

Lawyers Delay Own Cases To Observe Cover-Up Trial

NYTimes

OCT 31 1974

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30 — Lawyers of all specialties and ages have been coming to the cover-up trial each day, taking time off from their own cases because, as Steven Wolf, a young lawyer from Philadelphia, put it, "I don't feel like waiting 200 years for the next case like this."

Judge John J. Sirica has allotted nine seats for visiting lawyers. They are good seats, just inside the rail that separates the parties in the case from the spectators' gallery, but there are not enough of them.

So the lawyers who don't get in wait outside in the hallway, hoping that a seat will become vacant.

They talk about the way the lawyers in the cover-up case are handling themselves. They talk about the laws of evidence, about jurors, about defendants. And they talk about Judge Sirica, whose controversial remarks and rulings have become, for most of them, the main story about the trial.

"You wouldn't bring a group of law students in here to teach them evidence," said Stephen S. Eckman of Minneapolis, one of the lawyers waiting outside this morning.

"It's hardly the ideal Federal case to observe" in terms of seeing "what usually goes on," Mr. Wolf agreed.

"They do take liberties," said Mrs. Felicia McFeeley.

Mrs. McFeeley, once a lawyer with the Board of Veterans' Appeals and now retired, said that she had been coming to the trial "to see if the procedures are carried blished over centuries to guarantee defendants a fair trial.

She did not appear convinced that they were.

Next to Mrs. McFeeley stood another lawyer, also retired—Gen. H. H. Shaller, who had practiced law before beginning his Army career. The general interjected with some praise for the judge.

"He was in complete control," he said, when he observed him on an earlier day of the trial.

Most of the lawyers outside today have had little to do with criminal cases in their own law practices. One of them, however, a young man named Frank Wiggins, is an attorney with the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, working on such things as prison reform.

Did that give him any special feelings toward the defendants in the cover-up trial?

"If any of these people are committed to prison, you're going to see a new interest in prison reform," he replied.

Then he smiled and added, "That's facetious."