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Has new face, name

Panther spy for FBI disappears

By ROBERT McCLORY

The key witness in the Black Panther civil suit against former State's Atty. Edward Hanrahan and the policemen who took part in the infamous 1969 raid has disappeared completely and no one in the federal government knows his whereabouts, U. S. District Judge Joseph Sam Perry was told Thursday. The outcome of the trial may depend entirely upon whether he is ever placed in the witness stand.

Atty. Arthur Kanter, representing the defendants, said William O'Neal, a former Panther and admitted FBI informer, has simply vanished. "We can't produce William O'Neal because we don't know where he is," he said.

The government gave O'Neal a new identity in a new location, a new job, and reportedly a new face two years ago for his cooperation in the Stanley Robinson murder case. But Kanter said O'Neal later signed a release from federal protection, but all efforts to trace him since have been futile.

Atty. Howard Reid, representing the families of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark as well as seven survivors of the raid in this \$47-million damage suit, asked Judge Perry to obtain statements for the U. S. Attorney General and the head of the U. S. marshal's service that neither they nor any of their subordinates know where O'Neal is. Perry said he would.

It has been rumored that O'Neal is actually being held in secret custody by U. S. marshals, who are moving him constantly around the country to prevent his testifying at the trial, which is set to begin Nov. 3.

It is now known that O'Neal was a vital link between the Panthers and the FBI in 1969. He allegedly supplied many of the guns confiscated from the apartment, drew an elaborate floor plan for the raiders identifying the location of Hampton's bed, and may have even drugged the Panther leader before the raid.

The plaintiffs are attempting to establish that the raid was a carefully planned execution involving conspiracy by federal and local law enforcement officials.

Originally, O'Neal was not named as a defendant in the suit, but in a deposition he gave last year, his role in the raid was more clearly revealed.

Judge Perry said O'Neal would be fully protected and could even wear a mask to protect his new appearance if he agrees to come forth.