

Hinckley To Choose New Counsel

St. Elizabeths Warns Of 'Exploitation'

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Presidential assailant John W. Hinckley Jr., confined to St. Elizabeths Hospital since his 1982 trial, spoke out yesterday for the first time in a courtroom and vigorously defended his right to fire his long-time attorneys and replace them with flamboyant lawyer and assassination theorist Mark Lane.

In a courtroom hushed to catch his every word, Hinckley took the witness stand and captivated the crowd as he parried with the prosecutor, declared he felt "competent" to select a lawyer and predicted that although he is broke today, "that does not mean in the future I won't make any money."

When it was over, Hinckley, who was found not guilty by reason of insanity after he shot and wounded President Reagan and three others in 1981, won the right to dismiss noted criminal defense attorney Vincent J. Fuller and hire the attorney of his choice.

In her ruling, U.S. District Judge June L. Green noted that the court was concerned that Hinckley's rights be protected and cautioned him to seek the advice of his parents, "who have only your best interest at heart." But she denied the mental institution's request to place some restrictions on Hinckley's choice.

An attorney for St. Elizabeths had argued that the selection process "presents a unique opportunity for the exploitation of Mr. Hinckley."

Psychiatrist Raymond F. Patter-



1981 PHOTO

JOHN W. HINCKLEY JR.
... "I am competent to decide"

son testified that Hinckley was again confined to the hospital's maximum-security ward after he "had difficulty handling privileges" when doctors placed him in a less restrictive environment.

Patterson said that Hinckley still suffers from a serious mental illness, but he also testified that Hinckley is competent to select new counsel.

Hinckley, who was called by the judge to tell his own story, focused on that finding and spoke in a steady, calm voice as he made his first appearance on a witness stand.

Facing the judge in neat khaki slacks and a navy blue blazer, Hinckley testified that while Fuller and his other lawyer, Judith Miller, are "very fine lawyers, I feel I need someone else."

At first reluctant to reveal Lane's

name, Hinckley referred to him as "a person known nationwide" and someone who "has represented some people famous ... as criminals in the criminal world."

Hinckley told of making an appointment to see this person, but said hospital officials intervened and "it was pulled out from under me."

Lane is a controversial figure who has written books on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, assailing the findings of the Warren Commission, and on the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., questioning the guilt of convicted killer James Earl Ray, whom he represented for a time.

Lane, a New York-based lawyer with an office in Washington, could not be reached for comment.

Yesterday, as lawyers honed in on Lane's identity, Hinckley turned to the judge and inquired, "Do you want me to just give this person's name? . . . His name is Mark Lane."

In other exchanges, Hinckley appeared just as feisty.

As Assistant U.S. Attorney Richard Chapman attempted to show that Hinckley is indigent, Hinckley insisted that he had paid for his own defense at his 1982 trial. "How much did it cost you?" Chapman asked.

"A lot of money," Hinckley shot back, as the spectators laughed.

Then Hinckley added, "In order for me not to sound crazy here," and went on to explain that the defense was paid for by a fund set up for him by his parents.

Later, as the attorney for St. Elizabeths focused on Lane's books about previous clients, Hinckley cut her off. "I don't think it was a crime that he interviewed these people and has written these books," Hinckley said.

Moments later he told the judge, "I am competent to decide if I want my story told. It is not the hospital's say to dictate whether I can do that."