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MRS. ONASSIS CITES 'BLACKMAIL' CARD

Accuses Galella of Attempt
to Collect a Payoff

By MAX H. SEIGEL

Mrs. Aristotle Onassis charged yesterday in Federal Court here that a Christmas card sent to her by Ronald E. Galella, the photographer, in 1970 was an attempt at blackmail.

The card shows a Santa Claus handing a wad of money to the photographer. And beside them is a theatrical placard saying see "The Payoff, starring Aristotle Onassis as Santa and Ron Galella as the Paparazzo" — *paparazzo* meaning freelance photographer.

Mrs. Onassis told the court that "the message this card conveyed to me was blackmail and that Galella would continue hounding us until my husband paid him off."

Use of the word "blackmail" drew an immediate protest from Albred S. Julien, counsel for Mr. Galella. He said the Christmas card was a joke, "Maybe a bad joke," but no more than that. The lawyer then asked that the statement be stricken.

A Mistrial Asked

Mr. Julien also asked again for a mistrial. He told Judge Irving Ben Cooper, who is hearing the case without a jury:

"Under the circumstances of your own appointment as a member of this judiciary by this lady's late husband, with the Kennedy family children involved in this case, to hear the word 'blackmail' uttered by the widow of the President who appointed you, I think is improper. It should never have been said."

Judge Cooper declared that



DESCRIBED AS BLACKMAIL BID: This card was described by Mrs. Aristotle Onassis yesterday as an attempt by Ronald E. Galella at blackmail. She testified that it was sent to her by Mr. Galella in 1970. Wording on sign at right describes scene as "The Payoff," with Mr. Onassis (as Santa) and Mr. Galella. Card was shown at trial here.

Mr. Julien's statement was not called for. He said that if the lawyer wanted to challenge him in an attempt to keep him from presiding, there was "a method provided for by law" that he had the right to resort to. He did not.

"To throw in this kind of thing into a judge's firm determination to give of himself to the end that justice be done, it doesn't affect me," Judge Cooper said, "but certainly it is extremely unwarranted, to the point where I am ashamed that counsel thought that it would have any impression on me. It makes no impression whatsoever."

The judge then denied both Mr. Julien's motion to strike Mrs. Onassis' answer and his motion for a mistrial.

At this point, former Federal Judge Simon H. Rifkind, counsel for Mrs. Onassis, suggested that in view of instructions that Judge Cooper, had issued previously on the subject, Mr. Julien was probably in contempt.

"I would suggest," he told the Court, "your Honor might well want to consider that aspect of the case."

The Christmas card and the exchanges that it engendered came at the close of a morning during which Mrs. Onassis had continued her detailed recital of occasions on which she allegedly had been harassed by Mr. Galella. Her testimony was part of a countersuit seeking to enjoin the photographer from coming within 200 yards of her residence at 1040 Fifth Avenue and 100 yards from her elsewhere.

Judge Cooper has reserved decision on a claim for \$1.3-million in damages filed against Mrs. Onassis by Mr. Galella, who contended she interfered with his livelihood as a freelance photographer.

Direct examination ended in mid-afternoon, with Mrs. Onassis saying that the total effect of Mr. Galella's persistent attempts to photograph her had been to cause her anguish, fear for her safety at times, and

terror. She said she had "no peace, no peace of mind, was always under surveillance, imprisonment in my house, all this for me and my children."

At the start of cross-examination, Mr. Julien elicited from Mrs. Onassis the acknowledgement that the "bumpings" she said she received from Mr. Galella had caused no visible harm.

Mrs. Onassis will return to the witness stand for further cross-examination at 10 A.M. today in the Federal Courthouse at Foley Square.