

Critically wounded Flynt rasps an appeal for a 'free press'

By RUDY MAXA

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LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. — "If you could see what my stomach looks like, it'd make you sick," said Larry Flynt, his voice barely a rasp as he lay in a hospital bed here.

By his side was his wife, Althea, who had kept vigil at the hospital since Monday, when her husband was severely wounded on a Lawrenceville sidewalk, hit twice in the abdomen by bullets said to be from a .44 magnum weapon.

"The doctor said he had a 2 per cent chance to

live," said Althea Flynt, who has been joined by others making a pilgrimage to her husband: Ruth Carter Stapleton, Dick Gregory, Mark Lane and dozens of reporters.

Larry Claxton Flynt, founder of the magazine *Hustler*, recent convert to born-again Christendom and friend of President Carter's sister, had also become a vegetarian — and, later, a fruitarian.

He would fast, sometimes in the Bahamas with Gregory. And in the days before he was shot, as his trial for obscenity was drawing to a close at the courthouse here, he was fasting again.

On Monday, the day of the shooting, he had lunched only on grapefruit juice at a cafeteria two blocks from the courthouse.

And the day before, in keeping with his routine, he had had two enemas. His doctors said those enemas probably helped save his life. When the bullets tore up his intestines, his digestive tract was relatively empty, thus decreasing the chance of infection.

Flynt's condition later improved, and he was transferred Wednesday night to Emory University Hospital in Atlanta and placed under the care of a gastrointestinal specialist.

Flynt is convinced the attempt on his life was the work of an assassination team with ties to the government. The motive: to silence his inquiry into the JFK killing.

Even on his sickbed, still on the critical list, with paralysis of his legs still a possibility, Flynt took the opportunity to crusade:

"If this will focus enough attention on the concept of obscenity, maybe we can truly have a free press in this country . . . One single thing that has hurt the most — the American people wouldn't believe me when I said I was willing to die for the concepts on which our country was founded. If the apathetic American people can be woken up, we can solve a lot of social problems and make this a less violent world."

His wife asked him to save the sermons.

As he drifted asleep, Flynt asked her to stay nearby. He was afraid, he said, that if he stopped breathing no one would notice.