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Garrison's Chief Assistant Hints Investigation Lacks Substance

2 Thursday (NY)

By Bill Shipp

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The man in charge of New Orleans District Attorney Garrison's headline-making investigation into the murder of President Kennedy broadly hinted yesterday that in a secret meeting two weeks ago with Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, he had told the senator that there was no substance to the inquiry.

The bizarre development in the controversial Garrison investigation was disclosed to Newsday in an interview by the investigator, William Howard Gurvich. During the course of the interview, Gurvich:

- Strenuously denied a report that he had called the Garrison investigation a hoax in his talk with Kennedy.
- Refused to deny that he had said there was no substance to the murder conspiracy case against New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw. "There's a difference between a hoax and saying there's nothing to it," he said.
- Described in detail how, without telling Garrison, he flew to Washington to see Kennedy June 8. He said the senator "put aside everything" to hear him for an hour and a half, first in Kennedy's office, then in Kennedy's car, finally as the two men sat on a baggage conveyor at the Washington airport. He said Kennedy had told him he was "extremely grateful" Gurvich had come to see him. Until today, Garrison did not know of the trip.
- Made plain that he disagrees with Garrison on major aspects of the assassination investigation and that the Garrison staff is not entirely harmonious. "I say what

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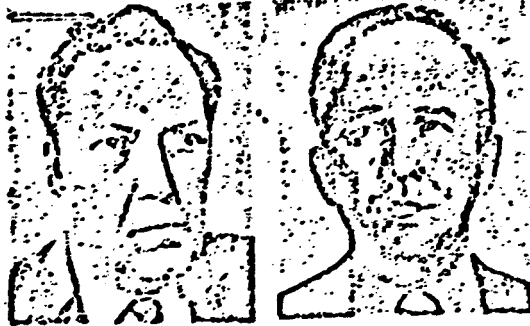
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Garrison

Gurvich

please and he (Garrison) says what he pleases," Gurvich said.

● Disclosed that, although for seven months he has been in charge of Garrison's investigation into Kennedy's murder, he has never read the exhaustive report of the Warren Commission on the assassination because he had not had the time to do it.

The interview with Gurvich took place in a New York restaurant, where he spoke easily about his talk with Kennedy and his experiences during the Garrison probe. Gurvich looks like a casting director's idea of what he is, an experienced private investigator: 42, handsome though graying, six feet, one inch tall, 198 pounds. He declined to discuss most of what he told Kennedy but said he had gone to see the senator to "clarify whatever I could out

of respect for his brother and out of respect to him."

He was asked if it were true that, as some reports had it, he had told the senator that the Garrison investigation was "a hoax." Gurvich said, "That is absolutely untrue . . . I think Mr. Garrison believes in what he is doing. He is sincere."

Asked if he told the senator that there was no substance to the investigation or to the case against Shaw, Gurvich said, "No comment." Asked why he denied having said that the investigation was a hoax but also refused to deny that he had told Kennedy there was no substance to it, Gurvich said, "There's a difference between a hoax and saying there's nothing to it."

He said that in his meeting with Kennedy, "I did most of the talking during the first half of the conversation. Then he asked me questions during the second half . . . I didn't refuse to answer a single question." He said Kennedy "put aside everything" to hear his account. When Kennedy finally had to leave for the Washington airport to catch a plane for an engagement in New York, Gurvich rode in the car with the senator and continued his discussion. At the airport, Gurvich said, he and Kennedy "went to the back of the terminal and sat on the edge of a conveyor," where they talked for a half hour.

At the end of the conversation, Gurvich said, the senator's wife, Ethel, came over and he was introduced to her. He said that before boarding his plane, Kennedy told him he was "extremely grateful for me coming to see him."

Gurvich declined to say more about his secret talk with Kennedy, but indicated that he would not keep his

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...forever. "There's a time and place for everything. And now is not the time and place." Kennedy refused to discuss the conversation between himself and Curvich.

Curvich was somewhat freer in what he had to say about the investigation he has conducted for Garrison, and much of what he said clashed with some of Garrison's most trumpeted claims. For instance:

- Garrison claimed that David W. Ferrie, a known homosexual who has been described by the prosecutor as a key figure in the assassination plot, committed suicide when the probe became public knowledge. Curvich said yesterday that he agrees with the doctors who performed an autopsy on Ferrie that Ferrie had died of natural causes.

- Garrison has said there is a good chance that accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald "didn't kill anybody." Curvich said the evidence clearly points to Oswald.

- Garrison's star witness in the case against Shaw, Perry Russo, said recently he had been told by a National Broadcasting Co. representative that "NBC and the CIA wanted to get Garrison." The statement was made by Russo in connection with an NBC documentary assailing Garrison's probe. Curvich ridiculed the statement yesterday. "Now tell me," he said, "why should NBC and the CIA want to get Garrison?" Curvich was asked if he thought Russo was a credible witness. "No comment," he said.

- Curvich displayed his greatest unease over the status of Shaw, the dignified, until recently highly respected, retired businessman under indictment. There was irony in his concern, since it was Curvich who announced the arrest of Shaw last March 1. His announcement was carried by newsreel and television cameras to millions. When Shaw was arrested, according to the announcement, the arresting officers found whips, chains, black hoods and other evidence of bizarre sexual inclinations in his home.

Yesterday, Curvich said he was anxious to see that "every one in the case is treated like a human being. I want to see Clay Shaw treated like a human being."

Asked if he thought Shaw had been treated that way, he said: "I didn't arrest him. They (Garrison's men) did."

Though Curvich knew nothing about the arrest, he was directed by Garrison to announce it. Curvich said he was in Texas in connection with the investigation when he got a phone call from Garrison telling him of the arrest and summoning him to New Orleans. Curvich said he had never questioned Shaw.

Curvich gave other indications that all was not harmony in Garrison's office. He said in the interview that he had not seen Garrison in some time. "I come up here (to New York) and find he's back in New Orleans. He's always traveling around somewhere," Curvich said. (Garrison was in Monticello, N.Y.) NY

He also said he has not seen Garrison's top assistant prosecutor, Charles Ward, who is in Nassau County to testify before the grand jury on organized gambling. Ward has been in Nassau since Tuesday. Curvich said, "It just didn't work out" for them to get together while they were both in the area. *Clay Shaw*

In his long discussion of the evidence in the Garrison investigation, Curvich said he had not read the Warren Commission report, though the Garrison probe has repeatedly been characterized as a direct challenge to that report. The commission concluded that there was no known evidence to indicate anything other than that Oswald, acting alone, had killed Kennedy. Curvich said that Robert Kennedy had told him during their talk that he, Kennedy, had also not read the Warren report, a fact the senator has said publicly before. Curvich commented: "Of course, he didn't have to. He could just call in Warren and say, 'Tell me about this.'"

Curvich is an official of the New Orleans Private Patrol and Curvich Detective Agency, a private investigation and security firm established by his father, a former FBI agent.