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Gunrunning is fool's errand, Sickles tells jurors

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Charles W. "Bill" Sickles, the son of a Pittsburgh miner who says he worked his way up to become the imperial wizard of the Adamic Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, took the witness stand in U.S. District Court on Tuesday and denied allegations that he was a gunrunner for the Klan.

"Only a fool would do a trick like that," Sickles told the jury. He contended that the 16 federal weapons charges against him were the result of entrapment by undercover agents of the Department of Treas-

ury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Also testifying on Sickles' behalf as a character witness was his friend, John H. Duffy, 27, a Wilmington-area electrician, who in the past was a member of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Liberation Front.

Sickles' trial was slow in starting on Tuesday because four jurors and two alternates had access to Tuesday's edition of The Morning News, which contained a story about the case. Judge Walter K. Stapleton allowed the trial to continue without disqualifying the jurors after he interviewed them and concluded that they had been interested in reading about the record-set-

ting base hit by Pete Rose of the Phillies the previous night.

But Stapleton admonished the jurors again, as he has done daily, to "please, please, please" avoid exposure to news reports for the duration of the trial. "I should have had the presence of mind to think of the temptation of Pete Rose last night before I excused you," the judge remarked.

Stapleton had learned of the problem before the trial opened when a juror asked for a pair of scissors in the jury room, presumably to excise the trial story from the paper. Three jurors and an alternate

were in the jury room at the time, and another juror and alternate later admitted they had looked at a newspaper elsewhere that morning.

Barring further delays, the trial could end late today or Thursday morning. Sickles is expected to make his own closing statement to the jury when the presentation of evidence is completed.

Special Agents James Markowski and Richard Schoerner have testified that they approached Sickles last July and joined the Adamic Knights a month later. Sickles agreed to help them obtain guns, Markowski said.

But Sickles said that his pertinent telephone remark, "I'm into that," meant only that he was interested in firearms as a hobby.

According to Markowski and Schoerner, Sickles later bought or aided in the purchase of guns from licensed firearms dealers in Delaware, transferring the weapons to the two undercover agents afterward.

Sickles acknowledged involvement in the sales of four guns to Markowski and Schoerner in November 1980, plus another sale to Markowski in May of this year, but

• See SICKLES [C3]