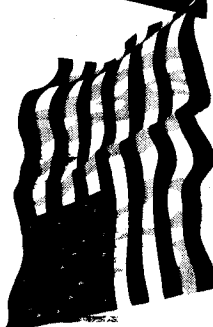


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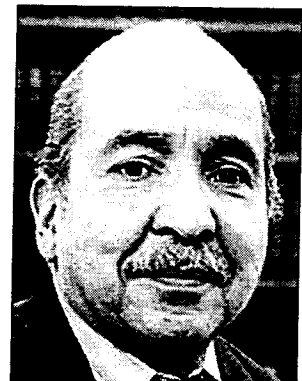
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'BRIBE' MESS IN SUIT vs. RABBIS

25 New York Post, Tuesday, February 17, 2004 nypost.com



TOM SHANAHAN
"I did the right thing."



JUDGE FIGUEROA
Goes after lawyer.

By DAREH GREGORIAN

A respected Manhattan lawyer finds himself in a legal tangle after claiming a woman involved in a bizarre and notorious divorce case tried to bribe him.

Tom Shanahan made the bombshell allegations about Helen Sieger in a letter to state Supreme Court Justice Nicholas Figueroa, who's presiding over her suit against the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, court records show.

Figueroa wasn't exactly grateful: He reported the lawyer to the Disciplinary Committee for sending him "clearly prejudicial" information about Sieger.

"It's outrageous," said Shanahan, who represented straphangers fighting the transit-fare hike. "I think I did the absolute right thing in bringing this to the judge's attention."

Sieger, 50, said she was appalled by Shanahan's allegation that she tried to pay him off for "inside" dirt on the UOR's lawyer.

"It has never happened and will never happen," she said. "If I paid bribes, my case wouldn't still be rolling along through the court system after 5½ years."

The legal mess started when Sieger's husband, Chaim, got 100 rabbis to approve a rare divorce decree that allows a husband, but not a wife, to remarry.

She claimed Chaim bought off the rabbis, and sued the UOR in 1998.

Her suit was tossed last year by the Appellate Divi-

sion, which called the bribe charges "unsubstantiated."

The case is still alive because Sieger is appealing and the rabbinical group is countersuing her.

Sieger said she was put in touch with Shanahan last summer through one of his former clients.

His letter says that he relayed to Sieger that he'd worked with one of the rabbis' lawyers, Stuart Tratner. She sent word back that she wanted him for a case unrelated to the UOR suit, and that his \$25,000-\$50,000 retainer fee "would not be problematic," Shanahan said.

He claimed that to remain aboveboard, he told Tratner — with whom he shares an office — that he was meeting with Sieger, but on a matter not related to the rabbi case.

Shanahan found out that wasn't true when he met with Sieger, the letter says, adding that she told him she wanted someone "inside" to find out Tratner's strategy because the "fix was in."

Shanahan said he turned her down and she left.

Shortly afterward, he wrote to Figueroa, who forwarded the letter to the Disciplinary Committee.

"I believe that he mailed this letter to me in an attempt to influence my decision," Figueroa wrote.

Shanahan said, "I look forward to explaining my actions to the Disciplinary Committee." ★
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