

SFChronicle

Newsman in Jail Appeals To Douglas

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Washington

Reporter William T. Farr, jailed by a Los Angeles judge for refusing to disclose news sources, appealed yesterday to Justice William O. Douglas to set him free.

Farr's lawyer, Mark Hurwitz of Orange, Calif., said in the application that the 38-year-old reporter was a victim of "judicial entrapment."

In 1970 while covering the Charles Manson murder trial for the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, Farr wrote a story saying members of the Manson cult planned to kill motion picture stars.

Superior Court Judge Charles H. Older had barred lawyers and other trial participants from disclosing any information about the case. When Farr declined to divulge who supplied him with the material, the judge held him in contempt and meted out an indefinite jail term.

Farr, now a reporter for the Los Angeles Times, has been in jail 38 days.

Hurwitz asked Douglas, who has jurisdiction over cases from California, to order the reporter freed, possibly on bail, until the U.S. Circuit Court in San Francisco rules on an appeal to upset the contempt judgment.

The lawyer said Older initially told Farr that he was under "no compulsion" to disclose his news sources, but later punished him for not cooperating.

Associated Press