

CHALLENGES GARRISON

New Assassination Book Rips Conspiracy Theory

By VICTOR LASKY

(North American Newspaper Alliance)

NEW YORK—So much fantasy has been woven around the tragic death of President Kennedy that it is a pleasure to report that a new book, written by one of the nation's finest reporters, successfully replies to the innuendoes, suspicions, and accusations that have created confusion and doubt around the world.

And what a book! It rips to shreds the theories espoused by such critics of the Warren Commission as the exhibitionist Mark Lane, one of whose previous claims to fame was being fined \$415 for ignoring 19 Manhattan traffic tickets. And it even takes on the colorful and ambitious New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison.

Charles Roberts, author of "The Truth About the Assassination," was an eyewitness to the dreadful events that occurred in Dallas. Moreover, Roberts, who is White House reporter for Newsweek Magazine, was one of the two newsmen who flew to Washington aboard Air Force One, after he had witnessed Lyndon Johnson's swearing-in as president.

ONE OF THE chapters in his new book deals with the errors he found in the much-discussed book by William Manchester. He takes issue with Manchester's suggestions that Johnson was unseemly in his haste to assume the presidency. Instead, Roberts says, Johnson's takeover was "careful, correct, considerate and compassionate."

And he adds: "A long tradition of quick succession in such circumstances and the uncertain state of the world at the time dictated that Johnson, already President under the Constitution, should take his oath to defend the Constitution at the first opportunity. Not to have done so would have tended to perpetuate the vacuum of power that seemed to exist in the first two hours after the fatal shot."

Although Roberts corrects other Manchester misjudgments and just plain errors, his main purpose in writing

this book was to make a point-by-point refutation of attacks on the Warren Report by such critics as Lane, Harold Weisberg, and Edward J. Epstein. The manner in which they deliberately distorted the

evidence contained in the voluminous documentation of the report is truly astounding.

ROBERTS REALLY goes after those deluded souls who believe that somehow the truth about Dallas has been concealed because of a conspiracy. The author quotes a Secret Service agent on this

subject: "If this is a conspiracy, it's really a big one. It's got to include the Dallas police force, the Secret Service, the FBI, all those doctors at Parkland, all those doctors at Bethesda, the entire Warren Commission, the Warren Commission staff, the Justice Department, and finally the attorney general, or it just won't work."

And, as Roberts notes, the attorney general at that time was Robert F. Kennedy. "Somehow, after that," he writes, "I could never take conspiracy theories very seriously."

This is a book that does for the Warren Commission what it apparently was unable to do for itself.

The foreward, incidentally, is by Pierre Salinger who takes issue with those who have called for a reopening of the Warren Commission investigation. Says JFK's press secretary:

"In my opinion those who have made such demands have not taken the time to make the kind of careful study made by Mr. Roberts. Had they done so they would have arrived at the same conclusion that he did. That is, in fact, that not one shred of new evidence has been brought forth by anyone since the Warren Commission made its findings public which would merit such a new hearing."

NOT UNSHAVEN, BEATNIK TYPE

Oswald 'Plot' Probe Image Mystifies Ex-Acquaintances

By NEIL SANDERS

New Orleanians who knew Lee Harvey Oswald when he last lived here are mystified by the ill-kempt, unshaven picture drawn of him by witnesses in the Garrison investigation.

They remember the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy as a neat dresser who was always clean shaven.

Perry Russo, Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's star witness in the preliminary hearing for Clay Shaw, testified "Leon" Oswald was dirty and had a heavy beard when he saw him in David Ferrie's apartment in mid-September, 1963. At the time, Russo claims, Oswald, Shaw and Ferrie were plotting to kill the President. Ferrie died Feb. 22 and Shaw has been charged with conspiracy to murder Kennedy.

RUSSO SAID HE RECOGNIZED OSWALD as the man in Ferrie's apartment only after the district attorney's office touched up photographs of him by adding a five-day beard and disheveled hair.

But Oswald's landlady, Mrs. J. J. Garner of 4911 Magazine, said she saw Oswald several times during September and he was always clean shaven and neatly dressed.

"I never remember him needing a shave," she said. "He was always neat, certainly not sloppy."

Oswald, his wife, Marina, and their baby daughter June lived in Mrs. Garner's apartment at 4905 Magazine from early May to late September, 1963.

Mrs. Garner said the last time she saw Oswald was Sept. 22, three days before he left for Mexico City. As usual, she said, Oswald was tidy and well shaven.

"ALL OF THOSE PICTURES they had in the papers don't do him justice," she said. "In person, he was a nice looking guy."

Another state witness, Vernon Bundy, an admitted narcotics addict, testified that Oswald looked like a beatnik when he said he saw him talking with Shaw on the lake-front sometime in June or July, 1966.

"He was in pretty nasty shape, to tell you the truth," Bundy said. "He needed a shave . . . he needed a haircut."

But the owner of a garage next door to the coffee plant where Oswald worked said he saw him nearly every day during June and more than half of July and he never needed a shave.

"As a rule, he wore a clean T-shirt and khaki pants with creases like razor blades," said Adrian Thomas Alba, operator of the Crescent City Garage, 618 Magazine.

"I don't think he did enough work to get dirty. And he had such a light growth of hair on his face I don't honestly think he could grow a heavy beard."

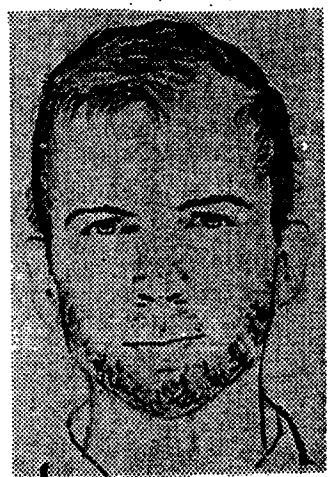
OSWALD SPENT MANY WORKING HOURS in the garage talking with Alba about guns and reading hunting and fishing magazines. He spent so much time, in fact, that he was fired from his job at the coffee plant.

John R. Rachal, placement interviewer for the Louisiana Division of Employment Security, talked to Oswald on two occasions during 1963. His impressions:

"I recall that Oswald was neatly dressed with a suit, dress shirt and tie on the occasion of our initial interview (April 26). On July 22, 1963, he was more casually dressed."

Could it be that Garrison's witnesses and the landlady, garageman and interviewer are not talking about the same man?

(A five-part series detailing the life of Lee Harvey Oswald during his stay in New Orleans between April and September, 1963, will begin Monday in the States-Item.) **END**



BEARDED "LEON" OSWALD



LEE HARVEY OSWALD

**Critic of Warren
Report to Speak Here**

Mark Lane, author of "Rush to Judgment," a current best-seller which is critical of the Warren Report's finding on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy will speak at 1 p. m. Thursday at a noon luncheon of the Young Men's Business Club at the Roosevelt Hotel.

Lane is in New Orleans in connection with the world premiere here of the movie version of "Rush to Judgment."

The public may attend the Thursday luncheon, according to Milton L. Fletchinger, chairman of the crime committee of the YMBC of Greater New Orleans, by making reservations at the YMBC office at The Roosevelt.

Lane, a 40-year-old New York attorney, attempted to appear before the Warren Commission as a witness.

Defense attorney for Lee Harvey Oswald, the man the commission says killed President Kennedy.

He twice testified before the investigative panel.

A former member of the New York state legislature, Lane was New York City campaign manager for President Kennedy in 1960.

National Press Views DA Probe

The National Observer

It is difficult to make any sense out of the spectacle going on in New Orleans, but it's worth a try because the American public has been teased on by a pitchman. . . .

For weeks, District Attorney Jim Garrison has been employing all the tricks of the pitchman to bolster his story that he has uncovered a conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy. With a flair for the melodramatic, he has succeeded to an incredible extent in getting the public and the press to pay him serious attention.

There was always the chance, slim though it seemed from the beginning, that he did indeed have something. That chance, call it one in a thousand, plainly has intimidated many close and knowledgeable observers from saying flat out what they personally and strongly believe: That the Garrison case, if there is one, is phony. . . . Mr. Garrison is not the first, nor will he be the last, to exploit the doubts that linger over the assassination. It was acknowledged by the Warren Commission that there probably never would be final answers to some questions left hanging by the commission's study. Jack Ruby's bullets guaranteed that. So there will be unanswered questions—and, undoubtedly, opportunists forever ready to supply *their* answers. . . .

The Washington Post

It is hard to know just what to make of Jim Garrison's sleazy legal extravaganza. Will the New Orleans district attorney, in the end, be able to establish a substantial connection between his pathetic cast of emotionally disturbed characters and the national tragedy of November 22,

1963? Or does the plot, in fact, exist only in the overstimulated imaginations of Garrison's strange troupe?

At the moment, certainly, the prospect of a legally presentable "solution" of the Kennedy assassination and a refutation of the Warren Commission findings seems remote at the best. The prosecutor's star witness, Perry Raymond Russo, had told a story that contradicts, on several key points, public statements he made less than a month ago. Until prodded by Garrison, he did not recognize the "Leon Oswald," who, he says, plotted the death of Kennedy, as Lee Harvey Oswald who carried it out. And yet he was able, with absolute certainty, to describe minute differences between a rifle Oswald was cleaning three years ago and a rifle produced in court by the district attorney.

It is, of course, possible that Garrison has more to offer in support of his arrest of Clay L. Shaw as a participant in an assassination plot. Indeed it would seem incredible for an experienced lawyer, who must be aware of the possibility of a suit for false arrest, to stick his neck out so far on such slender evidence. One can only assume that there is more to come.

But one conclusion can already be drawn from the strange goings on in New Orleans. This investigation into the assassination of the President is being conducted with the dignity and legal propriety of a smalltime circus sideshow. Regardless of the outcome, it is clear that Garrison's interest in that terrible moment of history lies solely in how it can be used for the personal and political betterment of Jim Garrison. It is a disgraceful performance. *END*

3-27-67
J. Edgar Hoover