

# Old London Town— the Plot Is Obscure

## Critics Are Still Awaiting Final Act in Garrison's Investigation

NICHOLAS C. CHRISS

NEW ORLEANS

Jim Garrison, garrulous 6-foot-7 Orleans Parish district attorney, is a frustrated playwright with a rich, booming voice. So it is no surprise here that his investigation of an alleged plot to murder John F. Kennedy bears what New Orleans long ago recognized as the Garrison trademark—a flair for the melodramatic.

It takes little imagination to envision Garrison standing, center-stage and beneath a shower of bright light, directing the principals in the investigation, his most recent and, by far, his most spectacular production.

But after several weeks of watching this melodrama unfold, the observer waxes increasingly uneasy.

### Full of Sound and Fury

There is no denying that Garrison fills the stage with intriguing characters and brisk action. But one wonders if there is any substance to his investigation, whether there isn't less on stage than meets the eye.

For the record, the flamboyant, 45-year-old prosecutor insists substance aplenty exists—enough to permit him to announce to the world he has "solved" Mr. Kennedy's murder.

But privately, one suspects, Garrison—the frustrated playwright—experiences belated misgivings about his creation. For, despite long hours he says have gone into the investigation, he seems to be revising the script almost daily.

What Garrison actually appears to have is a theory about a possible conspiracy, not a solution to an

*Chriss, who heads The Times bureau in Houston, this month has been covering the New Orleans investigation.*

assassination. Hoping to substantiate that theory, it seems, he has collected a melange of coincidences and circumstances which have some kind of wispy relationship—or so it seems to him. He is trying, one suspects, to fit to his preconceptions, odd pieces of fact, apparently uncorroborated statements and a mixed bag of human beings.

### Not One to Concoct

Thus, the value of all this remains highly suspect.

Yet to those who would dismiss him as a charlatan or, at best, an ambitious politician looking for the main chance, friends who know him best reply: "Don't underrate him. If he says he has something—he must have."

To appreciate the melodrama a better understanding of the man is required.

Jim Garrison not only is a big man physically. He also has a gigantic ego which has thrust him into repeated controversy from which he has emerged with his reputation enhanced. There can be no question that he lives a life of private as well as public melodrama, delighting in intrigue, bold moves and oversimplified statements.

In recent weeks, he has made a number of quick-trigger remarks which he has not yet supported with substantial evidence. For instance:

• "My staff and I solved the assassination weeks ago. I wouldn't

say this if we didn't have evidence beyond the shadow of a doubt. We know the key individuals, the cities involved and how it was done."

● "I have to take the risk that they (the alleged plotters) will stay around because you can develop a better case if you prolong arrests until you can have the whole group of key individuals."

● "The only way they are going to get away from us is to kill themselves."

Garrison's friends tell you: "Jim should have been an author or playwright. As it is, he's a frustrated writer."

One said: "I know Jim must have written a half-dozen short stories. They weren't bad. For a while he sent them off to magazines, got them back and sent them off again. I think he got a little disappointed."

#### A Wide Range of Views

Private conversation with Garrison produces talk ranging from his views on the population explosion, estimates of human error and judgments about Hamlet. He makes frequent reference to plays, novels, short stories and philosophy.

He is sensitive to criticism. It runs counter to his ego.

A significant event in his life, he recalls, occurred when he was in kindergarten. His mother arrived to pick him up from class and was told her son wasn't registered there. "We have no Irving Carruthers Garrison," said a teacher.

By his own volition, Garrison recalls, he had changed his name to Jimmy. Later he was to change it legally to Jim Garrison.

iegea prior to murder John F. Kennedy

During the first hectic weeks after Garrison's current investigation became public knowledge, the name Jim Garrison in gold letters three inches high appeared overnight above the entrance to his offices in the Criminal Courts Building here.

Some friends—and Garrison himself—maintain that he actually recoils from publicity; that he makes headlines only because he is not afraid to joust with "the Establishment," and that he is a Sir Launcelot eager to skewer the biggest dragon in the neighborhood.

"There is no such thing as an unanswered question; no such thing as a problem without a solution," Garrison is fond of saying. The expression is apt in his current dilemma.

#### Unanswered Questions Remain

For, as far as he is concerned, the

Kennedy assassination left nothing but unanswered questions, problems demanding solutions. What galls him most is that no one, in his eyes, really ever attempted to find the answers and solutions—which he is certain exist.

There is every reason to believe that he feels federal authorities should now step in and help him; explore leads he claims to have developed—even though he has said publicly his office needs no help. He

#### Continued from First Page

believes public opinion in New Orleans supports him and he's disappointed that the entire nation has not rallied behind him.

In one of his frequent literary allusions, Garrison refers to Ibsen's drama, "Enemy of the People."

The protagonist, a man of high principle, secretly has surveyed the town's water supply, and, as he suspected, finds it is polluted. He turns the proof over to the mayor and a newspaper. To his dismay, he sees them turn against him.

"They knew he was right," says Garrison. "The waters were polluted, but they are afraid to do anything about it. They are afraid of unrest and consternation they say such a discovery might cause among the townspeople."

#### Garrison on Morality

Garrison undoubtedly related this to the Warren Commission Report and the American people, and he goes on to a favorite Garrison judgment about human morality: "Don't rock the boat. If you don't rock the boat, you won't get into trouble."

Another choice Garrison axiom, which he unquestionably applies to himself and his investigation at this juncture, is: "Let justice be done, though the heavens fall."

In pursuit of the truth, as Garrison sees it, the DA has employed the lie detector, sodium pentothal—the so-called "truth serum"—and hypnosis; the products of none of these are admissible as courtroom evidence.

Almost all his methods have been unorthodox, and not the least of these was the prosecution request for the four-day preliminary hearing which led to civic leader Clay L. Shaw's being bound over to trial.

Garrison is thought to believe that, if the FBI or the Central Intelligence Agency now would come to his aid, the investigation could be wrapped up within a month or even two weeks and proof of a conspiracy established once and for all.

But so far federal agencies appear unwilling to touch Garrison's investigation. In fact, Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark insists the FBI covered all the ground along which Garrison has been traveling and found nothing to indicate a conspiracy. "All old stuff" is the federal point of view, though the Justice Department unquestionably has a periscope fixed on Garrison's every move.

Part of Garrison's investigation, it is understood, is based on a theory that the CIA trained anti-Castro

mier Fidel Castro and that this plot went afoul.

As this theory goes, the supposed plotters reversed themselves and turned against Mr. Kennedy.

All of this is pretty wild, but by extending the theory Garrison's office reportedly concludes that seven or eight men carried out a plot to kill the President. They reportedly included four Cubans and three or four Americans who discussed the assassination in a "series of meetings" in New Orleans in September, 1963.

Two of the Americans — Lee Harvey Oswald, whom the Warren Commission said acted alone in killing Mr. Kennedy, and David W. Ferrie, a former airlines pilot—are dead. Two others who Garrison believes to be implicated also are dead. Alive is Shaw, a pillar of New Orleans' social and civic life until a month ago but a man now under grand jury indictment for participating in the alleged conspiracy.

Garrison claims that Shaw visibly disintegrated during the last stages of his four-day preliminary hearing.

By way of expressing confidence he eventually will obtain a conviction against Shaw, he cites a trial several years ago when he was accused of defaming eight New Orleans criminal court judges.

"I wasn't worried. He knew I was right," he recalls. While on trial, Garrison wrote a Hamlet-like play about the judges.

#### Conviction Was Overturned

Garrison was convicted of defamation, but the Supreme Court—in a landmark ruling—overturned the conviction on the ground that public officials are open to criticism.

Garrison believes that, besides Cuban refugees and homosexuals, masochists who would do anything for a thrill were a part of the alleged plot to kill Mr. Kennedy. "If you placed a masochist in a room along with a button that would blow up the White House," Garrison said, "he probably would press that button for the thrill of it."

At times, such Garrison pronouncements have not only made his skeptics even more dubious but have turned his supporters into skeptics. But not all of them, by any means.

Garrison has received financial aid and moral support from Louisiana Gov. John McKeithen, Sen. Russell Long (D-La.), a group of respected New Orleans businessmen and the grand jury which indicted Shaw and another man involved in the investi-

Garrison has disavowed further political ambition, "at least for the next several years." Nevertheless, he is variously reported aiming for the U.S. Senate or the Vice Presidency itself.

Garrison, thus far, has produced one witness who claims to have overheard a plot to kill President Kennedy. He is 25-year-old Perry Raymond Russo, who was hypnotized three times and given a sodium pentothal test to authenticate his statements and jog his memory.

Russo's testimony, to date, has been the guts of Garrison's public presentation, and the young man himself has been the star performer in the district attorney's case.

Another witness, an admitted narcotics user, claimed to have observed, by chance, Shaw handing money to Oswald in New Orleans in "June or July" of 1963.

Thus far, Garrison's melodrama has a hard-to-believe quality. The American people, already troubled by doubt cast on the Warren Commission report, have a right to know what more, if anything, Garrison has to support his conspiracy theory.

# Garrison Issues Order for Arrest of Woman

## Russo Linked Omaha Wife to Party Where He Said Murder of Kennedy Was Plotted

—NEW ORLEANS (AP)—  
Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's office issued a warrant Monday for the arrest of Mrs. Lilly Mae McMaines of Omaha, who is linked to the Kennedy assassination probe through star witness Perry Raymond Russo.

Russo, 25-year-old Baton Rouge insurance salesman, said Mrs. McMaines — the former Sandra Moffett of New Orleans — was one of several persons who attended a party in David W. Ferrie's apartment after which he says he heard Ferrie, Lee Harvey Oswald and Clay L. Shaw conspire to kill President John F. Kennedy.

Mrs. McMaines, married to part-time minister Harold McMaines, 48, told newsmen Friday she did not attend the party. The 22-year-old woman acknowledged knowing Russo and said she was once in love with him.

Garrison's office swore out a warrant for her arrest as a material witness. The warrant was signed by Criminal Dist. Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr., who set bond at \$5,000.

"We feel sure she is a very important witness," said Asst. Dist. Atty. Andrew Sciambra.

Judge Haggerty, who will preside at Shaw's trial on charges of conspiring to kill Mr. Kennedy, directed the prosecution not to make public statements about the case or to discuss the evidence with newsmen.

### Russo Testimony

The judge said he wants to "prevent the flow of prejudicial pre-trial publicity."

Russo's testimony came

during a preliminary hearing for Shaw. Russo said the party at Ferrie's apartment took place in September, 1963—two months before Mr. Kennedy was slain in Dallas. Ferrie died Feb. 22.

In Omaha, Mrs. McMaines said earlier she did not meet Ferrie until 1965. She said she refused to accompany two Garrison investigators back to New Orleans after they contacted her March 8.

Attorneys for Shaw, a wealthy retired business executive, also expressed an interest in questioning Mrs. McMaines.

"My opinion now is that she will be a very useful witness," said F. Irvin Dymond, a defense attorney.

Russo alluded to Miss

Moffett only once during his three days' of testimony at Shaw's preliminary hearing. At one point he said he was taken to the party by a friend. Later he named Sandra Moffett as "the girl I brought."

A lawyer for Gordon Novel, also described by Garrison as a material witness in the investigation, asked Judge Haggerty Monday to quash a warrant calling for his client's arrest. Haggerty ordered a hearing Wednesday on the request.

Novel, 29-year-old former French Quarter bar owner, disappeared last Wednesday, the day he was to have appeared before the grand jury. Garrison called him a "most important and material witness" and obtained a warrant for his arrest. He did not disclose Novel's connection with the probe.

### Client to Return

Steve Plotkin, Novel's attorney, said his client would return to New Orleans when he is assured that he will not be jailed. Plotkin said he knows where Novel is.

In a later development, Asst. Dist. Atty. James Alcock said he sent a letter to U.S. Atty. Louis Lacour here advising Lacour that Garrison's office will ask that Novel be charged with unlawful flight.

If Garrison is successful in the move, it would bring the FBI into the search for Novel.

Shaw, 54, probably will be arraigned in Haggerty's court sometime next week, the judge said.