

Flamboyant Jim Garrison: What's Behind the Furor in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS.

A playwright could not have created a character more appropriate for his role. Standing six feet, six inches tall, weighing 220 pounds, wearing size 14 shoes, and packing a pistol beneath his vested, conservatively cut suit, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison is a fitting vortex for the maelstrom he has created.

Mr. Garrison gained world-wide attention last week when he vowed he could and would prove that President Kennedy's assassination was part of a conspiracy that was hatched in New Orleans. He said he would disprove the Warren Commission, which concluded after an exhaustive investigation that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing the President and that there was no credible evidence of conspiracy.

Then Mr. Garrison went irretrievably out onto a limb that many felt was already no thicker than a reed. "I have no reason to believe," he stated, "that Lee Harvey Oswald killed anybody in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963."

His First Statement

When the story first broke Mr. Garrison said arrests were imminent and that "convictions will be obtained." He later re-trenched, saying premature newspaper publicity about his investigation had endangered some witnesses and made arrests unlikely for months. Still later, using the word for the first time, he said his staff had "solved" the case weeks ago. "We know the key individuals, the cities involved, and how it was done. . . . The only way they are going to get away from us is to kill themselves."

Interest in the story had begun to wane by Wednesday. Then a police call from a disheveled New Orleans apartment revived and reinforced it: There, amid a clutter of books and pill bottles, police found the body of a pathetic figure named David Ferrie. Nearby was a note saying death would be welcome.

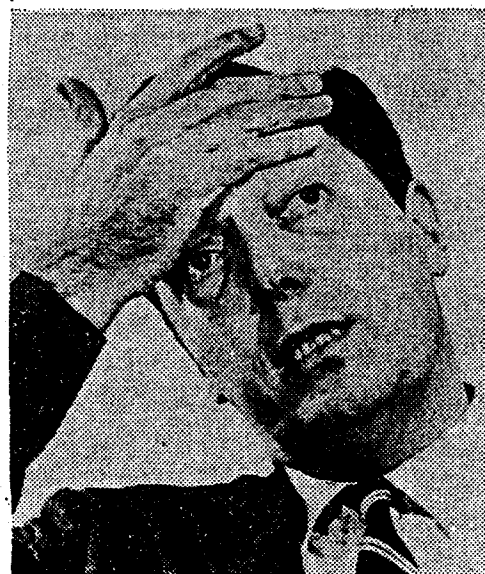
Ferrie had been arrested three days after the President's assassination on the suspicion that he was to have piloted a plane to get Oswald out of Dallas. At one time Ferrie had been a commercial airline pilot but he was fired; in his youth he was dismissed from a seminary in Ohio; he was twice arrested on morals charges in New Orleans, but never convicted.

To Mr. Garrison, Ferrie suddenly became—after his death—"a man who, in my judgment, was one of history's most important individuals. . . . Evidence developed by our office had long since confirmed that he was involved in events culminating in the assassination of President Kennedy."

The district attorney and his aides had

decided Wednesday morning to arrest Ferrie this week and put him in protective custody, Mr. Garrison said, but "apparently we waited too long." An autopsy showed that Ferrie, who had high blood pressure, died of natural causes when a blood vessel ruptured at the base of his brain.

The man who told the Warren Commission that Ferrie and Lee Oswald were co-conspirators later admitted he had lied. Ferrie himself denied knowing Oswald, and two investigators said they were satis-



Mr. Garrison: On a limb. —AP

fied Ferrie's plane was not flyable the day the President was killed.

Why, then, does Mr. Garrison consider Ferrie so important in the face of the contrary opinions from the Warren Commission and others? Mr. Garrison did not explain, any more than he has explained his other purported evidence.

And yet it is hazardous to dismiss Mr. Garrison outright. He is flamboyant, stubborn, politically ambitious. He is at once a publicity seeker and a newspaper baiter; he is secretive but he is also a good district attorney, with a reputation for honesty and for accomplishing what he sets out to do.

Mr. Garrison says privately that he wants to be a U.S. senator some day. He had planned, before the New Orleans States-Item smoked out his story, to have it come out in a national magazine under his own byline; political gossip here was that he hoped the byline would propel him into candidacy for national political office.

in 1968.

Whatever his ambitions, Mr. Garrison has laid them all on the line in this, the latest and by far the biggest of his crusades. If he falls now, after the world's attention has been centered on him, his career is over.

Clearly he does not expect to fail, despite the lack of credence given to his allegations by those who believe the Warren Commission reached the only plausible conclusion regarding President Kennedy's death.

Mr. Garrison brushed aside a suggestion by Rep. Gerald Ford, Michigan Republican, who served on the Warren Commission, that he turn over his findings to Federal authorities. "I am running this investigation, not the President, not the Attorney General," snapped Mr. Garrison. "I do not propose to let it be taken over by any other jurisdiction and be converted into a colossal fact-finding enterprise in which relevant leads become lost among truckloads of trivia."

At least two theories have grown out of Mr. Garrison's actions. The first holds that he is seeking world-wide publicity and political gains through the emotionalism that still surrounds President Kennedy's assassination; the second is that Mr. Garrison has the case he says he has, and that he will disprove the Warren Report.

A Plausible Answer

Another alternative is, of course, plausible: That there was a plot in New Orleans to kill the President, but that it either did not involve Oswald or, if it did, that it collapsed and Oswald went through with the assassination alone; or that a plot existed quite apart from what actually happened in Dallas. The Warren Commission did not flatly say there was no conspiracy; it said it could find no credible evidence of one.

Whether he succeeds or not, Jim Garrison received assurance at week's end that he is not alone in his interest. After the New Orleans paper published vouchers showing where his investigators had gone and where they had spent \$8,000 in public funds, Mr. Garrison announced that he would carry on henceforth with private donations or loans, thus avoiding public-record laws. Following this, several New Orleans businessmen pledged to finance Mr. Garrison's investigation.

"We are prepared to back Jim Garrison all the way," said Joseph M. Rault, Jr., president of the Rault Petroleum Corp. "It can be a year—or five years if necessary—and we'll provide whatever he needs. No questions asked."

END

—JACK WARDLAW

Ferrie Death Natural, Coroner Study Shows

New Orleans Official States There Is
No Evidence of Violence of Any Kind.

LAT

BY NICHOLAS C. CHETTA 3/1/67
Times Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS — An official coroner's autopsy report Tuesday confirmed that David William Ferrie, principal figure in the controversial investigation here into President John F. Kennedy's assassination, died of natural causes.

Dr. Nicholas J. Chetta, the Orleans Parish (county) coroner, said, "No evidence indicated any violence of any kind, certainly not of murder or suicide."

Chetta's final report directly contradicted Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, who has insisted that Ferrie committed suicide. Garrison, who launched the investigation three months ago, last Thursday called Ferrie a central figure in the investigation—the day after Ferrie died.

Layman's View

The coroner said, "If you want to look at this as a suicide, you have to think he died of the pressure he was under. But that is a layman's view."

At a 90-minute news conference, Chetta also read three notes he found in Ferrie's cluttered apartment. Ferrie died in bed with a sheet pulled up to his chest. All the notes were undated and without addresses. Chetta said he selected them over numerous other papers he found because he considered them pertinent.

One was a rambling diatribe against Garrison and his office and against his alleged ill treatment by Garrison's staff when he attempted to obtain

some unidentified criminal records. It also contained an attack against what he termed a lack of justice in the United States. Another was written to his brother and was filled with medical terminology. The third was addressed to "Dear Al."

Of his troubles with

Garrison's office, Ferrie wrote:

"Daily we are propagandized more and more about a rising crime rate. But how do we know it is true? We don't, for we Americans have little or no access to the truth. Today I went to the police headquarters to see these 'public records' of this rising crime rate and nearly wound up in jail for my trouble.

"I was searched, interrogated, verbally abused, had my record checked, and finally threatened. Needless to say, I did not see the 'public records.'"

The note, the first paragraph of which was released last week, concluded: "If there be justice, let justice be damned."

In his letter to his brother, found beside a medical dictionary opened to a page concerning gallstones, Ferrie advised his brother that he did not suffer from gallstones. Ferrie also gave him medical advice and opinions.

Third Note

The third note, addressed to "Dear Al," said in part: "When you receive this I will be quite dead. All that I can say is that I offered love and the

best I could. All I got in return in the end was a kick in the teeth. Hence, I die alone and unloved."

Chetta did not call the letter a suicide note.

Chetta noted he was aware that Ferrie, who had a homosexual record, had been living under an emotional strain. He described him as a man who lived in a "world of fantasy . . . an intellectual psychopath . . . a dangerous individual with paranoid tendencies." But he stuck by his report of death by natural causes.

He said Ferrie's unstable temperament, his known feelings of alienation, persecution and emotional upsets might have made Dist. Atty. Garrison think

Monday from Rockford, Ill., signed by a P. T. Ferrie, asking him to turn the body over to a New Orleans attorney for placement in a funeral home.

Meanwhile, Garrison scheduled three news conferences during the day, the first for 10 a.m. and the last between 3 and 4 p.m. But shortly before 5, an assistant district attorney told a group of about 35 newsmen waiting in Garrison's office that the district attorney was busy, had no statements and would hold no news conference.

The assistant district attorney announced that a man identified only as "James Lewallen" had been subpoenaed. He refused to elaborate. It was believed that Lewallen and Ferrie's parents knew each other in Cleveland, where Ferrie grew up.

Dist. Judge Bernard Baggert, who signed the subpoena, said Lewallen had refused to take a lie detector test and that the subpoena was issued to require him to report to Garrison's office to make a statement. **END**

Ferrie had committed suicide.

Chetta also said that a series of thorough tests revealed Ferrie had not taken any pills which might have caused suicide.

He listed the official cause of death as "Berry aneurysm with a brain hemorrhage." This was the substance of statements he made last week when he said he would withhold final judgment until the complete and final autopsy tests Tuesday.

Medical History

Ferrie, he said, was born with a weakness at the base of his skull and had a history of high blood pressure.

In Ferrie's apartment, the coroner said, officials took into custody piles of miscellaneous papers, photographs, a sword, several cameras, boxes of rifle and shotgun shells, a chalice cover, three rifles, radio receivers, a flare pistol, a bayonet, a four-foot dud aerial bomb, earphones, two U.S. Signal Corps field telephones and a small chemistry laboratory with which Ferrie had been working.

Cancels Conferences

The coroner said he received a telegram

Leader in Kennedy Death Probe

3/2/67

BY NICHOLAS C. CHRISS

Times Staff Writer

LAT

NEW ORLEANS—One of New Orleans' best-known civic leaders was arrested Wednesday by Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and accused of conspiring to assassinate President John F. Kennedy.

Clay Shaw, 54, retired director of New Orleans' famed International Trade Mart and an often-decorated World War II Army major, was questioned more than five hours before his arrest was announced at 5:45 p.m.

Shaw, tall, handsome and silver-haired, appeared at Garrison's office shortly after noon in answer to a subpoena. A new state law gives district attorneys the power to subpoena persons for questioning.

In announcing the arrest, William Guervich, a private detective agency owner who serves as a \$1-a-year top assistant to Garrison, said:

"The first arrest has been made in the investigation of the New Orleans district attorney's office into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy . . .

"It should be pointed out . . . that the nature of this case is not conducive to an immediate succession of arrests at this time. However, other arrests will be made at a

later date." Garrison revealed late last month he had undertaken a fresh investigation into Mr. Kennedy's assassination and promised "arrests . . . and convictions" would be forthcoming.

This disclosure and statements he has made since have aroused international interest.

Shaw was booked on a charge of "conspiracy to commit murder."

While giving no indication of what connection he thought Shaw had with the assassination, Garrison said he would file a bill of information, probably today, formally charging Shaw with "participation in a conspiracy to murder John F. Kennedy."

Garrison Request

Dist. Judge Thomas Brahney rejected Garrison's recommendation that Shaw's bond be set at \$25,000 on the ground that it was "excessive."

After Shaw posted the \$10,000 bail set by the

judge, his attorney said: "We will have a statement—but not tonight."

In Washington, the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation declined to comment on the arrest.

Shaw's name appears nowhere in the summary of the Warren Commission Report, nor is he listed as a witness.

But persons familiar with the Garrison investigation believe the Shaw arrest has some connection with testimony given the Warren Commission by New Orleans attorney Dean Andrews Jr:

Visit to Office

Andrews told a commission counsel that Presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald had visited his office in the summer of 1963, accompanied by persons he described as "Mexicans" and "gay kids."

Oswald, Andrews said, wanted help in getting his bad conduct discharge from the Marine Corps changed to an honorable discharge. The attorney said he assumed Oswald

was sent to him by a "Clay Bertrand," who had called him in the past to obtain bond or parole for "gay kids."

After the assassination, said Andrews, he got a call while he was in a hospital from a man he believed was Clay Bertrand, who "asked me if I would go to Dallas and Houston — I think Dallas, I guess, wherever it was that this boy was held—and defend him."

Andrews told the commission counsel that in previous conversations with FBI agents he had decided he was imagining the existence of Clay Bertrand because they (the agents) "are on you like the plague. They never leave. They are like cancer."

(The FBI and Secret Service, after much investigation, were never able to establish Bertrand's identity.)

Andrews claimed he had seen Bertrand only twice and that he was "about 5 feet, 8 inches." Earlier, however, he had described Bertrand as being about 6 feet, 1 or 2 inches tall.

Dist. Atty. Garrison gave no indication whether he had established a link between Shaw, who traveled in this city's best social set, and shadowy David William Ferrie, found dead in his bed Feb. 22.

Speculation on Link

However, there was speculation that Shaw and Ferrie may have been acquainted.

Garrison maintains Ferrie committed suicide while still under investigation by the district attorney's office in connection with the assassination, but the Orleans Parish (County) coroner ruled Tuesday that Ferrie died of natural causes.

The arrest of Shaw, who retired 18 months ago as Trade Mart director, sent a new ripple of wonder through New Orleans, a city divided over Garri-

son's investigation.

Shaw, a native of Kentwood, La., moved to New Orleans with his family at the age of 5, worked for a time in New York City in advertising and public relations, then entered the Army in World War II.

For his service in Eu-



TAKEN INTO CUSTODY—Clay Shaw, center, is led away by members of New Orleans district attorney's office after arrest in Kennedy death inquiry.

(AP Wirephoto)

son, he won France's Croix de Guerre and his own country's Bronze Star.

He returned to New Orleans and was one of the founders of the Trade Mart, a privately supported, nonprofit organization which promotes trade through the nation's second largest port.

As the Trade Mart director, Shaw had frequent and important contacts in Latin America.

Oswald passed out pro-Castro leaflets in front of

the Trade Mart before the slaying.

In a television interview only last week, Shaw said he once saw Oswald distributing the leaflets, but never met or spoke to him.

A close associate of Shaw said: "He's the last man in the world I could think of who might be associated with violence."

"He was an ardent supporter of President Kennedy—he was on the welcoming committee when Kennedy visited here in 1962." **END**