

On the Trail of Dirty Tricksters

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BY ROBERT WIENER 4/25/76

THE STAR-SPANGLED CONTRACT by Jim Garrison
(McGraw-Hill: \$8.95)

Sometimes fiction can be as strange as truth. Case in point: "The Star-Spangled Contract," a kind of sci-fi spy novel that weaves key elements of our most notable assassination conspiracy theories into a frightening scenario of the future. It's a story that's at once fantastic and plausible, pitting a jaded intelligence agent against the machines and machinations of our secret government.

Our hero is Colin McFerrin, once a CIA man but now (if, in fact, one can ever quit the CIA) a champion of justice out to sabotage the military cabal that plans to blow away a liberal President. His is a tale of paranoia as he winds through the webs of amoral intelligence men and the claws of the Pentagon—never knowing whom to trust and never being able to tell the good guys from the bad. His fear and loathing on the trail of the dirty tricksters is a story older than the computer printout and the psychological profile.

Ordinarily one might write this work off as just another of its genre, less boring than Le Carre but certainly a better buy in paperback than in an \$8.95 hardcover. It has enough action, enough intrigue and enough sex to keep a reader interested. But probably the most interesting facet of "The Star-Spangled Contract" is its author.

A decade ago Jim Garrison was the district attorney in New Orleans, a conservative law-and-order man who became one of the first officials in the country to raise questions about the Warren Commission and the death of John F. Kennedy. He turned his doubts into investigation and indictments at a time fewer Americans than now believed Lee Harvey Oswald to be a patsy and people in high places to be involved in—at very least—a cover-up of the real facts. It's obvious



Jim Garrison

that more assassinations, cover-ups and patsies have come down the pike since Dallas '63 and, as Garrison suggests, our public officials aren't necessarily in control of the government. So, those of us who hunger for more information and who doubt official denials as a matter of course see the byline of Jim Garrison and are left to wonder: Does this man know something we don't? Have his years of probing, followed by his public setbacks, forced him into fiction to tell a story he couldn't do with provable fact?

Gentle readers may be jarred by this story of political fatalism and electric future shock. But then, if fact and fiction were to run a race through the pages of Garrison's book, there's no telling who'd win.

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