

The Garrison Gambit and the
Warren Report Critics

(Meagher 8/8/67)

The airlines must be quietly delighted by the rise in passenger traffic and the increase in revenue from flights to New Orleans. Since February 1967, when a newspaper broke the story that New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison was investigating a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy, a steady stream of pilgrims has made the journey to the Parish of Orleans. Journalists, photographers, sensation seekers, busybodies, and even the serious critics of the Warren Report have visited the shrine and have received the personal attentions of the district attorney. Many have been good enough to share their experiences and their impressions. Without exception and almost without qualification, superlatives were heard.

Garrison (they said) was a man of high intelligence and profound conviction; a professional in the highest tradition of his calling; incorruptible; a ~~scholar~~ ^{Student} of ~~literature~~ ^{Shakespeare}; an admirer of ~~Lord Russell~~ ^{Napoleon} and energetic, brilliant, productive; ~~and a master of the volume of~~ ^{an authority on the content of the WR and the} Hearings and Exhibits; handsome, charming, witty, egalitarian---the testimonials were ~~imposing~~ ^{formidable}.

I have not made the pilgrimage to New Orleans, nor do I intend to do so. Testimonials notwithstanding, Mr. Garrison strikes me not as a hero but a master of improvisation. The most recently returned of the

peripatetic critics has contributed to the rich body of ereomiums the new intelligence that Mr. Garrison is ~~the most~~ ^a tender ~~of~~ father~~s~~ to his adoring brood of youngsters. I am delighted to hear it, but as I am not engaged in a study of paternal influence in the contemporary family unit, I find the information extraordinarily irrelevant. I feel sure that Earl Warren must have been an exemplary parent, too; and it is a fact that Adolph Eichmann was a most tender-hearted sire to his little ones.

Since paternal piety is not germane to an investigation of the Kennedy assassination, it is immaterial that David Ferrie and Clay Shaw--Oswald's alleged co-conspirators in Mr. Garrison's "solution" of the crime--were bachelors. What is material is the basis on which they have been accused, and Shaw has been arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit the assassination.

The only known basis for the charge ~~thus far~~ is that Perry Raymond Russo has accused Clay Shaw of using the alias "Clem Bertrand" and of conspiring with David Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald, in his (Russo's) presence, to assassinate President Kennedy.

if Perry Raymond Russo had really been present while three men negotiated the modus operandi of a presidential assassination, he had not reported this extraordinary proceeding at once to the authorities, or ^{even} reported it ~~at 11:00 p.m.~~ on November 22, 1963. The answer still eludes me.

And of my fellow-critics who have specialized in the logging of "peripheral deaths" (a good number of key witnesses have met their end in the last three years, preponderantly from unnatural causes) I asked why the

conspirators had spared the life of Perry Raymond Russo, ~~so that he could~~ ^{enable him to} finger them to the New Orleans district attorney in the year 1967. The answer still eludes me.

Mr. Russo surfaced for the first time on February 24, 1967. On this occasion, he sought out the news media and volunteered ^{during} in a television

interview that he had been acquainted with David Ferrie, and that Ferrie

^{In August 1967, Russo asserted that ex-President Eisenhower and President Lopez-Mateo} had spoken at times of his wish to dispose of President Kennedy. Asked if

he knew Oswald or had ever met him, ~~he said~~ Russo said no. He ^{mentioned} ~~said~~ nothing

at this time about a party in Ferrie's apartment, about a bearded young man

("Oswald") or a white-haired older man ("Clem Bertrand" or Clay Shaw), or

about ^{listening to} ~~auditing~~ a ^{planning} ~~professional~~ conference among would-be assassins.

of this were also on Ferrie's list for assassination

When these events unfolded,

The critics of the Warren Report, myself included, ~~at this time~~ had been

single-mindedly crusading against the Warren Report for more than two years.

We had been animated ^{and unified} by ~~moral~~ outrage ^{and disgust} at the deliberate perversion of evidence

and the travesty of justice in which the ^{peculiar} ~~shabby~~ labors of the Warren Commission

had culminated. We had, with considerable success, attacked and discredited ^{much}

^{of} the "hard evidence" cited in the Warren Report, and ^{much of} the circumstantial evidence

--which included "identifications" of Oswald by witnesses who were self-admitted ~~and~~

^{self-serving} liars (and incriminating testimony against him) ~~by equally tainted witnesses.~~

The unity which had developed among the critics was scarcely perfect; yet

it was a considerable achievement that after an initial long period in which

each had worked alone, unaware even of the existence of the others, contacts

were made and a loosely-constructed "group" ~~eventually emerged~~ ^{formed} in which the

members maintained a generally high degree of voluntary cooperation and

~~maintained~~ a willing, ^{even} ~~if not~~ eager, ^{exchange} sharing of information. ~~Even~~ The critic

is by definition ^{an} ~~a highly~~ individualistic ~~and~~, even a rebel and iconoclast,

temperamentally predisposed against functioning ^{with} ~~in~~ in a committee structure

(the more so after the sorry results of the Warren "committee"). That the

nevertheless group/achieved considerable cohesion, ~~generally speaking,~~ was gratifying.

The ~~individualistic~~ critics managed somehow to put aside doctrinal differences

and to subordinate ~~the~~ competitive drive ^{to} ~~for~~ the common purpose--not invariably,

not easily,

but much of the time. Although some of the critics have not met ^{each other} personally

to this day, and although they seldom found a moment ~~to converse~~ for exchanging

~~personal~~ personal rather than technical information, some alliances and some ~~minor~~

close friendships solidified among members of the group. Speaking for myself,

I found that I did not wish to work closely or associate with a few of the

critics (or would-be critics) whom I encountered; but with the majority,

there was a continuous and ^{loyal} ~~close~~ liaison. ~~In~~ ^F four or five ~~cases~~ ^{of} the

critics [whom I had not even known before 1965] became the ~~dearest~~ most

valued, most respected, and most trusted of friends. Of one of these

critics, I once wrote ^{in a letter} (and meant it) that I would literally stake my life

on his integrity and ~~unshakable~~ incorruptibility. Fortunately, this was never

put to the test and I am still among the living.

I would have sworn that nothing could divide me from my fellow-critic

friends. But I did not reckon ^{with} ~~on~~ District Attorney Jim Garrison of New

Orleans. ^{As} ~~It is~~ ^A by-product of his ^{eruptive} ~~epileptic~~ and surrealist "investigation" ~~is~~

~~that~~ some of the critics have become deeply alienated from ~~most of~~ their

fellows, ~~that~~ ^{de facto} the "group" has been fragmented, the friendships ^{have been} refrigerated

or destroyed, and the mutual respect displaced by bitter disenchantment.

Many of the critics have polarized ^{and} ~~in~~ gone into orbit around "Big Jim" Garrison; ~~some of us~~ ^{others} ~~and~~ look upon him as the most blatant of mountebanks, and an unscrupulous and dangerous fool. Inevitably, the "team" was transformed into opposing camps, staring suspiciously at each other and watching their words.

I readily grant that Garrison embarked on his now notorious "probe" ~~the~~ ^{doggedly} which my colleagues attribute to him. ~~man~~ with ^{the} disinterested and high motives; But the same thing perhaps can be said about the authors of the Warren Report, or some of them. In the pre-Garrison era, no one confused manners with morals--on the contrary, the critics were embittered by the very contrast between the ~~high~~ lofty pronouncements and the shameful performance, the exalted reputations and the ~~unscrupulous~~ betrayal of trust. Those of us who felt ~~unscrupulous~~ disgust felt it all the more because we had admired and trusted Earl Warren before he became ~~the~~ Chairman of a Presidential Commission.

I can only marvel that my ~~man~~ erstwhile friends and allies do not see the mirror-image, and do not realize that they are playing Louis Nizer to Garrison's Earl Warren. It is even worse than that. One colleague who had argued all along that we must wait and see Garrison's evidence went to New Orleans and saw it for himself. He came back "discouraged" and even "dismayed." There was no evidence, ^{no proof,} and no "case."
But he was, more ^{fervently} ~~than~~ ever, ~~fervently~~ committed to Garrison's cause,

if you will believe it. Garrison was human ^(he said) and had made mistakes; but his motives were pure, no man in public office was so enlightened, so worthy of respect and admiration, so noble in spirit and heart (if you will believe it). Consequently, "there should be no vicious attacks against him." ~~What kind of attacks, I asked icily.~~ "No attacks against him," he amended.

But I am attacking the lies and fictions about the assassination, and the false accusations against innocent men, and the fabrication of evidence against the accused, and the use of perjured testimony—and I am attacking these sordid and intolerable practices and this falsification of the historical record, ^{wherever it originated,} whether ~~by~~ ^{with} the Warren Commission or ~~by~~ the New Orleans district attorney, and regardless of the readiness of my fellow-critics to aid and ~~abet~~ ^{abet} Garrison while denouncing the Warren Report, as if there was any ^{real} difference between the two.

I have also been warned that I will find myself isolated and alone; that is not at all perturbing, since alliances which are illusory are no ^{alliances.} ~~comradeship.~~ And I have been asked how I, who have never held public office, dare to sit in judgment of a district attorney. The questioner, who never ~~asked~~ ^{inquired about} challenged my qualifications to ~~attack~~ ^{challenge} the Warren Report, should realize that one needs, ^{only} ~~for~~ either ^{role} ~~case,~~ ^{only} a simple intolerance for liars and character-

assassins, and especially for those among them who place genuine credentials
at the service of ~~an~~ injustice.