

Mafia Charge**Car Dealer Sues Magazine**S.F. Examiner—Page 15
☆☆☆ Wed., Nov. 1, 1967

Life magazine today faces a \$7 million libel suit filed by a Los Gatos auto dealer who denies the magazine's allegation that he is a member of the Cosa Nostra and Mafia.

Time, Inc., a publisher of Life, also was named a defendant by Joseph Cerrito, 53, Lincoln-Mercury dealer, who also lives in Los Gatos.

Attached to the Federal Court suit were two issues of Life for Sept. 1 and 8 which contained a two-part series detailing "the audacious empire of organized crime."

Cerrito's name is not men-

tioned in the articles themselves.

PICTURE

But in the Sept. 1 issue Life ran pictures of individuals identified as Cosa Nostra "family heads." Cerrito's picture was included.

San Jose attorney Thomas Salciccia, representing Cerrito, said yesterday "Mr. Cerrito states that he has never been and is not now a member of any criminal organization."

ACCUSATIONS

Cerrito has been in business in the Santa Clara Val-

ley for 25 years, Salciccia said.

"No matter how admirable the objectives of Time, Inc., may be, they will not be permitted to assassinate character with impunity," Salciccia said.

The article accompanying the photographs accused Cerrito and others of being high ranking Cosa Nostra hoodlums, who were the heads of geographic territories in the United States.

It charged the men with presently being "a cartel of

24 semi-independent Cosa Nostra families."

The suit said Life was asked for a retraction on Sept. 14 and 25 but that the editors refused to comply with the demand.

(In March and again in June of 1959 Cerrito was called before a Federal Grand Jury in Los Angeles. The jury was inquiring into the activities of West Coast figures who attended a "summit meeting" of crime heads in the Appalachia area two years earlier. Cerrito's testimony, if any, was not disclosed.)