

TESTIMONY GIVEN BY MRS. ONASSIS

Trial Begins on Charges of
Freelance's 'Harassment'

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By MAX H. SEIGEL

Mrs. Aristole Onassis took the witness stand for two hours yesterday as a Federal Court hearing in Manhattan began on charges that she was preventing a freelance photographer from earning a living.

In accompanying actions Mrs. Onassis is charging the photographer, Ronald E. Galella, with harassment and the Federal Government is accusing him of interfering with Secret Service men assigned to protect Mrs. Onassis' children.

Mrs. Onassis was asked by Alfred S. Julien, lawyer for Mr. Galella, about a visit Sept. 24, 1969, to Kennedy International Airport to meet her children. Mr. Galella took many photographs of Mrs. Onassis at the airport, and Mr. Julien sought to elicit from Mrs. Onassis a statement that she had not been frightened.

Holding up a photograph, Mr. Julien asked: "Does it show a frightened or alarmed Mrs. Onassis?"

"I can't say, sir," she replied.

In his opening statement, Mr. Julien charged that Mrs. Onassis "grossly exaggerated" when she said that she was terrified and that her children were endangered by Mr. Galella's picture-taking.

Mr. Julien said that Mrs. Onassis' charm, marriages and life-style had made her so famous she represented "the American dream." Former Judge Simon H. Rifkind, Mrs. Onassis' lawyer, commented that Mr. Galella's activities were turning the "American dream" into a "nightmare" for his client.

Beginning in 1968, Mr. Rifkind said, Mr. Galella had conducted a persistent and obsessive campaign to drive Mrs. Onassis to distraction.

Mr. Rifkind added that Mr. Galella had followed Mrs. Onassis to Athens, Ischia, Skorpis and Capri by ship car and helicopter. He paid teen-agers to spy on her at her country home in New Jersey and he had "romanced" maids in her employ, it was charged.

The right of his client's privacy was invaded, Mr. Rifkind said, because of the extensive and exhaustive pursuit.