

Boasberg's testimony in pinball bribery trial

New Orleans Novelty Co. owner Louis M. Boasberg testified today that between January and June, 1971, he sent \$6,000 in envelopes to Pershing O. Gervais. He said he sent another \$2,000 in envelopes to former police Capt. Frederick A. Soule Sr. during this same period.

But Boasberg maintained the money to Gervais was payment for lobbying in favor of the pinball industry. He said he was seeking to get Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison to persuade former Gov. John J. McKeithen to influence the legislature not to outlaw gambling-type pinball machines.

Boasberg said the money was for himself and TAC Amusement Co. owner Lawrence L. Lagarde Sr., and it was delivered to Soule and Gervais by Harby Marks, an employe of New Orleans Novelty Co.

The first \$1,000 was delivered to Soule on Jan. 15, Boasberg said. He said another \$1,000 was sent to Soule on Feb. 18.

Boasberg said payments of \$2,000 each were sent to Gervais on March 8, May 3 and June 29, 1971.

Under questioning by U.S. Atty. Gerald J. Gallinghouse, Boasberg said he met with Soule in August, 1970, and discussed problems he was having with the Vice Squad.

Boasberg rambled as he talked about their discussion including Vice Squad arrests for prostitution, when Gallinghouse finally interrupted him and asked if they talked about the Bally Bingo pinball machines.

"Yes, I told Soule I was trying to prolong the business until the next session of the legislature to see if we couldn't legalize the machines," Boasberg said.

He said he asked Soule if something could be done about the raids and Soule told him he would talk to Sgt. Robert Frey, then the commander of the Vice Squad.

Soule, then assigned to Garrison's office, later said he talked to Frey, who was "reluctant" and "couldn't help," Boasberg said.

"In a subsequent meeting Soule said Frey said he might be able to do something," Boasberg said.

Later in his testimony, Boasberg said he was not paying for warnings. "We weren't concerned with warnings because we always warned our people."

Judge Christenberry then asked, "You mean you didn't want to know about the Vice Squad?"

Boasberg said no. He said he couldn't understand "why the Vice Squad was going out when we (pinball operators) were paying \$700 a year in licenses on the machine."

Boasberg, who has pleaded guilty in the conspiracy case, underwent questioning by the government for the first time today after it played 14 taped conversations between Boasberg and Gervais.

Boasberg also testified he got a telephone call in December, 1970, at Galatoire's restaurant from John Aruns Callery, Boasberg's partner in New Orleans Novelty Co., telling him Gervais wanted to talk to him.

Boasberg then was asked how Callery knew he wanted to talk to Gervais.

"I had told Callery I would like to talk to someone who could talk to Garrison and get Garrison to talk to the governor about how bad it would be to outlaw the pinball machines. Callery told me Gervais was a good man to talk to."

Boasberg also testified he asked Santo DiFatta, former owner of New Orleans Coin Machine Co., to contribute to a fund to protect the pinball industry. He said, however, he told DiFatta the money was for "a political campaign fund."

Boasberg also testified he had never received a warning of Vice Squad raids from pinball operator John Elmo Pierce.

Pierce, earlier in the trial, testified he gave warnings to other pinball operators including New Orleans Novelty Co.

The testimony also was heard that Callery borrowed \$95,000 from New Orleans

Novelty Co. through a suspense account over a period of 10-12 years without Boasberg's knowledge. Boasberg said he was perturbed that Gertrude Pearson, a certified public accountant who worked for him, did not notify him of the borrowed money.

He said Callery paid the money back.

Boasberg testified his books always were in order and once was complimented by an Internal Revenue Service agent on the way he handled them. When asked the name of that agent, Boasberg was unable to give it.

BOASBERG, under cross examination by Virgil Wheeler, attorney for John Aruns Callery, said, "There hasn't been a candidate running for office in New Orleans who hasn't approached us (the pinball industry) personally or had his campaign manager approach us."

Boasberg said he turned the handling of campaign contributions over to Callery and didn't want to know who got the money.

"Aruns handled all campaign contributions and PR for me since the 1950s," Boasberg said. "I told him, 'Please handle it. Do anything you want. I'm fed up with it.'"

At that point Judge Christenberry interceded asking how Boasberg could stand having his money given to a candidate without knowing which candidate got it.

"I just didn't want to know," said Boasberg. "I didn't want to know anything about it for many reasons."

Boasberg said Callery became fed up with handling the campaign contributions about 1967 or 1968.

BOASBERG SAID Callery told him he intended to get out of the pinball business because "the stigma had become too great."

Boasberg said Callery, who was a member of the New Orleans Mid-Winter Sports Association, the Sugar Bowl sponsor, was troubled in part because the Sugar Bowlers

wanted to throw him out of their organization because he was in the pinball business.

He also testified neither Callery nor Robert Nims, the other co-defendant with Garrison, knew anything about the deal Boasberg made in 1970 and 1971 with Frederick Soule and Pershing Gervais.

He said he gave Soule and Gervais about \$9,000 — \$6,000 from him and \$3,000 from other pinball companies—in the belief that Gervais "would see someone about killing" the anti-pinball bill in the legislature.

Questioned by Judge Christenberry, Boasberg said he didn't know how much of the \$9,000 Gervais would keep. "I didn't know if he would keep it all. I didn't inquire," he said.