

Alcock Denies DA Laxity on 'Menace to Community'

Rebuts Connick Charges

in Patrem Case

An accusation that District Attorney Jim Garrison's office dismissed two attempted rape charges despite eyewitnesses and police reports has been denied by James L. Alcock, first assistant DA.

Likewise denied was the charge that the office then allowed the suspect to slip out of the state prison on a technicality after he was convicted of burglary.

The combined accusations were made by district attorney candidate Harry Connick Thursday at a meeting of the Louisiana Motor Transport Association held in Delmonico's Restaurant.

Alcock termed Connick's charges "absurd" and said the two rape charges were dropped because of difficulties with the principal witnesses.

Connick in his speech, identified the convicted criminal as Bert Vincent Patrem, 26, and called him "a menace to the safety of the people of this community."

POSTS 3 BONDS

He outlined Patrem's alleged crime spree in this city:

On June 9, he posted three bonds: \$5,000 for a burglary-battery charge and \$1,000 for an unnatural sex act allegedly committed on the same day, May 12, 1966; and \$10,000 for a burglary-battery and attempted aggravated rape on June 8, 1966.

"A curious thing happened on Sept. 28, 1966," Connick said, the D.A.'s office dismissed both charges connected with the May 12 incident.

Connick said the DA's office has accepted the charge, and that police investigation indicated that Patrem did commit a sex crime on the victim named in the charge.

In this case, Alcock said, the victim first picked the suspect out of a lineup but several months later gave a statement to the effect that she was not sure he was the guilty party.

Since she would not testify, as to his guilt under oath, "We had no choice but to drop the case," Alcock said.

While still out on the \$10,000 bond, Patrem made another bond, for \$5,000 for the charge of aggravated burglary involving an incident which occurred on Oct. 6, 1966.

ARRESTED IN FLORIDA

After failing to appear for

several court appearances and while free on two New Orleans bonds, Connick said, Patrem was arrested in Crestview, Fla., for burglary and grand larceny.

Patrem was finally convicted on Oct. 22, 1967, Connick said, of the Oct. 6 burglary and sentenced on July 21 to four years at Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola.

He arrived at Angola Aug. 4, but was released from the prison on Sept. 17, on a \$10,000 appeal bail which someone forgot to have him sign.

Alcock said, "Patrem and anyone else sentenced to less than five years has a right to an appeal bond. The DA's office had nothing to do with the failure of the authorities at Angola or the Orleans Parish criminal sheriff to make Patrem sign the appeal bond."

OTHER CHARGES

Meanwhile, Patrem had been booked with aggravated burglary of a motel on the Chef Menteur Hwy., and the attempted aggravated rape of a woman there who identified him. These charges were dismissed by the DA on Nov. 21, 1966, Connick said.

Alcock said the case was handled by Charles Ray Ward, then first assistant DA and now, like Connick, a DA candidate. Alcock said his recollection is that the alleged rape victim was uncooperative and refused to testify, thus wrecking the issue and causing the charges to be dropped.

But Connick said that officers had gone to the motel where the crime occurred, and met the victim and the manager of the motel, who stated that a nude man had attempted to rape the victim. Patrem was identified as the man who committed that crime, Connick said.

Then, after all these events, on Sept. 8, 1967, the DA's office charged Patrem as a multiple offender in an effort to increase the severity of his sentence, but dismissed these charges on Sept. 28.

UPHOLDS SENTENCE

In the interim, on Sept. 23, Patrem was arrested in Crest-

view, Fla., for breaking and entering but was allowed out on bail there.

Finally, on Dec. 3, 1968, the Louisiana Supreme Court upheld Patrem's four-year sentence to Angola but he had fled the state and could not be located.

The district attorney didn't call in the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the case, for "unlawful flight to avoid prosecution" until seven and a half

months after Patrem failed to show up in court, Connick said.