

Orleans Coroner Rules Ferrie Died Natural Death Despite Notes Found

By George Lardnea Jr.
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NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 28 — Orleans Parish Coroner Nicholas Chetta flatly and finally ruled today that David William Ferrie died a natural death despite several notes found in his apartment suggesting suicide and rejection of homosexual love.

"We know his intent. We know the pressure he was under," Dr. Chetta told reporters. But he stressed that exhaustive tests showed absolutely no sign of suicide or murder.

Ferrie, 49, was once suspected but subsequently cleared by Federal agents of involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy. Last week, after death from cerebral hemorrhage, he was again accused by District Attorney Jim Garrison of a key role in "events culminating in the assassination."

Chetta called Ferrie "a psychopath... a dangerous individual capable of almost anything."

Blood Pressure High

But the Coroner said Ferrie could not have killed himself, except perhaps by worrying himself to death under the "stress and strain" of Garrison's investigation. He said Ferrie was suffering from high blood pressure.

Before he died, Ferrie said he never knew Lee Harvey Oswald, who was found by the Warren commission to have been the assassin. But the New Orleans States-Item reported today that a local law enforcement officer says he found Ferrie and Oswald together here shortly before the assassination. At story in latter edition said that the officer denied that one of the men was Ferrie.

Garrison's office, it was reported, was told by the officer that he found two men

sitting together in a parked car near the New Orleans lake front in early morning on a fall day in 1963. One of the men reportedly identified himself as Oswald then.

A flight school instructor and a part-time private investigator, Ferrie left behind a bitter, typewritten note, undated and unsigned, condemning local law enforcement officials and the American court system. He had a record of arrests on homosexual charges.

The note labeled District Attorney Garrison and other law officials as "utterly unfit to hold office."

Note Found in Rooms

"Truth and falsehood, right and wrong, have no place in the courts," the note added. "All the State needs is 'evidence to support a conviction.' If this be justice, then justice be damned."

Also found in Ferrie's drab dooms was a note to a "Dear Al," again undated and signed with the typewritten parting, "Goodbye, Dave."

"When you receive this," the second note said, "I will be quite dead so no answer will be possible..."

"All I can say is that I offered you love and the best I could. All I got in return, in the end, was a kick in the teeth. Hence I die alone and unloved."

"You would not even straighten out Carol about me though this you started when you were going steady. I wonder what your last days and hours are going to be like. As you sow, so shall you reap."

Chetta said he did not know who "Al" was.

Alluded to Charges

In a four-hour interview with me shortly before he died, Ferrie alluded to the homosexual charges in his past by attempting to suggest

there was nothing improper in his relationship with young men.

He said he made "a hobby" of taking "deserving youngsters from broken homes" and trying to give them a break in life.

Dr. Chetta said the notes were typed on a Royal found in Ferrie's rooms. He said he recognized the conflict with his finding of natural death and consequently made his tests as painstaking as he could.

The coroner said he has already received several "crank letters" challenging his findings.

The only drug turned up in toxicological tests, however, was some caffeine, Dr. Chetta said. This presumably came from the cup of coffee Ferrie had in the interview with me before his death. He died about 4 a.m. Wednesday, "give or take a couple of hours," Dr. Chetta said. I left Ferrie's flat round 4 a.m.

It has been suggested that Ferrie might have written the "suicide notes" in an earlier mood of depression when he actually intended to kill himself.

Appeared a Saver

The coroner said Ferrie was "definitely manic... He had paranoid tendencies, too." He was also apparently a compulsive "saver," of papers, letters, pictures and other memorabilia. Police also found several guns in his apartment, including even an ancient Springfield muzzle-loader.

Dr. Chetta ruled out the possibility that a karate chop might have produced the ruptured blood vessel that caused Ferrie's death. He said it would have left some slight sign on his skin and there was none.

Ferrie, Oswald Link Reported in Louisiana

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison has been given information that Lee Harvey Oswald and David W. Ferrie were picked up together by police in New Orleans in 1963, the States-Item reported today.

Before he was found dead last Wednesday, Ferrie had insisted he did not know Oswald, named by the Warren Commission as the man who killed President John F. Kennedy Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

Ferrie, a former airlines pilot, has been called "one of the most important men in history" by Garrison, who launched his own investigation of the assassination last October and now claims to have "solved" it.

Garrison's investigators, the newspaper said, were told by a New Orleans law officer that he was making a routine check near Lake Pontchartrain early one morning in the fall of 1963 when he found two men sitting in a parked car.

One of the men identified himself as Oswald, the officer said.

The officer was not clear about how the other man identified himself, but he has since positively identified Ferrie as the man he saw in the car, the paper said.

Not Arrested

The officer took the pair to headquarters, the newspaper said, where his superior declined to arrest them on the grounds there was insufficient evidence they were guilty of any wrongdoing.

After the Kennedy assassination, the officer said, he recognized Oswald's face and name from pictures. He said he took no action because it was widely known that Oswald had lived in New Orleans.

Last week, when Ferrie's name was prominently linked to the Garrison probe, the officer gave the district attorney his information, the States-Item said.

Federal investigators are known to have found no evidence linking Ferrie with Oswald or any conspiracy to kill Kennedy.

A typewritten note found in Ferrie's apartment after his death contained a bitter indictment of law enforcement officers, courts and American justice in general.

The first paragraph of the note, released on the day Ferrie died, referred to death as a "sweet prospect." Garrison maintains that Ferrie committed suicide, although Coroner Nicholas Chetta has ruled death resulted from natural causes—a ruptured artery in the brain.

Tests revealed that the note was typed on a typewriter found in Ferrie's cluttered apartment.

Never Convicted

It contains numerous references to the writer's irritation at police methods.

Ferrie apparently had never been convicted of any crime. He lost his job as an airline pilot in 1961 after being arrested on a morals charge in suburban Jefferson Parish (county), but the case never went to trial. No charges were known to be pending against him at the time of his death.

Ferrie was interrogated by both local and federal authorities after the assassination. He had left for Texas on the day of the slaying and said later he and two friends visited Houston and Galveston before returning to Louisiana.

JFK PLOT PROBE

Another Mixup In New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 28

Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison has been given information that Lee Harvey Oswald and a man wanted for questioning in the Kennedy assassination investigation were picked up together by police here in 1963, the States-Item reported today.

The States-Item first reported that Oswald's companion was David W. Ferrie, identified by Garrison as a central figure in his investigation. But the newspaper said later the second man was not Ferrie.

Before he was found dead last Wednesday, Ferrie had insisted he did not know Oswald, named by the Warren Commission as the man who killed President John F. Kennedy in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

The States-Item reported that Garrison's investigators were told by a New Orleans law officer that he found the two men sitting in a parked car near Lake Pontchartrain early on morning in the fall of 1963.

One of the men identified himself as Oswald, the officer said. The States-Item reported in its first edition that the officer — after seeing Ferrie's body — said Ferrie positively was the second man. Later the newspaper said the second man was not Ferrie, but apparently was connected with another aspect of the Garrison probe.

The officer took the pair to headquarters, the newspaper said, where his superior declined to arrest them on the grounds there was insufficient evidence they were guilty of any wrongdoing.

After the Kennedy assassination, the officer said, he re-

cognized Oswald's face, and name from the pictures. He said he took no action because it was widely known that Oswald had lived in New Orleans.

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In announcing today his final verdict in the Ferrie death, Chetta said: "This man died a natural death. There is no indication of violence of any kind—certainly not murder or suicide." Chetta said findings were negative for alcohol, arsenic, cyanides, barbiturates, depressants and central nervous system stimulants.

Tests revealed the note was typed on a typewriter found

in Ferrie's cluttered apartment.

It contains numerous references to the writer's irritation at police methods. "Daily we are propagandized more and more about a rising crime rate. But how do we know it is true? We don't, for we Americans have little or no access to the truth . . . today I went to the police headquarters to see these 'public records' of this rising crime rate and nearly wound up in jail for my trouble. I was searched, interrogated, verbally abused, had my record checked, and finally threatened. Needless to say, I did not see the 'public records'."

" . . . These judges of today deny defendants due process of law . . . when I was a boy my father preached that in the 'American Way of Life' you are innocent till proven guilty. No greater lie has been told."

Ferrie apparently had never been convicted of any crime. He lost his job as an airline pilot in 1961 after being arrested on a morals charge in suburban Jefferson Parish (county), but the case never went to trial. No charges were known to be pending against him at the time of his death.

Ferrie was interrogated by both local and federal authorities following the assassination. He had left for Texas on the day of the slaying, and said later he and two friends visited Houston and Galveston before returning to Louisiana.

The coroner gave newsmen today a list of the objects taken from Ferrie's apartment after his death. They included a blue 100-pound practice aerial bomb, a Springfield muzzle loading rifle, a 22 calibre Remington rifle, a single shot 22 calibre rifle with an altered stock, 20 gauge shotgun shells, two Army Signal Corps field telephones, a bayonet, a flare gun, a radio transmitting tuner unit, a radio receiver tuner unit, 32 calibre empty brass casings, 22 calibre blanks, several cameras and three rolls of undeveloped film.

Dr. Chetta revealed that another note was found in Ferrie's apartment. Addressed to "Al," it said in part: "When you receive this I will be quite dead, so no answer will be possible." The remainder of the note was phrased in a similar tone of depression, and it concluded: "Hence, I die alone and unloved. As you sow, so shall you reap. Goodbye. Dave."

A third typewritten note, addressed to "Dear Perm," dealt with medical subjects relating to Ferrie's ailments, which included high blood pressure.

A fourth note, which bore the name "Tom Clark," said: "I want to introduce myself. My name is Tom Clark. Dave has been very sick for the last two months and I am nursing him at home. He has a form of encephalitis."

Dr. Chetta told newsmen, however, that Ferrie was not suffering from encephalitis at the time of his death.

The coroner termed Ferrie "definitely a psychopath."