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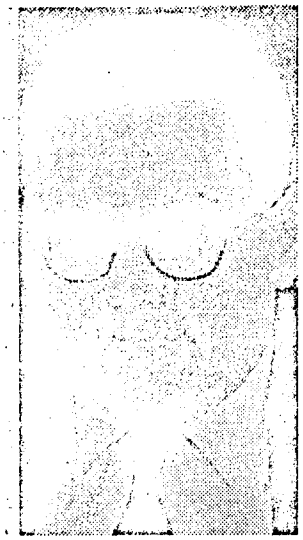

Sherman Skolnick

Skolnick told: Find own judge

By Dave Canfield

Sherman H. Skolnick has been assigned to find a judge he likes, and then admit as much, in court.

Skolnick, a legal researcher and critic of the courts, was told to submit "a list of one or more . . . judges of his choice" by Feb. 10 to Circuit Court Judge Nicholas J. Bua.

In a one-page written order, Bua told Skolnick he could pick a Circuit, Appellate or Supreme Court judge from anywhere in the state.

That judge will preside at a hearing at which Skolnick will be questioned by attorneys for two lawyers he has accused of a scheme to bribe Divorce Court judges here.

The time and place of the hearing were not set forth by Bua in his order. But it is definite under the order that the hearing at which Skolnick's designee will preside will be "in open court." Bua added in the order that Skolnick's chosen judge would serve only at his own "consent."

INTERVIEWED outside court after Bua signed the order, Skolnic said the judge's decision was "the most amazing ... I've ever seen" but that "I'll work hard" to come up with the name of a judge.

Bua's order was entered on a suit seeking $6 million in damages from Skolnick, his Citizens Committee to Clean Up the Courts and a third defendant.

They were sued late in 1972 because of the bribery-scheme allegations about which Skolnick is to be questioned before the judge of his choice.

Skolnick's accusation was referred by Chief Judge John S. Boyle of Circuit Court to the state's attorney's office for an investigation.

BOYLE HAD been asked by Skolnick to appoint a special panel to investigate a divorce case involving Joseph Sclafani, 35, owner of the Addison Construction and Lumber Co. in Addison, and his wife, Sheila, 30.

Sclafani allegedly was asked by lawyer Robert Klepak, then of 1 N. La Salle, to put up $25,000 to bribe "one or two judges" in the court's divorce division in order for Sclafani to obtain custody of his four children.

The "conduit" for conveying such a bribe was to be Klepak's sister and law partner, Ralla Klepak, according to a petition filed in the divorce division by Skolnick, who sent a copy to Boyle.

The suit pending before Bua was filed by Ralla Klepak. It calls Solnick's accusation "false, defamatory and scurrilous."