

Funnymen in JFK probe

By DAMON RUNYON JR.

Seriously, comedian Mort Sahl is a volunteer investigator in New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's probe of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

This disclosure was casually made by Sahl last week when he was a guest on the National Broadcasting Company's "Tonight Show." Host Johnny Carson appeared astonished to the point of disbelief.

Sahl made it plain that he wasn't joking, and he spoke earnestly and informatively on Garrison's side of the controversial issue. Carson seemed to reflect NBC's undisguised skepticism about the prosecutor and his investigation.

When the guest first took a seat on the usually lightweight conversational show, the host amiably asked the state of his health and what he had been doing lately. Only a few pleasantries had been exchanged when the bombshell was dropped.

Sahl, who is more humorist than clown, and whose act usually has been politically-oriented, explained he went to New Orleans to write a book and came to believe Garrison "has something."

The prosecutor's theory, he reported, was that seven men were involved, at least four of them shooting, in the murder of President Kennedy November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Tex.

Sahl gave himself only minor billing in his present role with the Garrison office. He apparently attends minor work that otherwise would tie up a regular staff investigator. He explained:

"It's a voluntary contribution."

On Monday Carson informed his television audience that Garrison himself would appear on the program Wednesday night and make some "new disclosure."

The latest "in depth" study of the New Orleans investigation was made by the eminent Wall Street Journal. "Jim, do you really believe all this stuff?" That was the Journal's question. The prosecutor obviously does, of course.

He believes there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. Retired New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, 54, former director of the International Trade Mart in the Crescent City, comes to trial February 14 on Garrison's conspiracy charge.

The pistol-packing prosecutor lately subpoenaed Mrs. Marina Oswald Porter, the Russian-born remarried widow of the cipher fingered by the Warren Commission as the lone gunman. She's now a Richardson (Texas)

housewife who made this comment:

"I don't know if I could prove my innocence to him. Mr. Garrison is so powerful."

Additional information glossed over by the Warren Commission was entered in the Congressional Record by Rep. John R. Rarick, Louisiana Democrat, at the request Rep. G.V. Montgomery, Mississippi Democrat.

Rarick's contribution was a long article from a publication called Herald of Freedom of New Jersey. There was no intended connection with the Kennedy assassination, but it happened to reveal the background of the one person Oswald sought for help when he was clapped in Dallas jail.

Mrs. Ruth Paine, close acquaintance of the Oswalds, told the Warren Commission that Oswald phoned her—twice in succession, oddly enough—"To ask me to call Mr. John Abt in New York for him after six p.m." She added:

"He gave a telephone number of an office in New York and a residence in New York."

Abt, Oswald told her, "was an attorney he wanted to have."

Who was John J. Abt?

He was, according to the Congressional Record, one-time attorney in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, later chief counsel for the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee in the Senate and a special assistant to the US Attorney General.

And, by the account in the Record, he was identified in "sworn testimony as a Communist and member of an espionage group."

He was in the Harold Ware cell of the Communist Party, the Record discloses to present-day Washington. Members of that cell included:

Nathan Witt, AAA attorney; Lee Pressman, assistant general counsel for the AAA; Charles Kramer of the AAA and the LaFollette committee; Henry H. Collins Jr., of the National Recovery Administration (NRA); Victor Perlo of the NRA, Office of Price Administration (OPA) and the War Production Board (WPB), now a writer for the Communist Worker; Alger Hiss, who fell from government heights to prison, and his brother, Donald, a Public Works Administration attorney.

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The Warren Commission Report simply described John J. Abt of New York as attorney, and said Abt was not in New York when Oswald sought to contact him. The Report added:

"Abt has testified that he at no time had any dealings with Oswald and that prior to the assassination he had never heard of Lee Harvey Oswald."



Clay Shaw



Mort Sahl



Jim Garrison



Jack Ruby



Lee Harvey Oswald



Marina Oswald