

Garrison says Howard has cleared himself

STEVEN J. BURTON

NEW ORLEANS, La. Feb. 25, 1968 (LNS)—Jim Garrison subpoenaed Lawrence J. Howard, Jr, of El Monte, California, last month, contending that he was a material witness "in a unique position to observe the operations of a conspiracy to murder President Kennedy." Howard fought the subpoena and won, removing any legal obligation for him to come to New Orleans.

This weekend, Howard came to New Orleans voluntarily and spoke with D.A. Garrison for over four hours.

As he left Los Angeles, Howard said, "I don't know if Garrison is on the right track or not. I'm not aware of what I know that could help him. But I'll tell him anything I know."

"He made some pretty damaging statements about me that are not true. I want to straighten things out," he added. "I never visited Sylvia Odio nor did I know of a plot to kill the President."

Howard was referring to an incident told to the Warren Commission by Mrs. Sylvia Odio, a Cuban refugee in Dallas. She said that she was visited by two Cubans and an American named Leon Oswald two months before the assassination. One of the Cubans said that Oswald thought that President Kennedy should have been killed after the Bay of Pigs debacle.

If this was Lee Harvey Oswald, the incident could show that he had accomplices.

The Warren Commission concluded that the three anti-Castro raiders, William Seymour, Loran Eugene Hall, and Lawrence Howard had visited Odio. In a letter to the Commission, J. Edgar Hoover noted that the name "Howard" bore a phonetic resemblance to "Oswald."

Howard has consistently denied his presence at Odio's. When he emerged from Garrison's office, he told Liberation News Service exclusively, "Mr. Garrison is now convinced that I was not there. He told me that he will shortly make a public statement to the effect that I was in no way involved in any assassination."

Howard said that he believes that he was able to help the investigation in connection with his anti-Castro activities in 1962-1963. He could not disclose exactly what was talked about.

"My impression is that Mr. Garrison is a very sincere and dedicated man who seeks only the truth," he said. "He treated me fairly and honestly."

"I believe that he's probably on the right track," he added.

Howard said that he went through a great deal of anxiety before deciding to come to New Orleans. He said that many friends and reporters had urged him not to go because Garrison was out to 'get him.'

"I don't think that Garrison's a nut. He was truthful with me and I was truthful with him," he said. "He did not try to do anything to me, except find the truth about my trip to Dallas."



Lawrence J. Howard photographed in airplane on way to New Orleans to speak with D.A. Garrison. Photo by Steve Burton.