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No Money for Death Rifle

By DICK PROUTY

Denver Post Staff Writer
 Denver oilman John I. King lost his attempt Monday to obtain compensation for the rifle that killed former President John F. Kennedy.

A U.S. District Court jury in Denver ruled that Lee Harvey Oswald abandoned the rifle. Therefore, King couldn't have purchased it from Oswald's widow, the jury ruled.

The jury set the value of the weapon as a collector's item at zero.

The panel of three women and nine men awarded King a \$350 return from the government for rights to the .38-caliber pistol Oswald used to murder a pursuing Dallas patrolman, J. D. Tippit. King had paid Mrs. Oswald \$10,000 for the weapons.

The jury was asked to determine whether King should receive any compensation for the rifle and pistol.

The abandonment question wasn't connected with the pistol, which was taken from Oswald on his arrest.

King, 27 Sunset Drive, Cherry Hills Village, testified that as a gun collector he valued the murder weapon at \$450,000. It was sold to Oswald by a Chicago mail order firm for \$21.45, including telescopic sight.

King based his bid for the 6.25 mm Manlicher Carcano Italian military rifle on a Dec. 31, 1964, contract with Mrs. Oswald.

Mrs. Oswald was to get an additional \$35,000 if King ever got possession of the weapons which were taken by the Warren Commission.

After the contract was signed, Congress passed a law obtaining the rifle and hundreds of other exhibits associated with President Kennedy's slaying. It specified owners of the property would receive "just compensation."

Barred from ever getting the weapon he'd never seen, King sought \$5 million for the rifle and the .38-caliber pistol.

He based his claim on commercial exploitation value if the rifle could be shown around the world to persons willing to pay to see it.

Judge Doyle barred any such claim, and told the jury it could only consider the value of the weapon as a collector's item, not for any historical association.

The government resisted King's claims on grounds he didn't own the rifle, regardless of the contract.

Lee Harvey Oswald abandoned the rifle at the Texas School Book Depository immediately after the shooting the government maintained. Therefore, Mrs. Oswald couldn't have any claim upon it or authority to sell it, the government claimed.

The government also used

several communications from Mrs. Oswald, including a deposition taken for the trial, that she intended that the weapon belong to the United States.

King was represented by attorney W. C. Garrett, Dallas, and Denver attorney William G. Odell. Lawyers for the government were Lawrence M. Henry, U. S. attorney for Colorado, and Irwin Goldbloom and David J. Anderson, U.S. Justice Department counselors.

Odell said Monday it wasn't decided if the case will be appealed. King has estimated he has spent \$25,000 in trying to obtain the rifle or compensation for it.

King testified he valued the pistol which Oswald bought for \$29.95 at \$25,000 by itself, \$50,000 if it and the rifle were acquired together.

The jury reached its unanimous verdict Friday morning. It was sealed for reading Monday.

King wasn't present to hear the outcome of the case. His secretary said he had no comment.

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