

Murky, Improbable World of Ferrie

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Some six years ago, on AUG. 30, 1961, two young men in a Plymouth convertible were braced by police in a residential neighborhood near the New Orleans lake front. In the car, officers reported, were found a fully loaded .38 caliber Smith and Wesson and a makeup kit with human hair, sealing gun and scissors. Both belonged to one David W. Ferrie. One of the young men in the car said they were waiting for him.

The police were, apparently, skeptical. The neighborhood had been plagued with burglaries. The two young men led the officers to a neighborhood home occupied by Sergio Arcacha Smith, local head of a Cuban liberation group. Arcacha's wife said Ferrie had been there earlier.

The connection between Ferrie and members of a Cuban exile group, appears to be a key link in the controversial investigation District Attorney Jim Garrison is conducting into the assassination of President Kennedy.

Nothing has surfaced connecting Ferrie or anyone else on Garrison's list to the assassination. Garrison has yet to disclose a shred of evidence. But he flamboyantly claims to have "solved" the assassination and, an investigation by Newsweek and The Washington Post found, he is looking for Sergio Arcacha Smith for questioning.

It is a strange, murky, improbable world that the district attorney's office is reconstructing. The prosecutor has even stated that he does not believe Lee Harvey Oswald killed anyone in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963. Instead he is concentrating on Cubans.

So far the only signs of where all this may be leading Jim Garrison lie in the tangled life of David William Ferrie—who died last week of what the police and the coroner have said were natural causes. Characteristically, Garrison disagrees, insisting

it was a suicide.

With his bizarre red wig and painted eyebrows, Ferrie who once studied to become a Catholic priest but was considered too unstable and arbitrary, played many roles—pilot, philosopher, private detective, medical expert, building inspector, high school teacher, and confidante and moldier of young men. Another was Cuban freedom fighter.

Born in Cleveland 49 years ago, Ferrie insisted he had never been to Cuba, but that didn't keep him from talking about it. In July, 1961, for example, he spoke to the New Orleans chapter of the Military Order of the World Wars on "Cuba—April, 1961, Present and Future" but he was

cut off by a chapter official who found the remarks offensive.

Just what Ferrie said is unclear, but one man present is reported to have said Ferrie complained sharply about "the President of the United States and the Commander in Chief of our Armed Forces," apparently for the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Ferrie, it was also recalled, had brought with him a 17-year-old Latin American boy as a show of part of the work he had been doing for "Cuban liberation."

At one point, Ferrie was also alleged to have been "working out of" the New Orleans office of the Frente Revolucionario Democrático headed locally by Arcacha who, Newsweek news reporter Philip D. Carter found, moved from New Orleans well before the assassination and wound up in Dallas.

In the police investigation of the Aug. 30 incident revolving around Sergio Arcacha Smith's home here, the New Orleans intelligence division reported, several months later, that "apparently this group (the Cuban Revolutionary Democratic Front) was legitimate in nature and presum-

ably had the unofficial sanction of the CIA although this could not be determined locally.

Sergio Arcacha Smith, it was also reported, had been removed as New Orleans head of the group.

Ferrie's continued interest in the group, if any, remains unknown. Several hours after President Kennedy's assassination, Ferrie and two youths—Alvin Roland Beauboies and Patrick L. Martens—left for a weekend drive to Texas that brought them first to Houston on Nov. 23 at 4:30 a.m. (One "Layton Martens" had been at Arcacha's apartment when police rapped on the door back in 1961; he had furnished them then with identification saying he was second in command here of the Cuban group headed by Arcacha.)

Ferrie and the two youths subsequently drove to Galveston and made their way back to New Orleans by way of Alexandria, La., on Nov. 24.

Ferrie found his rooms had been searched—a monumental job if they were as cluttered then as they were at his death—and found the district attorney's office was looking for him.

They had been alerted by Jack S. Martin, now 53, one-time private detective, newsman, deputy sheriff "and what have you," according to Mrs. Martin. Martin was also a bishop of an obscure and dissident Catholic sect who once ordained Ferrie into the order. Martin gave authorities a batch of rumors about Ferrie, including allegations that

Ferrie may have once taught Oswald how to shoot, that he may have hypnotized Oswald, and that he may have been the pilot of a rumored "getaway plane."

"You would have to meet Jack Martin repetitively, to appreciate him," Ferrie said wryly in an interview shortly before he died. He said Martin — now "somewhere in Mexico," according to his wife—delighted in stirring up trouble. Mrs. Martin said her husband has "a violent temper" and often "drinks heavily."

Of Ferrie, an FBI agent told Newsweek's Hugh Aynesworth in Dallas several months ago, "We picked him clean. You won't find anything there."

Nonetheless when District Attorney Garrison launched his investigation last November, his men called in David Ferrie once more. "They used the names Martin gave them," Ferrie charged in the interview. He also asserted that he had "been trying to see Garrison directly for months for a face-to-face talk about what the District Attorney wanted."

That Garrison's theories revolve around Cubans was clear from an interview with private detective William Gurvich, one of Garrison's chief aides in the investigating. He referred several times to testimony before the Warren Commission about a "powerful" Cuban which conflicted with the preponderance of testimony pointing to Oswald.

After acknowledging mon-

entary doubts, and worries that there might have been a second assassin," Ferrie said he was convinced there was no plot. He suggested Garrison try a new theory on for size. "I've got a real plot for him," he said in his last interview, opening his eyes wide in mock horror. "The astrology magazines—they all said in 1960 that whoever was elected—and they couldn't tell whether it would be Kennedy or Nixon—would die in office. Maybe the astrologers killed Kennedy."

Not even Carlos Bringuier, a firm believer in a conspiracy theory of the assassination, seems to think that Garrison's quest for Arcacha will be any more fruitful. A Cuban exile leader here and a firm believer that Fidel Castro was behind the assassination, Bringuier called Arcacha his "foe" because of an obscure falling-out they had. But, he said, "I'm completely sure that he had nothing to do with anything."

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