Galella Story of 'Missed Photos' Disputed by the Peter Duchins

By MAX H. SEIGEL MAR 2 1 1972

Peter Duchin, the pianist, and his wife, Cheray, yesterday disputed testimony given last week by Ronald E. Galella, the freelance photographer, who is accused of harassing Mrs. Aristotle Onassis.

Mr. Galella had testified that he missed getting photos of Mrs. Onassis before the opening of the Broadway musical "Two Gentlemen of Verona" because he had overslept.

Yesterday Mr. and Mrs. Duchin, appearing as witnesses for Mrs. Onassis in her suit for a permanent injunction against Mr. Galella, told identical stories of what had happened last Dec. 1.

They testified that they first saw Mr. Galella in the evening outside Bonwit Teller's 57th Street entrance, between Fifth and Madison Avenue. They said that Mr. Galella and other photographers were taking pictures of Mrs. Onassis in a limousine as she was waiting for the Duchins.

Followed by Photographers

Then, they testified, four photographers, including Mr. Galella, followed the entire party to the St. James Theater, arriving ahead of their limousine, to take more pictures.

Mr. Galella testified last Friday that he had fallen asleep in the lobby of the Croyden Hotel on East 86th Street that evening and had reached the theater too late to get any photographs before the intermission.

Yesterday's testimony came shortly after Judge Irving Ben Cooper ordered a speedup of the trial, which started more than a month ago in Federal Court at Foley Square. s

Judge Cooper, who is hearing the case without a jury, announced that court would convene at 9:30 A.M. instead of 10 A.M. the rest of this week, except Thursday. He also directed that a night session be held Thursday, from 8 to 10 P.M.

The judge also announced that he was reserving decision on all pending motions and that he would accept no offers of proof of damages until it was determined whether there was liability on the basis of the facts and law.

Mrs. Onassis is seeking an injunction to keep Mr. Galella 100 yards from her and 200 yards from her apartment at 1040 Fifth Avenue. The photographer had started the court action with a claim for $1.3-million in damages for alleged assault by Secret Service agents assigned to protect Mrs. Onassis, false arrest and interference with his livelihood as a photographer.