

Belli Backs JFK Death Probe

Pittsburgh Press 1/10/77

By ROGER STUART

Melvin M. Belli, who defended Jack Ruby against the charge of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald, thinks it's a good idea for Congress to reinvestigate President Kennedy's assassination.

Although Belli said here today he still thinks the murders were "two isolated acts by two isolated men," he said: "It would be good to let the CIA and the FBI clear themselves."

Belli was in town to promote his new book, "Melvin Belli: My Life on Trial."

Oswald was found by the Warren Commission to have acted alone in killing Kennedy, while a Dallas jury convicted Ruby of shooting Oswald.

The Ruby verdict was overturned on appeal on grounds Ruby didn't get a fair trial in Dallas, but he wasn't retried before he died of cancer.

Belli doesn't hold much hope that some people will accept a congressional investigation's findings any better than they did the Warren Commission.

"There is nothing that can be done to prove to some people that the assas-



BELLI

sination and Oswald's murder weren't part of a sinister conspiracy," he said.

"But then there are some people who don't believe anyone's innocent.

"They're the kind who believe innocence can only be established beyond any possible doubt, and that's not the test."

Belli, in his book, traces his personal attainment of higher jury awards in civil damages suits.

And he recalled today that he once tried a case in federal court here. "It was against a hospital, which we sued for letting a man fall down the stairs," he said.

But jury verdicts here are low in comparison with some other areas, Belli said, noting his native San Francisco ranks very high.

"There are pockets of high and low all around the country," he added. Jury awards in northern and southern California are about a third what they are in San Francisco, Belli noted.

Although Belli has earned huge

awards for people who've been maimed or killed in tragic accidents, he agreed he has "made a hell of a lot of money."

"I've gone through a lot, too," Belli said, noting he recently paid off a \$300,000 judgment against him that stemmed from his purchase of the riverboat, The Delta King.

"I thought we could refurbish the thing, bring it to San Francisco and use it as a restaurant and hotel," he said. But plumbers and marine engineers and such cost a heck of a lot."

Belli also noted that he's spent money on oil wells, mines, films and inventions, including a nutcracking machine that pulverized nuts rather than delicately cracking them as it was intended to do.