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Carrison and the JFK Plot

Really Have a Valid Case? Does New Orleans DA

By RICHARD N. BILLINGS Special to The Press

abruptly ordered the dinner canceled. assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Garrison to tone down his charges of a federal conspiracy in the be the host D.A., Jim Garrison. But when he was asked leans in March the speaker at the main banquet was to At a district attorneys' office convention in New Or-

Affronted by the rash and petulant act, a local television station charged Garrison with "making New Orleans the laughing stock of the nation."

realize how dedicated he is to this conviction. to people who have observed him closely chough to vinced he has solved the conspiracy. It is no joke either the controversial district attorney, who is firmly con-The Case of Jim Garrison is no laughing matter to

Most especially, there is nothing funny about it to Clay

ceal this conspiracy. there is a federal plot to con-Harvey Oswald. Garrison also widespread conspiracy involvdistrict attorney, is convinced the assassina-tion of President Kennedy was the result of has repeatedly charged that ing more persons than just Lee

Jim Garrison, the flamboyant New Orleans

public by firing off sensational son has befuddled the American accusations at a wide field of targets. For more than a year, Garri

Jim Garrison

To separate fact from sensation, a top rank

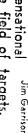
the JFK Plot." This is the first article in his inating five-part report titled "Garrison and Now he has completed an exciting and illum

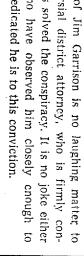
field of endeavor for many months. He is a former Life magazine reporter who is doing a book on Garrison.

ing journalist of national reputation, Richard N. Billings; was assigned to investigate the

Billings; was assigned to investigate the

Garrison affair. Billings has made it his specia





He Was a Suspect DAVID FERRIE

one of the plotters. L. Shaw, a retired businessman who stands accused as

nificant that such an astonishing event could ever take date. For the moment, however, it is sufficiently sigalthough legal maneuvers by his defense may delay the Shaw, 55, is scheduled to go on trial this month,

Oswald, a social misfit and once a defector to the Soviet Union, was the lone assassin. report. It concluded in precise detail that Lee Harvey 1963, the Warren Commission submitted an exhaustive WITHIN A YEAR of the President's death on Nov. 22.

well aimed rifle shots. ity, when he accomplished his deadly mission with two by no one and motivated merely by a deep-rooted hostil-Oswald, the commission had determined, was assisted

alternative was developed. tained by the passage of time during which no positive nightmarish illusion of conspiracy. The verdict was susmission critics notwithstanding, was to set aside the An effect of the Warren Report, disclaimers by com-

open his own investigation. true until November, 1966, when Garrison decided to would ever stand trial for the assassination. That was his arrest in Dallas, it was reasonable to assume no man Since Oswald himself was murdered two days after

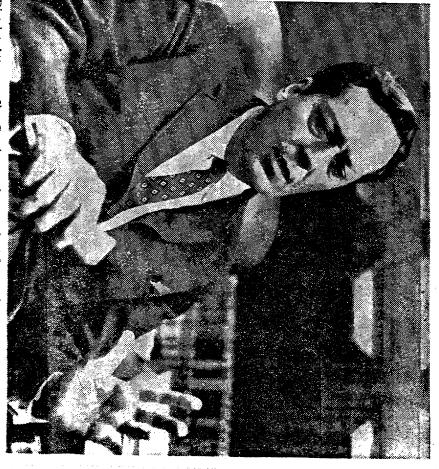
AT THE TIME Garrison was a relatively unknown prosecutor, although he once made national headlines by running Begirls out of New Orleans strip joints,

attention, his name is a household word synonymous with the assassination controversy, Now, more than a year after his case first got public

gic have decided he just might be right. a vast following of people who by gut lo-He is the new American demagog with

even Lyndon B. Johnson. mission members, the Attorney General, implicates federal agencies, Warren Comare shaken by the manner in which he has in the plot he has reconstructed Garrison resurrected the conspiracy nightmare, for But some of his most ardent supporters

mitigate his most outlandish charges, for sories before and after the fact fails to when Garrison calls Mr. Johnson "the That he can distinguish between acces-



District Attorney Jim Garrison, who stands 6-foot-6, insists that there was a widespread conspiracy to take the life of JFK. He's shown here at his desk in his New Orleans office.

assassination," the meaning is insidiously one man who has profited most from the

through the wall." get from one room to another is to go "Garrison has said, "The best way to

doubt he intends to impugn the national leadership, For a battering ram lately he has tak issuing statements that leave little

Last December, he charged,

and the President of the United States was appointed, the command of the FBI "Even hefore the Warren Commission

> completely false," and that the Dallas police scenario was people shooting at President Kennedy had to know that there were a number of

weighted the commission with men who an amhush of CIA employes, and they ceal the assassination of the President by on to help conceal the truth," had big names but who could be counted of the Warren Commission was to con-And more recently: "The main function

himself has said, "An awful lot of people GARRISON IS a scatter shooter. He

were looking at their watches at 12:25 that day." He has fired incriminating charges in all directions — at Cuban exiles, neo-Nazis, Southern racists, Texas right-wingers, California Birchers—to the point that he must believe the conspirators numbered in the hundreds.

Morcover, he has staked much of his case on fairly flimsy evidence: Questionable eyewitnesses, concected codes and photographs that prove only what he wants them to.

It is tikely Garrison has a sincere faith in even his most faulty "proof," for he is a profound partisan.

"An advocate can't afford to be objective," he has said privately.

But is he right? The battering ram and scatter shotgun have inflicted injury to possibly innocent victims. Two men have heen charged with conspiracy, others with perjury and still others have been subpoenaed as material witnesses, their involvement implied.

Certain members of the underground of Warren Report critics, for which Garrison has become a spiritual leader, have begun to fear they helped "create a monster." as Garrison pursues additional players in the plot. The burden is on

him to make a case against the men charged, and if he does he could be absolved of his other distortions.

"Garrison may be 90 per cent all wet," a sometime friend of his has advised. "But if so, watch out for the other 10."

THE PUBLIC Garrison today, irrepressible, overconfident and slanderous, is a man of marked contrast to the district attorney who quietly opened an investigation in the fall of 1966. For the first three months there were no public statements, no headlines, no charges.

In consistencies alleged by Warren Commission critics alerted Garrison to The Case, and although it is curious that he got interested so belatedly, he became a dissenter almost by instinct. He decided right away the FBI had eliminated the

possibility of conspiracy all too quickly

By mid-December Garrison was privately confident he had discovered a plot, so confident in fact that he inadvertently indicated he might be holding a hidden trump card, a possibility that exists to this day.

It is known, however, that two principal factors formed the foundation for the investigation

the investigation.

First, Garrison had certain knowledge of a conspiratorial atmosphere in New Orleans in the summer of 1963 while Oswald was living there,

The other one, and more important, he had a suspect, one David W. Ferrie, who had been arrested by Garrison shortly after the assassination only to be released by the FBI.

From the beginning Garrison has insisted that the idea of one assassin is im-



CLAY SHAW
Was One of the Plotters?

probable if not impossible. His more recent irrationalities aside, it must be said he started out by constructing a reasonably logical case, circumstantial though his evidence may have been.

THE LONE assassin theory, Garrison contended, pre-supposed that Oswald was an introvert. The Warren Report even cited as a motivating factor "his inability to enter into meaningful relationships with people."

In Garrison's opinion Oswald was anything but a loner. That summer in New Orleans, in fact, he was something of a public character.

He had courted publicity for his Fair Play for Cuba campaign, he had gone to jail for street fighting, he had joined in a debate on television, he had even marched into the district attorney's office one day to inquire into the effect of some exotic drug.

Oswald had in fact achieved enough notoriety by the time he left New Orleans in September to cause federal agents to keep a careful watch on him.

Details of the FBI file on Oswald prior to the assassination will be revealed in a later article, but it is interesting to note here that the bureau learned from Oswald's New Orleans landlady on Oct. I that he had left the city.

Ferrie's arrest on Nov. 25, 1963, was the result of a tip that he had taught Oswald in marksmanship. The FBI discounted the story, and the tipster, one Jack Martin, admitted later it had been stimulated by alcohol and his hatred for Ferrie.

But Garrison decided to look further into a possible Oswald-Ferrie link.

AS GARRISON pieced it together, Ferrie's career shaped up interestingly. A former airline pilot who had been fired for degeneracy, he had joined the Cuban anti-Castro movement to train guerrilla fighters.

Ferrie was a close associate of Sergio Arcacha, then chief New Orleans delegate of a Cuban organization called the

Democratic Revolutionary Front (FRD), and in October, 1961, they opened an office at 544 Camp St.

A third member of the cabal against Castro was W. Guy Banister, a former FBI agent who ran a detective agency around the corner from the FRD head-quarters. Banister, who died in 1964, was a rightwing militant and a provider of arms to anti-Castro rebels in Cuha.

It was Garrison's early conjecture that Ferrie, Arcacha and Banister, along with others, redirected their anti-Castro operation and turned it against Mr. Kennedy.

By November, 1963, Arcacha was livered.

By November, 1963, Arcacha was living in Dallas. But Garrison could produce no tangible evidence that would connect

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him with the assassination and he successfully fought extradition to New Orleans as a material witness.

Banister, Garrison learned, could have established he was in New Orleans on the day of the assassination, because that might he got into a public brawl with the dipster, Martin.

the moment of the assassination. He was in a courtroom where mobster Carlos Marcello was winning a favorable verdict in a deportation hearing.

Ferrie had been working as an investigator for G. Wray Gill, Marcello's lawyer.
That evening, while most of the country
mourned the President's death, Ferrie attended a party to celebrate Marcello's
victory.

Later that night he started out on a mysterious journey.

At 9 p.m., Ferrie said later, he and two young men decided to drive to Texas for some ice skating and goose shooting. They went to Houston and then to Galveston, heading back for New Orleans Sunday night.

When they reached Ferrie's apartment, district attorney's detectives were already there.

Perrie, having learned from Gill by phone he was wanted in connection with the assassination, ducked the detectives and spent the night with a friend, but the next day he turned himself in.

Ferie insisted they had shot geese, but his companions both testified they didn't even take guns along. They did, however, go ice skating at the Winterland rink in Houston on Saturday afternoon, and from

there they went to Galveston for a night on the town.

A GARRISON assistant talked to the manager of the skating rink, who said he remembered Ferrie well.

The manager explained, "He came up

ine manager explained. He came up to me, flapping his arms and excepting. I'm Dave Ferrie, I'm from New Orleans, and I'm here.'"

The manager also said that instead of skating. Ferrie stood close to the public telephone.

This strange peregrination the weekend after the assassination nominated the unfortunate pilot as Garrison's suspect No. 1.

Garrison devoted most of the early investigation to Oswald's short career in New Orleans. He found little that would alter history in terms of fact, but in terms of empsasis and interpretation he was making progress.

While the Warren Commission noted nothing significant in the New Orleans period, Garrison isisted these points come clear:

- Oswald used the Fair Play for Cuba Committee as a cover to mask his true political allegiance;
- He was in contact with any number of 'Individuals Latins,' intelligence agents, anti-Castroites whose identity never comes clear in the Warren Report.
 He scrupulously covered his tracks by using allases, giving false information on job applications and lying to authori-

Oswald's role with regard to Cuba is an enigma at best. He contneded his "Fair Play" branch had 35 members, when it really consisted of just himself and his fictious after ego, A. J. Hideli.

Moreover, his "Fair Play" activities

o obtain bond or parole in the fired to locate berti Was: "the one who ca from Andr

didn't press Andrews for the Bertrand, and he was surpris IN IS THIS CLAY BOX al in his response to

Daily News)