

2 DA hopefuls take stump

By RAY LINCOLN

Two candidates for district attorney took their cases to the Broadmoor Improvement Association last night, with George Reese pledging long-time inner city residents a reason to stay there and Harry Connick emphasizing his experience as a criminal prosecutor.

In addresses to the group at 3825 Gen. Pershing St., the two men disagreed on whether a 60-day limitation can be placed on the time between arraignment and trial in criminal cases.

Connick insisted it can be done, saying that in California the law requires it. Reese said everything can't be tried within 60 days because there are too many cases and not enough assistant DAs or judges.

Reese told the Broadmoor group, which is involved in fighting blockbusting and other discriminatory housing practices, the flight to the suburbs has resulted in part from the serious crime problem in Orleans Parish.

"Most of us were born here, and most of us want to stay here," Reese said. "We can move out, or we can fight."

He said the key to winning the fight is to determine which of the 9,000 to 10,000 cases that come to Criminal District Court each year are worth priority treatment. If elected, Reese said, he will

emphasize cases involving serious crimes against persons and "upper-class crimes" such as embezzlement or political corruption.

Going after crime in high places will help prevent crime in the streets, Reese said, because it will reduce "the feeling of rage at the whole system" on the part of young potential law-breakers who might otherwise feel justice is not administered equally to all.

IN HIS remarks, Connick recounted his experience as a defender of indigents and as a federal prosecutor, saying the latter position taught him how a criminal case should be handled. He said Reese "has never prosecuted a criminal case in his life."

Connick said voters should be looking for "someone who can take charge of the situation," not a man who has to learn on the job.

He said he will create a strike force to combat organized crime and implement a speedy trial program aimed at reducing unnecessary delays and continuances.

On juvenile crime, Connick said instead of waiting for youths with long arrest records to commit more offenses, he will re-present their cases to Juvenile Court and seek to have them institutionalized as a danger to the community.

DURING SEPARATE questioning by members of the association, the candidates agreed on two points: information about the prosecution's evidence and witnesses should be more readily available to defense attorneys, but information about the sources of campaign contributions shouldn't be available to the public.

Connick criticized what he called the "cat-and-mouse business" in which the DA's office makes it difficult for defense attorneys to learn what the state's case consists of. Reese said that in many cases making such information available saves time by convincing the attorney his

client should enter a plea.

Reese said at first he was in favor of revealing the names of campaign contributors, but has since changed his mind because other candidates weren't willing to do it and because some contributors have insisted on remaining anonymous.

Said Connick: "I'll take my contributions from anybody, as long as there are no strings attached." He said he will not reveal the money received or spent in the campaign.

Incumbent DA Jim Garrison and candidate Ross Scaccia did not respond to the Broadmoor group's invitation to speak.