

'Newshawk' sues Patterson, paper

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI
WXYZ-TV's "Newshawk" Jerry Stanecki filed suit last week in Oakland County Circuit Court against Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, The Oakland Press, a daily newspaper published in Pontiac, and Press reporter Ira Rosen.

According to briefs filed with circuit court, Stanecki, an investigative reporter for Channel Seven, claims Patterson slandered him and the Oakland Press maliciously printed statements which it knew to be false.

The suit revolves around Patterson's Organized Crime Task Force's arrest of a number of allegedly middle-class mobsters in July after months of investigation. Undercover policeman Vincent Mazzara, who rose to fame as Detroit's "service" in helping to bust a multi-million dollar heroin ring in 1974, was instrumental in the Oakland County investigation.

According to articles written by Rosen and published in the Oakland Press, Patterson and other unidentified sources said Stanecki, a Southfield resident, tipped off a Teamster Union official that Mazzara was an undercover cop. Patterson and others also said the Federal Bureau of Investigation was investigating Stanecki for possible obstruction of justice.

Patterson claimed the alleged Stanecki tip almost ruined the investigation.

THE ROOT OF the suit against Patterson is the prosecutor's statement that the FBI was considering bringing obstruction of justice charges against Stanecki.

According to the suit, Stanecki claims Patterson's statements were intended to "subject Stanecki to embarrassment, ridicule, disgrace, and scorn."

He also accused the Oakland Press and its reporter with publishing "untrue, false and defamatory" statements. He also claims the newspaper knew the statements were untrue but printed the information anyway.

"THE OAKLAND Press, Rosen and Patterson gave erroneous and slanderous information and tried to destroy my career. I have spent the last 10 years as an investigative journalist and exposed corruption and corrupt politicians," Stanecki said last week before leaving on a vacation.

The suit, which asks damages of \$10,000, has been assigned to Circuit Court Judge Farrell Roberts. It has brought disclaimers from Patterson's staff, the Pontiac-based newspaper and the FBI.

Patterson, who also was on vacation, could not be reached for comment. Richard Thompson, Patterson's chief assistant prosecutor, however, dismissed Stanecki's suit as "just one of



L. BROOKS PATTERSON

many harassing lawsuits for his pursuit of organized crime."

Thompson said the suit was just another attempt to "put pressure directly on an investigative agency by having that agency defend itself in all these lawsuits."

The Oakland Press, which ran the

Stanecki articles July 20 and 22, is standing by its story.

"Prior to writing the articles, we took every precaution to insure their accuracy. We are standing behind our original stories and have confidence in the sources for them," said Oakland Press Editor Richard L. Conner.

THE FBI, which is in the middle of the Oakland County temper, said "FBI Detroit is not conducting an investigation concerning a TV reporter on the possibility of obstruction of justice charges."

"The FBI has no investigation pending concerning a reporter, TV or otherwise, concerning the recent investigation in Oakland County."

The statement was released July 19 by O. Franklin Lowie, special agent in charge of the Detroit FBI office.

Last week a spokesman for the FBI refused to comment as to whether the bureau had ever investigated Stanecki prior to the July 19 statement. "We'll stand on our original statement," said FBI spokesman Bill Napp.

No action will be taken on the suit for six months.

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