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Lynn D. Compton, Sirhan Prosecutor, Named State Judge

BY RON EINSTOSS
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Lynn D. (Buck) Compton, who 20 years ago left the Los Angeles police force to begin a career as a county prosecutor, was nominated Thursday by Gov. Reagan to the 2nd District Court of Appeal here.

Compton, according to Dist. Atty. Evelle J. Younger, will be the first former policeman to advance as high as the appellate court level in California.

The nomination is subject to confirmation by the Commission on Judicial Appointments. If approved, Compton will succeed Justice Donald R. Wright, recently appointed chief justice of the State Supreme Court.

Last year Compton headed the three-man team that prosecuted and convicted Sirhan B. Sirhan for the slaying of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

Came as a Mild Surprise

His acceptance of the appointment came as at least a mild surprise because the ex-UCLA football star and war hero was considered the leading candidate to become district attorney if Younger is successful in his

campaign for state attorney general. It is no secret that Younger favored his 48-year-old longtime aide for the appointment by the County Board of Supervisors as his successor.

The district attorney's job, if it becomes available, now would have to be rated a tossup among several candidates, including some Superior Court judges who have indicated an interest in it.

Commenting on his chief deputy's new assignment, Younger said Compton is a distinguished lawyer and a brilliant scholar.

Occupy Judicial Position

"His appointment must serve as an inspiration to many young people who have to do it the hard way," Younger said, referring to Compton's working his way through law school as a police officer.

"To the best of my knowledge, he will occupy the highest judicial position any former policeman has ever occupied in this state, if not the nation," Younger added.

Compton, a Republican, brought the same hard-nosed attitude to the courtroom that he earlier displayed in collegiate athletics and on the battlefield.

He captained the baseball team as

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a catcher at UCLA in 1942, making all-conference, and he started at guard in the 1943 Rose Bowl Game against Georgia.

During World War II as a first lieutenant with the 101st Airborne Division, Compton was awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He now is a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserve.

Compton's appointment to the bench is the second time he has been called upon by Reagan.

The governor last year named him to the California Crime Technological Research Foundation, which serves as the research and development arm of the California Council on Criminal Justice—the statewide planning and coordinating agency in the field of crime prevention and control.

He joined the district attorney's office in 1951 af-

ter four years as a police officer.

Compton has had extensive trial experience and last appeared in the courtroom during the Sirhan trial. He delivered a stirring closing argument in

which he successfully asked the jury to convict Sirhan of first-degree murder and to reject the defense contention that the Palestinian immigrant was temporarily insane when he shot Kennedy.

Since 1962, when he became head deputy in the district attorney's Long Beach branch office, Compton primarily has been engaged with administrative duties.

He was named chief deputy district attorney, the No. 2 job in the largest prosecutor's office in the world, in 1966 after serving as both chief of the area and branch offices and assistant district attorney.

Compton worked under four district attorneys and

said he considers Younger to be the best of them all.

He said he has mixed emotions about accepting the judicial appointment because the district attorney's office performs what Compton described as "a great public service to the community" and also presumably because of Younger's strong showing in the pre-election polls.

"Dealing with the proper administration of justice is one of the most important

aspects of government in this day and age," he explained, "but on balance, I believe I can make a greater contribution in this area on the appellate court level."

Compton is nationally known in the field of criminal law. He is a member of the governing council of the American Bar Assn.'s criminal law section.

Compton, who was born in Los Angeles and attended Los Angeles High

School, lives with his wife, Donna, and daughters, Cindy, 15, and Tracy, 13, in Pajos Verdes.

Gov. Reagan also nominated Appellate Justice Robert Gardner, 58, to be presiding justice of the 4th District Court of Appeal, Division 2, San Bernardino, succeeding Hilton McCabe, who has retired.

And he recommended that Riverside County Superior Judge John G. Gabbert, 60, be appointed to succeed Gardner.