

Garrison Claim Is Challenged By Connick

District attorney candidate Harry Connick last night challenged Jim Garrison's claim that Garrison's office has never lost a murder case.

Connick, addressing a rally of his campaign workers at his headquarters, 924 Gravier, said he had found a case where the grand jury returned a murder indictment which was reduced to a manslaughter charge by Garrison only to have a 12-man jury return an innocent verdict.

Connick said Alphonse Williams was charged Sept. 20, 1967, with the murder of Robert Ferguson. Connick said court records show the charge was reduced to manslaughter and Williams was found innocent on March 13, 1968.

THE DA candidate also charged that Garrison has failed to bring to trial some 3,813 charges against people accused of crimes, including some cases that go back to 1962.

"The truth is that Jim Garrison has misled the people of New Orleans about every aspect of criminal justice," Connick said.

"Garrison misled us when he told us he never lost a murder case.

"He misled us when he told us he was speedily prosecuting persons accused of crimes when, in fact, he allows cases

to linger for as long as seven years.

"HE MISLED us about the Clay Shaw case.

"He misled us when he said he cleaned up Bourbon Street when everyone knows that pornography and a heavy traffic in drugs are flourishing there."

Connick charged that Garrison's record "does not stand up to close inspection. The achievements he claims are a flimsy cover that is blown away by the first strong breeze that comes along."

CONNICK TOLD his campaign workers that under Garrison, between Jan. 1, 1966, and June, 1969, the grand jury indicted 142 men for murder.

Of these, Connick said, 34 pleaded guilty or were found guilty at a trial. Twelve of the murder charges were dismissed. One, (Alphonse Williams) was found not guilty. Thirteen are still open and haven't been prosecuted.

Eighty-three, Connick said, were allowed to plead guilty to manslaughter or negligent homicide and received sentences from two to 21 years.

"IN OTHER words," Connick said, "Mr. Garrison went to trial on only 34 of 142 murder indictments, winning 33. The way that he has stacked the deck, taking to trial only those cases he was certain to win, it is indeed a mystery that he has ever failed to get a conviction in a murder case. The real question is whether this bargain basement approach to justice, allowing many defendants to cop lesser pleas, really protects the law-abiding citizens of New Orleans."