

Contempt hearing for divorce lawyer postponed third time

Sassower's doctor recommends she avoid stress for 60 days

By Deborah Pines
Staff Writer

With some skepticism and obvious frustration, a state judge yesterday granted a third delay in contempt-of-court proceedings against a White Plains divorce lawyer based on her claims that she is medically incapacitated.

State Supreme Court Justice Samuel G. Fredman said he will fix

the next date for the proceedings against Doris Sassower, which began July 27, after questioning Sassower's doctor under oath at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow.

The doctor, Theodore Cherbuliez of Scarsdale, wrote Fredman on Tuesday recommending that Sassower avoid for at least 60 days "contested court proceedings" and "unduly stressful" situations.

The doctor reported Sassower

had been hospitalized and is being treated for "major depression."

Similar letters from Cherbuliez led to delays Nov. 14 and Jan. 9.

Yesterday, when Fredman received the latest Cherbuliez letter from William Diament of Scarsdale, an attorney for Sassower, the judge said he has heard that Sassower is seeing clients and made one appearance in federal court in

January. "I will not be pushed around, and I will not be lied to," Fredman said.

In response, Diament said he was told that his client is working only on "pending matters" and that appearing at the contempt hearing before Fredman would be too stressful for her.

Although Fredman said the contempt hearing should be considered a pending matter, he agreed to the delay to give Sassower "every benefit of the doubt."

After the hearing, Elena Sassower, the attorney's daughter, said in a telephone interview that Diament was mistaken. Elena Sassower said her mother is not seeing clients on pending matters and appeared in federal court only because a judge threatened that if she didn't he would dismiss a lawsuit both Sassowers filed against a cooperative board that had refused to sell them a unit.

Later, Diament said over the telephone that he does not "know

what she (Sassower) does or doesn't do. He said the statement in court "was an impression I had."

The contempt proceedings against Sassower focus on whether she willfully held on to a former client's file after she was ordered to turn it over and failed to make a scheduled court appearance.

Sassower maintains that there was no contempt because she has since returned the file and that the missed appearance was a scheduling misunderstanding.