

O'HARA ADMITS MAKING TRIPS

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'Just a Messenger,' Says Judge in Testimony

CHICAGO (AP)—A New Orleans builder testified Monday that an Orleans Parish criminal court judge aided his attempts to obtain evidence of government wiretapping during the Chattanooga, Tenn., jury tampering trial of James Hoffa, Teamster Union president.

Zachary Strate, 47, told a U.S. District Court hearing that Judge Malcolm O'Hara attempted to get an "affidavit of confessed wiretapping" from a key witness at the trial.

Strate said the judge told him that Edward Grady Partin, president of the Teamster Union local in Baton Rouge, La., refused to sign the affidavit.

Judge O'Hara, called as a witness during the afternoon session, admitted he made several trips with Strate, a long-time friend, including one to Teamster headquarters in May, but said his only purpose was to be a "traveling companion."

The judge, a former assistant district attorney in Orleans Parish and former Louisiana state senator, admitted also going with Strate in February to be "just a messenger" and present Partin the affidavit.

O'Hara was not specific, however, about for whom he served as messenger, despite intense cross-examination.

Strate, Hoffa and four others convicted in 1964 of mail fraud and conspiracy were ordered by the Supreme Court to receive a hearing to determine whether admitted government wiretapping resulted in evidence that was instrumental to the conviction.

Strate's remarks Monday came during cross-examination by Donald Page Moore, special prosecutor.

ADMITS TRAVEL

Moore asked Strate if he ever made trips with Judge O'Hara. Strate said that he did make trips to Washington, Las Vegas and other places with O'Hara

and that he paid the bills.

"Generally, when we travel together, I pay the bills," Strate told the court.

Strate testified that he, Judge O'Hara and Teamster official Alan Dortman met in the Washington office of Frank Fitzsimmons, acting Teamster head since Hoffa was jailed at Lewisburg, Pa., on the jury tampering charge.

Moore asked if Strate knew Judge O'Hara was in debt because of expenses incurred during his unsuccessful campaign against Jim Garrison for the office of district attorney.

Strate answered that he didn't know.

O'Hara said he and Strate were friends for a long time and since his (O'Hara's) separation from his wife, he had

Cont. in Sec. 1, Page 12, Col. 1

SECTION ONE—PAGE TWELVE

THE TIMES-PICA

O'Hara Admits Making Trips

Continued from Page 1.

spent much idle time with Strate.

O'Hara admitted he made several trips with Strate at Strate's expense. He admitted he visited teamster headquarters in May but said he knew no one.

Moore asked, "What were you doing there?"

The witness said "my only purpose was to go with Strate. He hated to go alone and I went with him as a traveling companion. I just sat around."

O'Hara admitted he went to Baton Rouge with Strate in February to see Partin. He said he was asked by Strate to see Partin and present him with the affidavit.

O'Hara was also asked if he owed \$30,000 to Strate and if he was ever paid by the teamsters. Judge Richard B. Austin sustained objections to both questions.

MEETING ALLEGED

Strate testified Friday that Judge O'Hara arranged a meeting between him and Walter Sheridan, an aide to Robert F. Kennedy in the Justice Department during Kennedy's term as attorney general.

Strate said that Sheridan, now an investigative reporter for the National Broadcasting Co., offered to give him evidence of government wiretapping at Chattanooga in exchange for Strate's

help in discrediting Garrison's probe of the Kennedy assassination.

Strate said there was no tape recording of his conversation with Sheridan, which he said took place in a New Orleans hotel lounge.

Strate testified that Sheridan told him he was willing to help Strate at the Chicago hearing if Strate was willing to help Sheridan in New Orleans.

Moore said Sheridan answered Strate's request for evidence of wiretapping by saying, "There was none. I'm afraid we can't do any business."

Judge O'Hara corroborated Strate's testimony when he was on the stand Monday. O'Hara said he was present for a few moments of the meeting and heard Sheridan say, "Why, don't you let me help you in Chicago?"

He also said he heard no reply from Strate.

Hoffa was sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$10,000 on the fraud and conspiracy charges involving loans made from the multi-million dollar Teamster pension fund.