

Panther Lawyer Finds Job Fulfilling

By WALLACE TURNER
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SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 15— "I've never been as happy, never felt as professionally fulfilled as I have in these past two years," said Charles R. Garry, the white lawyer whose days and nights are now given over to defense of the Black Panthers.

Mr. Garry leaned forward as he made the comment, and the fires that usually leap from his dark brown eyes seemed banked.

His clients have included the top men in the Black Panthers—Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, David Hilliard, Bobby Seale and many others. He said he had never heard of the Panthers until the fall of 1967 when friends asked him to defend Newton from a charge of murdering an Oakland policeman.

Had not a gall bladder attack required immediate surgery in late summer, Mr. Garry would have been chief counsel in the trial of the "Chicago Seven."

Conflicts over Mr. Garry's absence contributed to the disputes between United States District Judge Julius Hoffman and Seale that ended with Mr. Seale being bound and gagged, then sentenced to four years for contempt and severed as a defendant. He will be tried later.

Mr. Garry said in a recent interview that as a specialist in trial work he formerly brought in about \$150,000 a year to his law firm. This has shrunk to almost nothing, he said, but the mission is worth it to him.

"I feel that for the first time in my life I have run into a group of men and women that I have unqualified respect and love for," he said of the Panthers. "The Black Panthers and what they stand for have brought to me a kind of a cohesion of all the things that the labor movement originally started out in the '30's fighting for. They deviated, in my opinion, when they became more affluent, and forgot the role of the masses of the unorganized,



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Charles R. Garry

and the unwanted and the undesired."

Mr. Garry, a husky man at 5 feet 11 inches and 180 pounds, recovered slowly from his gall bladder operation. One of his first acts afterward was to go to the prison where Newton is serving a 2-to-14-year term for killing the Oakland policeman.

Bias in His Own Life

Mr. Garry was born March 17, 1909 in Bridgewater, Mass. His parents were Armenian immigrants named Garabedian. His father is alive at 90 years of age. The family lived in Selma, in California's Central Valley, with one interruption, while Charles was growing up. He was the family's sole support for a time while growing up. His father went bankrupt on a small farm. The Central Valley is a place of deep prejudices, as John Steinbeck has described.

"I guess one of the things that makes me so incensed about what's happening to black people is because I relate it to my early life and the dis-

crimination that I received by just being an ethnic Armenian," Mr. Garry said. "I was called a god damned Armenian, and up until the time that I finished grammar school I think that I had a fight every single night."

He married Louise Evelyn Edgar of Portland, Ore., 37 years ago, worked in a cannery, went to law school at night, and was admitted to the bar in 1939. The Garrys have no children.

"We had the struggle going on in Spain, and I wanted to go and become a volunteer to fight," he said. "But I decided to stay in law school."

Mr. Garry said that from his father he had learned to read the Bible for guidance to action and Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables" as guide to human understanding.

In 1957, he said, he was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee and refused to testify on Fifth Amendment grounds. He remembered in the interview that he had quoted Jesus answer when he was asked if he were king of the Jews.

"I told them 'thou sayest.'" Mr. Garry said of the committee's question about Communist party membership.

"I don't belong to any organized Marxist party," he said. "I adhere towards the means of production to be in the hands of the people. I don't believe that the 76 corporate bodies, corporations in the United States should be running this country."

Is he a member of the Black Panthers?

"Oh no, and they will never make me one because the Black Panther party is only for black people. But they consider me a Panther because of the way I feel."

Some of that feeling was expressed in these words:

"I think the Black Panther party today, as limited as it is in its membership and being persecuted as it is, represents what I consider will save America from its own seeds of destruction."