

Chief judge queries need for 2 grand juries

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Prosecutor Richard Thompson will have to be very persuasive to convince anybody that two grand juries are needed simultaneously, according to the chief judge of the Oakland County Circuit Court.

"He (Thompson) will have a monumental task," said Judge Steven N. Andrews. "He will have to convince us (a majority of the county's 14 circuit judges) that the same goals can't be achieved with normal police methods."

Then he'll have to explain the logic of having two grand juries at

the same time," said the judge. "That won't be easy."

The prosecutor last week filed two motions.

One was filed with Robert C. Anderson, chief judge when the existing grand jury was empaneled Sept. 6 and who remains its judicial supervisor. It asked for an extension of the grand jury.

The second motion, filed with Andrews, asked for a second grand jury to sit simultaneously as the first panel finishes reviewing cases already before it.

TWO GRAND JURIES are needed

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— Chief Judge Steven N. Andrews

for continuity, Thompson said. The second grand jury to consider new cases while the existing grand jury finishes investigations already initiated.

Judge Anderson was in a jury trial

Friday and could not be reached for comment.

Judge Andrews, however, said Thompson's motion for a second grand jury will be reviewed twice — the first time during a judges' infor-

mal meeting on March 6. The second time will be during a hearing on March 13, he said.

Neither is open to the public, said Andrews, who noted that most grand jury proceedings are secret.

"Thompson will need (affirmative) votes from at least eight (of the 14) judges," Andrews said, "not an easy task."

ANDREWS DECLINED to speculate on how his colleagues would vote. "But speaking for myself, I should think there would be more logic to letting the existing grand jury wind down and THEN talk about another panel."

Asked about any feedback about the grand jury and its proceedings, Andrews said, "Every comment I've heard has been favorable."

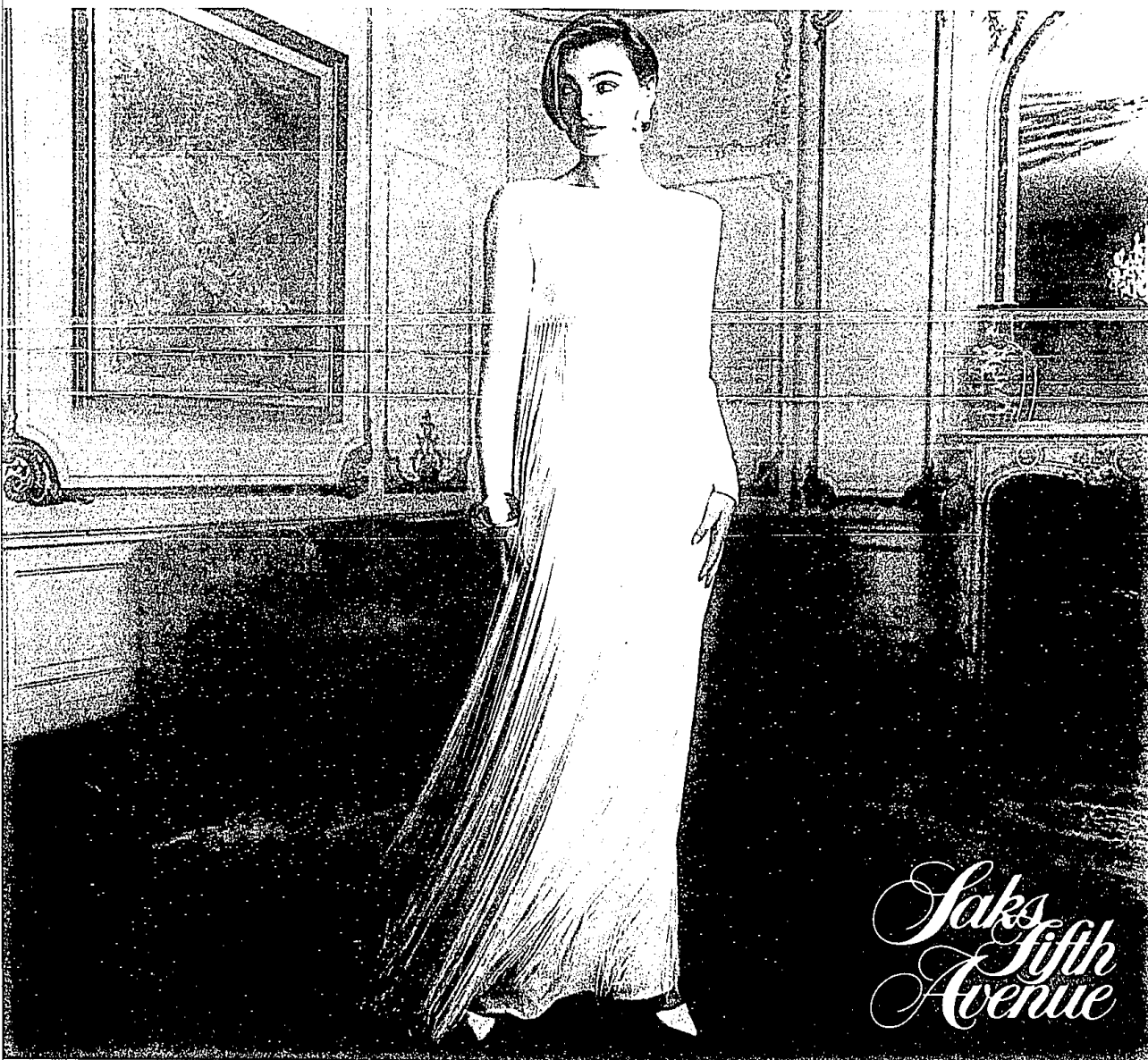
Thompson has been enthusiastic about the grand jury, calling it a "devastating weapon" against crime.

At a press conference announcing his two petitions, Thompson said 30 people have been indicted by the grand jury, including four for murder.

Its big advantage, he said, is compelling reluctant witnesses to testify by granting them immunity or threatening them with jail if they refuse and are cited for contempt.

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