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Monroe Probe

L.A. Reopens Inquiry Into Actress' 'Suicide'

By Joan Goulding

LOS ANGELES, Aug. 10 (UPI)—The district attorney's office said today it is investigating Marilyn Monroe's drug overdose death of 20 years ago because of her mysteriously missing "red diary" and allegations of improper handling by the coroner's office.

District Attorney John Van de Kamp made the disclosure shortly before the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a motion requesting an investigation.

The board cited allegations by a former coroner's aide that he was coerced into signing the death certificate for the movie star and that Monroe's diary had mysteriously disappeared from the coroner's office.

"We should look into allegations made in a series of New York Post articles concerning the death by drugs of the actress in her hillside home in West Los Angeles," Supervisor Mike Antonovich said.

Van de Kamp issued a statement saying he already had directed his office to review reports of Monroe's Aug. 5, 1962, death, which was ruled a suicide. "Early last week, as news accounts on both the East and West coasts raised questions about Miss Monroe's death 20 years ago," he said, "I asked assistant district attorney Mike Carroll to gather all relevant materials and reports in an attempt to put this information into some kind of context.

"Since former district attorney William McKesson apparently never opened an investigation in the Monroe death, we had no files of our own. We are in the process now of reviewing both the news accounts and official police reports on her death in order to see what further action may be necessary, if any."

The supervisors' motion asked the district attorney to refer the matter to the grand jury "if any or all charges are substantiated."

"Within recent days various news accounts have highlighted alleged irregularities in the handling of the coroner's investigation into the death of Marilyn Monroe," the motion said.

"Specific news accounts have quoted former coroner's investigator Lionel Grandison, who stated that one, he was coerced into signing Marilyn Monroe's death certificate; two, part of the evidence collected, specifically Marilyn Monroe's diary, was missing from the coroner's office two days after it was brought in; and three, the coroner's investigation into Marilyn Monroe's death was incomplete."

Both the New York Post and the Los Angeles Herald Examiner have run articles on new questions about Monroe's death.

Last week, shortly before the 20th anniversary of Monroe's death, a private investigator offered a \$10,000 reward for the actress' red diary, claiming it will prove his theory she was murdered by a "dissident faction of the CIA" to protect secrets revealed to her by Robert Kennedy.

Investigator Milo Speriglio claims Monroe threatened to reveal CIA plots to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro after Kennedy, then attorney general, refused to marry her.

Dr. Thomas Noguchi, who was demoted this spring from coroner to autopsy surgeon, performed the au-

topsy on Monroe and concluded that she committed suicide at home by a drug overdose. His attorney, Godfrey Isaac, said Noguchi would have no comment because he is in the midst of a civil service battle to regain his former post.

Van de Kamp told a news conference he expects the "threshold inquiry" to take about 10 days before officials determine if a "full-scale criminal investigation" is warranted.

He said the probe would consist of reviewing official records and questioning some of the individuals quoted in recent news accounts to determine the "veracity" of their statements.

He said an exhumation of Monroe's body would only come "quite a ways down the line," if at all.

Coroner's spokesman Bill Gold said Grandison was a coroner's aide whose duties were mostly clerical, and was not an investigator, as the supervisors identified him.

Gold also said Grandison's allegations about coercion and the missing diary were first made in an interview with the National Enquirer in 1979.

Playwright Arthur Miller, who had been married to Monroe, said today that he couldn't comment on any reopening of the case because he has nothing to add to what already is known.

"I just have no information whatsoever. I was nowhere near it at the time so there's nothing I could say," Miller said from his home in Roxbury, Conn.