

Colleen and John: Still an Item, But Only in Court

I can stand up to them as long as I know you haven't talked," a worried Rep. John Young (D-Texas) told former staffer Colleen Gardner over the telephone last year.

Alas, unbeknownst to Young, Gardner was even then tape-recording their conversations because she was already talking to "them"—two New York Times reporters. And Colleen Gardner soon followed Elizabeth Ray into print last summer to charge her congressional salary was meant primarily to guarantee her boss a bed partner.

Now, fifteen months after the first news story, the Gardner-Young affair is a scandal that will not go away. Three little-noticed law suits have kept the issue alive in Young's home district newspapers, and should those cases come to trial, more embarrassing details may spill from Washington's District Court.

First Gardner's attorney, Sol Rosen, filed suit against Young, charging the congressman libeled him by denouncing him in print. "We're going to ask for everything and do what the Justice Department should have done," says Rosen, who is requesting Young's motel and restaurant receipts, among other things. He also wants to question Young in person, which is something federal investigators did not do before the Justice Department de-

ided it had insufficient evidence to prosecute the congressman, who was re-elected last fall.

For his part, Young filed a Freedom of Information Act request and was handed the evidence Gardner had voluntarily given the Justice Department, including the tapes she had made of their intimate phone conversations. In June, Young sued Gardner, Rosen and the New York Times, charging libel, "conspiracy" to invade his privacy, and "unlawful" phone recordings.

To complete the legal triangle, Gardner last month filed suit against her ex-boss, joining Rosen in claiming the congressman's printed statements about her constituted libel.

Taken together, the three suits promise a winter of discontent for Young—whose wife committed suicide two months ago—and Gardner, who now shuns publicity and is considering changing her name as a step toward beginning a new life.

Footnote: In a remarkable demonstration of restraint (by Washington standards, anyway), Gardner never wrote about the episode. But the master of quick and sensational paperbacks, Robin "The French Connection" Moore, is due out with a book called *The Washington Connection* that will devote many pages to the Gardner-Young affair.