

City is 'in fear,' Reese says

Challengers blast Garrison, crime rate

By ALLAN KATZ

Four candidates for Orleans Parish district attorney pitted themselves against the lure of Billie Jean King vs. Bobby Riggs and did surprisingly well.

A crowd filled up the Walnut Room at New Orleans Lakefront Airport last night for a New Orleans Voters Association meeting, despite the lure of watching the libber demolish the lobber.

George Reese, Ross Scaccia, Denis Barry II and Harry Connick addressed the meeting. The incumbent DA, Jim Garrison, was not present.

EACH OF THE candidates, not surprisingly, was critical of Garrison's administration, but none alluded to the DA's problems in U.S. District Court. Instead, they concentrated on linking the DA's office to the rising crime rate.

Reese said "600 hard-core criminals are holding a city of 600,000 in fear. These criminals are on the streets because the present DA's office is unwilling to go the limit to get them off the streets.

"What New Orleans needs is a DA who will go into court himself and is willing to prosecute. The present administration in the DA's office is scared to death to lose a case and spoil their conviction record.

"As a result, they back off the tough cases. If I'm elected, I'll take the responsibility for getting these people off the streets."

SCACCIA SAID the criminal justice system isn't working in New Orleans because of "inefficiency and incompetence in the DA's office."

He said Garrison was diverted from the job of putting criminals in jail by his fascination for the John F. Kennedy murder case and became mired in a case against Clay Shaw "on paltry evidence I wouldn't go into court with."

Unlike the incumbent, Scaccia said, "I'm sincere about the law. It's not a joke to me.

Barry was critical of both Garrison and Reese. Of the DA, he said, "Jim got sidetracked. This city said back in 1962 when he was first elected that it wanted a seven-day-a-week DA because the people realized that the people

who are in the business of crime work at their trade seven days a week."

In Garrison's absence, Barry charged, the DA's staff "plea bargains" case after case, with the result that "armed robbers facing 99 years in jail walk off with six months in Parish Prison for a guilty plea to attempted simple robbery, and the incumbent tells you what a good conviction record he has."

BARRY SAID Reese is on the wrong track when he

speaks of taking full responsibility for ending crime. "We don't need a DA who thinks he is a policeman, judge and jury," Barry said. "That would not be good for this community. It's not a healthy outlook."

Connick said Garrison's inattention to his sworn duties have led to a situation where "instead of the criminals who are afraid, it's the good people who feel unsafe."

"I was one of the few who stood up to Garrison in 1963 when he was at his peak," said Connick. "Since then, the number of dope addicts in New Orleans has gone up six times and the number of murders has nearly doubled. Half the crime is committed by juveniles, and no one in the DA's office seems able to do anything about it.

"Fortunately, people are finally getting alarmed about the crime rate, and we're going to do something about it this time."

CANDIDATES FOR other offices addressing the gathering included Criminal Sheriff Louis A. Heyd Jr. and opponents Louis Ivon, Charles Foti and Don Schwab; Civil Sheriff Milton Stire and challengers Robert Talbot and Alvin Sargent; and Criminal Court Clerk Daniel Haggerty, with opponent Edward Lombard.