



GARRISON

CLOSEUP

The New Orleans DA

NY Post 4/23/67 P.35

JACK WARDLAW

New Orleans.

District Attorney Jim Garrison, the man who says he'll prove the death of President Kennedy was a conspiracy, is a politically ambitious man with a knack for having the last word in a controversy.

He is known variously as "New Orleans' answer to Perry Mason," (not for his courtroom work but for his startling resemblance to Raymond Burr) and "the Jolly Green Giant," (not for his disposition but for his size, 6-foot-6).

Garrison, 46, has a flair for publicity and is a hard-working administrator. Whether the current proceedings have put him out of his league only the next few months will tell.

Garrison has firmly and specifically promised there will be arrests and convictions resulting from a New Orleans-based plot to kill Kennedy.

If he comes through, he's a national figure. If he falls on his face, he's a laughing stock or worse.

Garrison was furious when a New Orleans newspaper, the States-Item, got wind of his investigation and broke the story. He reportedly had planned to reveal it in a national magazine.

* * *

The DA's political ambitions are not small. Two years ago he turned down offers to get into a Mayor's race he had a good chance of winning, and has shown little interest in the Statehouse, other than keeping his friend and political ally, John J. McKeithen, in the Governor's chair.

He has said privately that his sights are set on the U. S. Senate. And there were rumors in connection with the JFK inquiry that he hoped it would make him a possibility for the Vice Presidential nomination.

Garrison was an obscure assistant city attorney in 1961, when he jumped into the DA's race against a well-entrenched opponent.

Running as a reform candidate, he waged a hard-hitting campaign and overcame a first primary deficit to win.

Before he got his office chair warm, he was busy cleaning up Bourbon St., New Orleans' famous sin strip.

* * *

One of the DA's major fracas was with the eight judges of Criminal District Court. The financial setup of his office is such that he must operate with money from the fines and fees accumulated by the court. The judges began refusing to approve funds for Garrison's extensive vice investigations, and the DA hit the ceiling.

He charged that the action of the judges "raised interesting questions about racketeer influences." The judges charged him with criminal libel and he was convicted and fined \$1,000.

This \$1,000, if paid, would have gone into the same fines and fees fund that he uses to operate his office. Garrison told a friend at the time that if he had to pay up, he would commission a \$1,000 portrait of himself to hang in his office.

He didn't have to. The U. S. Supreme Court, in a landmark decision of the right of criticism, of a public official, reversed his conviction.

He used his new-found political leverage to unseat several of the judges when they came up for reelection. He won a second term in 1964.

Garrison is married and has two children. His political philosophy is hard to pin-point. He bobs up on the liberal side of some issues, the conservative side of others.

When the police tried to ban James Baldwin's "Another Country," Garrison refused to prosecute, damning censorship.

On the other hand, in the recent session of the Legislature, he backed a very tough bill providing a death penalty for armed robbery, which was opposed by the state branch of the American Civil Liberties Union. The bill was watered down to provide a 99-year term.

Negro leaders say Garrison has been fair and even-handed as a DA, and he ran well in the Negro precincts in his race for reelection.