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Woman Volunteer on Grand Jury

The new Orleans Parish Grand Jury sworn in yesterday includes among its number, for the first time in 13 years, a woman.

She is Mrs. Dolores V. Mason Smith, who volunteered for service as a result of a series of articles in this newspaper by staff writer Patsy Sims.

The last woman grand juror was Mrs. Daniel Fleming, who sat in 1954 during the investigation of police bribery charges.

For years, the Criminal District Court here has been hard-pressed to find jurors.

A major reason is that while jurors serving every other court in the state of Louisiana are paid, jurors sitting on Criminal Court cases here are not.

Furthermore, women can serve

only if they volunteer. Defense attorneys in Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's probe into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, in fact, have specifically cited the lack of women jurors here, both grand and petit, in their moves to have charges against their clients dropped.

The over-all shortage of jurors has become so bad at times that court bailiffs have been sent running onto the sidewalks to grab the first person they could lay their hands on.

Mrs. Smith's presence on the new grand jury is a hopeful sign. The shortage of women jurors, however, is but part of a much larger problem—a problem that will not be fully alleviated until Criminal Court jurors here are paid just as they are in every other court in the state.