

ASSASSINATION THEORISTS FLOCKED (101)

to Garrison's side, including not only people who had written books such as Mark Lane, Harold Weisberg, and others, but also entertainers like Mort Sahl. Garrison began making peculiar statements. At one time he said President Kennedy was shot by a man in a sewer manhole. Another time he blamed a fourteen-man Cuban guerrilla team. After talking with Professor Richard H. Popkin, he adopted the latter's celebrated "second Oswald" theory, which held that a man posing as Oswald did the killing. He steadily expanded his list of supporting characters. At first the conspirators were merely a band of sexual perverts and anti-Castro Cubans. To them he later added Minutemen, CIA agents, oil millionaires, Dallas policemen, munitions exporters, the Dallas establishment, assorted reactionaries, White Russians, and elements of "the invisible Nazi substructure." He kept on even after Russo admitted to the grand jury that he had perjured himself by falsely identifying Shaw as Bertrand. Every attack on Garrison gave him opportunities for fresh charges, thanks to equal-time rules and fair-coverage procedures. When Edward Jay Epstein published a hostile article on him in the *New Yorker* magazine, Garrison denounced it as part of a CIA plot to discredit his investigation. Garrison made many charges against the CIA, his clincher being that the government had not given him any material linking the CIA with the assassination. To ordinary men this might seem a point against his theory. But Garrison triumphantly celebrated it as evidence that the government was hiding the truth from him. It says something about the government's credibility that by then millions agreed.

Garrison was so strongly established as a gutsy loner bucking the power elite that his reputation even survived the trial itself. When Clay Shaw came to court Garrison had no evidence beyond what was already known, and Shaw was easily acquitted.* This shattering failure, and the ridicule poured on him for having boasted so much of so little, had small effect in New Orleans. He hardly campaigned at all, seemingly depressed by events, but was handily returned to office anyway. His populist image remained intact, though no one knew if it

* Garrison's malice knew no limits. After Shaw was acquitted Garrison charged him with perjury. Shaw took this persecution urbanely. Defense costs having taken his savings, he went back to work remarking, "The French have a proverb, 'the wounds that come from money are not fatal.' I hope it's true."

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