

# Leak of Garrison medical records

# Big brother's heavy hand

By DAMON RUNYON Jr.

The hatchet job on Jim Garrison continues. This time it was a leak of government medical records on Garrison to a reporter of the Chicago Tribune.

Such medical records, of course, are confidential.

Garrison is continuing his investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy with no help from anyone else. Witnesses are taking refuge in other states, and governors of these states are then refusing extradition. Garrison thus can issue subpoenas, but he gets no help in bringing the witnesses in to testify.

Federal agencies have also refused to cooperate.

This resurrection smacked of a government ploy to discredit New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.

No other explanation fitted the obvious "leaking" of a privileged military medical record studded with jawbreaking psychiatric jargon that might lead the public to suspect that Garrison should be fetched at once by the white coats.

It was one of the most flagrant known government uses of private papers in an attempt to intimidate a citizen, in this case a state official. Garrison drew the dubious honor of being the target because of his persistent probe of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The planting of the story about his military medical history appeared to support the ~~prosecutor's~~ ~~prosecutor's~~ charges that the federal government, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in particular, was attempting to frustrate his investigation of a possible conspiracy.

The major government counterattack came three days after Garrison bluntly accused President Lyndon B. Johnson and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover of covering up "the truth" about President Kennedy's murder in Dallas, November 22, 1963. His previous verbal

bombardments had zeroed in mainly on the cloak-and-dagger espionage agency, the CIA, which won't even reply to a polite "howdy?"

The Johnson administration had been in the nerve-wracking position of being unable to answer Garrison's roundhouse accusations in the face of forthcoming elections. The trial of New Orleans retired businessman Clay Shaw on assassination conspiracy charges is pending in court, and anything said might be construed as prejudicing his case.

Regardless of the outcome of the Shaw case, the attendant publicity is bound to have an effect on the Johnson administration. As chief executive, President Johnson stands responsible for the actions or inaction of government agencies, which President Kennedy found wasn't easy in the case of the free-wheeling secretive CIA.

Now, it's clear that Garrison won't shut up his harping about the spy agency's alleged sins. So, let the CIA take care of itself. Who'll know the truth about such a collection of fog, anyway? Let Garrison shout himself silly into a void. With the CIA people locked up in Virginia, who's to answer him, or get cornered by some working Washington correspondent?

Then Jim Garrison, a Democrat obviously unhinged and gone berserk, lobbed a lulu at the White House. Unthinkable! Enough's too much! Have at him!

Of course, maybe that's not the way the wind blew at all. Maybe Garrison's bombshell wasn't heard, wherever President Johnson was; possibly the White House shrugged it off as a New Orleans mosquito not worth slapping. Possibly . . . But there's no "possibly" about the fact that someone lobbed a doozy back at Garrison.

The Chicago Tribune blossomed with disaster-sized headlines on an "exclusive" story that Garrison was under the care of a psychiatrist from the fall of 1956 to the spring of 1955.

- Mont
- Bishop
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- Felt
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

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- The Washington Post \_\_\_\_\_
- Times Herald \_\_\_\_\_
- The Washington Daily News \_\_\_\_\_
- The Evening Star (Washington) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Sunday Star (Washington) \_\_\_\_\_
- Daily News (New York) \_\_\_\_\_
- Sunday News (New York) \_\_\_\_\_
- New York Post \_\_\_\_\_
- The New York Times \_\_\_\_\_
- The Sun (Baltimore) \_\_\_\_\_
- The Worker \_\_\_\_\_
- The New Leader \_\_\_\_\_
- The Wall Street Journal \_\_\_\_\_
- The National Observer \_\_\_\_\_
- People's World \_\_\_\_\_

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According to the story, an Army medical board at Brooke Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, reported Garrison had "a severe and disabling psychoneurosis of long duration." He was given a medical discharge from the Army. It should be noted here that the circumstances did not mean Garrison was "crazy"—psychotic. He wasn't any worse off than millions of Americans.

Ironically, considering the charges hurled at Garrison by opponents who tab him a brazen political opportunist and self-booster, the psychiatrists found he had been "a shy, somewhat introverted individual throughout life."

The Chicago Tribune spread its "exclusive" story by means of its wire service to other newspapers. The Tribune hails itself as "The World's Greatest Newspaper," but, alas, sometimes it isn't.

Seems its whooped-up exclusive was exclusive because it was two years old. The whole story about Garrison was hashed out in public, on television, in an election campaign in 1965.

The Chicago Tribune reported its "exclusive" Garrison story was based on "detailed medical histories" kept in the Pentagon and at the Army Record Center in St. Louis. Personal medical records are classified as "privileged," like private, and are not released without written permission of the person concerned. A reporter doesn't just walk in and "borrow" the records, as he would a library book.

Who then sneaked Garrison's medical record to the Tribune reporter? That's what the Army now is trying to learn through an investigation. The result, if there is one, won't come for three or four months.

Complicating the probe is the system that allows other government agencies—the CIA, for instance—to take out records, presumably for legitimate purposes. This makes it tough to pin down the official who tried to discredit Garrison by slipping an unsub Tribune reporter a two-year-old "scoop."

Whatever his merits, or lack of them, Jim Garrison, dubbed the "Jolly Green Giant" around New Orleans (he's six-foot-four), has rapidly become a puzzling national phenomena, a storm center of controversy.

The mention of his name can start violent arguments, revolving around the question of whether he's really "got something" in his belief that President Kennedy was assassinated by members of a conspiracy, that Lee Harvey Oswald was a fall guy who never fired a shot that fateful day in Dallas, Texas.

This theory contradicts the Warren Commission belief that Oswald alone, for no known motive, killed the President with a cheap mail order Italian rifle that was defective when imported.

The incident of the Chicago Tribune's two-year-old "exclusive" showed that strange bedfellows are made by the Garrison controversy. The radically Republican Tribune could gloat over the discomfort of Democrats embarrassed by the maverick New Orleans prosecutor.

Rabidly Democratic newspapers could happily hope that the planted news bombshell would demolish the "Jolly Green Giant" and put an end to the lurking possibility that he "really has something" after the administration said he didn't and tried to discourage him.



GARRISON