to New Orleans, Braniff set his pre-trial bond at \$250,000.

In challenging Novel's current bond, Connick's motion states Novel says he "is a resident of Orleans Parish and has complied with all orders, both written and oral, heretofore entered in this cause. These are false and misleading representations to the court."

Exnicios's law office is currently for sale, although Novel says he is still

living there.

Novel accused Connick of being part of a giant conspiracy to have him framed. He said he will take a lie detector test to prove he is telling the truth and claimed he is currently shopping around for a house in Orleans Parish.

Novel has exploded onto news headlines several times in the past, most recently in connection with the arson charges. Following his first trial in the case, he filed a \$1 billion suit in federal court in Atlanta against several individuals, including Connick.

The suit alleged Connick and others interfered in Novel's plan to locate a 1980 World's Fair in eastern New Orleans.

Reportedly a former CIA agent, Novel was a witness in former District Attorney Jim Garrison's probe of the Kennedy assassination. He has also claimed he was hired by former President Richard Nixon to erase a portion of the Watergate tapes.