

# Lawyer agrees to reimburse client

By Deborah Pines

Staff Writer

White Plains divorce lawyer Doris Sassower came to court yesterday bearing checks and apologies. But a local judge said he still may find her in contempt for earlier refusals to turn over a former client's file and to appear before him.

"We've got to uphold the rule of law," state Supreme Court Justice Samuel G. Fredman told Sassower.

Fredman set Aug. 15 for a new hearing on the contempt accusations that could lead to imprisonment or fines. "I took an oath, 'Without fear or favor,' and I mean it," Fredman said.

The hearing yesterday in White Plains was called to probe three issues:

- Sassower's refusal to give a former client's file to the woman's new attorney.

- Her refusal to reimburse payments owed the client.

- And Sassower's conduct, including her failure to appear at a July 10 hearing.

Robert Weininger, Sassower's attorney, told Fredman that Sassower would turn over the file immediately. He said she also would return \$517.50 she owes her former client, Evelyn Breslaw of New Rochelle. Sassower also agreed to pay \$3,800 to a real estate appraiser used in the case, saying Breslaw could repay her later.

Until yesterday, Sassower had refused to give the file to Breslaw's new attorney, Harvey Landau of White Plains, saying the appraiser had to be paid first.

Breslaw has been sued for divorce by her husband, Milton Breslaw of New Jersey. The couple is separated.

In a ruling made public this week, Fredman said Sassower was not authorized to keep the file because a hearing officer, backed by an appeals court ruling, ordered the file returned.

Fredman called Sassower's failure to appear at a July 10 hearing on the case a "gross insult."

Sassower has maintained that she didn't think she had to appear

because she had asked for a 30-day postponement. She said she never received a written response from the judge denying the postponement before she left the country for two weeks.

Landau has asked Fredman to find Sassower in contempt and to possibly fine her for each day she "unlawfully" held the file.

But Sassower's attorney said, "Mrs. Sassower would never knowingly disregard any order of this honorable court."

Sassower, 56, a former president of the New York Women's Bar Association, is no stranger to the limelight. In November she won on appeal a case in which she was arrested with two friends after she was accused of refusing to pay a \$56.50 restaurant tab. She is now suing the restaurant, the White Plains police and Westchester County for the 1986 arrest.

Last year, some of her files were subpoenaed for Bess Myerson's trial in Manhattan.