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WILLIAM FARR
Douglas ordered release

Newsman Farr Freed From Jail

A.P. & U.P.

Washington

Justice William O. Douglas ordered reporter William T. Farr freed from jail yesterday while the newsman appeals a contempt conviction for a story about the 1970 Manson trial.

Douglas said he was freeing Farr "in the interest of justice" because he had raised an issue not covered by past decisions of the Supreme Court.

Farr, 38, walked out of jail after 48 days behind bars. Douglas' ordered that the Los Angeles Times reporter be freed "on his own recognizance."

STORY

Farr, who was then working for the Los Angeles Herald - Examiner, wrote a story about a prospective witness' statement that the Manson clan planned to murder several movie stars.

Superior Court Judge Charles H. Older held Farr

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in contempt for refusing to divulge the names of the lawyers who supplied him with the statement.

During the trial the judge had imposed an order barring lawyers and other trial participants from disclosing any information about the case.

ARGUMENTS

Farr argued that the contempt conviction was invalid since he was ordered to jail more than a year after the trial. California has a one-year statute of limitations.

Farr said that since the judge could not take action against the lawyers more than a year after the information was given, the reporter himself could no longer be held accountable.

The Los Angeles county counsel's office responded that there is no statute of limitations in California for civil contempts.

Douglas, in his opinion, said "whether this means that Farr could be imprisoned for life is not clear." He added: "The issue is not free from doubt. Yet, since the precise question is a new

one not covered by our prior decisions, I have concluded in the interest of justice to release Farr on his personal recognizance pending decision of his . . . case" by the U.S. Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

RULING

Last June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that reporters could be held in contempt for refusing to divulge information to grand juries. But Douglas, who dissented from that ruling, said it did not apply to the Farr case.

Farr, whose release was delayed several hours because there was no delivery boy available to carry a telegram from a Supreme Court clerk notifying the sheriff of the ruling, said the first thing he wanted was "a hot bath" and then, "the biggest hamburger I can find."

His fiancée, Cindy Boltz, was on hand to greet Farr when he was released.

He said he had survived the 46 days in solitary confinement in good mental shape and had received psychological boosts from frequent visitors.