

Plea bargain frees Casner . . .

(Continued from A-1)

against Casner were about to be dismissed because a witness was excused during the preliminary hearing before Casner's attorney, Deputy Public Defender Gary Smeltzer, completed cross-examination. If a dismissal were to occur, Deputy District Attorney Joseph B. Canty would have the option of refiling the charges, but another preliminary hearing would have involved considerable expense in court time and transportation of witnesses.

In court Canty said he approved the disposition for Casner because it was in the interest of justice. One factor in that decision was the avoidance of \$25,000 to \$30,000 in trial costs, he said.

Smeltzer told a reporter

that Casner has never ceased to maintain his innocence, but agreed to plead guilty because he wanted to get out of jail.

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