

DAVID FERRIE'S WEB OF INTRIGUE

By John S Craig

Lee Harvey Oswald has been described by the Warren Commission, and supporters of the Commission's findings, as a loner who had inadequate social skills and a miserable marriage. In reality, however, he had numerous relationships with organizations and individuals linked with the activities of pro-communists, anti-communists, Cuban exiles, right-wing groups and the Mafia. One of the most intriguing of these relationships was with the brilliant misfit David William Ferrie of New Orleans. This article presents an overview of research concerning Ferrie that has been reported over the years by serious researchers and official government documents, as well as an investigation of less credible sources that have helped to spin the legend of Ferrie.

Introduction

Both before and after the assassination, Ferrie's life is full of mystery, strange activity and puzzling behavior. Cuban exiles christened him the "master of intrigue." Jim Garrison, New Orleans DA during the 'sixties, described him as a key figure in the assassination of the President and "one of history's most important individuals." Robert Morrow, a CIA contract employee from 1959 to 1964, claims that he worked with Ferrie on many CIA covert operations and believes that Ferrie was the "mastermind" behind the assassination. An ex-roommate of Ferrie, Raymond Broshears, declared that Ferrie confided details to him concerning Ferrie's role in the assassination. A former Ferrie associate, Jack Martin, contended that Ferrie was part of a plot to kill the President, only to withdraw his assertions and say that his accusations were figments of his imagination. The

Secret Service had an almost immediate interest in Ferrie following the assassination. Ferrie's activities and enigmatic behaviour became a subject of serious concern for the 1978 House Select Committee's investigation of the assassination, citing that "several parallels in the lives of the two (Oswald and Ferrie) emerged: complex personality and political beliefs; difficulty in achieving normal social adjustment; and a pattern of visiting the same locality at the same time, and engaging in similar activities." (1)

Who was David Ferrie?

At the time of the assassination, David Ferrie was a 45-year-old New Orleans resident. Since the assassination, researchers and investigators have been intensely interested in his association with some of the most notorious names said to be linked to the assassination: Lee Harvey Oswald,

Clay Shaw, Guy Banister, Jack Ruby, Sergio Arcacha Smith and Carlos Marcello.

Ferrie possessed assorted talents and eccentricities. He was a pilot who learned how to fly in Cleveland at Sky Tech Inc. from 1942-45. At one time he was a senior pilot with Eastern Airlines until he was fired for homosexual activity on the job. He was also a hypnotist, an accomplished pianist, a serious researcher into the origins of cancer, an amateur psychologist and the victim of a strange disease, alopecia, which made his body void of hair.

He listed his name in the telephone directory as Dr Ferrie by right of a doctorate degree in psychology from an unaccredited school, Phoenix University of Bari, Italy. Anti-Castro, anti-Kennedy and anti-Communist, Ferrie was also a bishop of the Orthodox Old Catholic Church of North America.

His odd lifestyle was embellished by an equally bizarre appearance featuring a red toupee and false eyebrows. He often made disparaging remarks concerning the intelligence of women. Investigator and author Harrison Livingstone met Ferrie and remembered him as "an intense and sinister, cynical, disgusting, disheveled individual who was excited at the prospect of preying upon the vulnerable, the helpless and the innocent."

Ferrie had not always been anti-Castro. In the 'fifties he flew guns to Castro's rebel forces as they fought Batista's army in the Sierra Maestra. In August 1959 he was put under surveillance by Miami customs agents who believed that he was involved in gun smuggling. (2) After a 26-hour surveillance and background investigation, Customs agents informed FAA officials that Ferrie was "not involved in any nefarious activities of wrongdoing." In 1961 he flew bombing missions over Cuba and sometimes made daring landings to retrieve anti-Castro resistance fighters. When Castro announced his intention to become a Communist and aligned his political philosophy with Khrushchev's Soviet Union, Ferrie turned against him.

Communism in Cuba, and Kennedy's inability to do anything about it, drove Ferrie to become vociferous in his speech against the President. He turned against Kennedy during the Bay of Pigs debacle. In a July 1961 speech before the New Orleans chapter of the Military Order of World Wars, the organization put a stop to Ferrie's remarks when he became too critical of Kennedy. (3)

At this time, Ferrie became a member of the anti-Castro Cuban Revolutionary Front, an organization financed by New Orleans Mafia boss Carlos "The Little Man" Marcello and organized by Sergio Arcacha Smith, head of the Cuban Revolutionary Front delegation in New Orleans. By late April 1961 the Cuban Revolutionary Front became the

Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC). An FBI report in April 1961 indicated that Marcello contributed funds to Smith's anti-Castro organization in exchange for concessions in Cuba after Castro's overthrow. The House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) stated that based on the evidence available to it, anti-Castro Cuban groups were not involved in the assassination but the evidence did not "preclude the possibility that individual members may have been involved." (4) The HSCA investigated the most violent and frustrated anti-Castro groups and their leaders from among more than 100 Cuban exile organizations in existence in November 1963. (5)

Sergio Arcacha Smith

Ferrie worked with Sergio Arcacha Smith in counter-revolutionary activities. Ferrie built two miniature submarines which he planned to use in an attack on Havana Harbor. (6) Ferrie was questioned by the FBI on August 22, 1961 concerning the submarines and he stated that he was "working with, and assisting, the Cuban

"Ferrie built two miniature submarines which he planned to use in an attack on Havana Harbor".

Revolutionary Front, which is under the leadership of Sergio Arcacha Smith, 207 Balter Building, New Orleans, Louisiana, off and on since November 1960. (7)

Smith requested Eastern Airlines to give Ferrie a leave without pay for full-time work for the CRC. Although the request was denied, Ferrie's vacation in April 1961 coincided with the Bay of Pigs invasion. (8) The HSCA was unable to find whether Ferrie had any role in the invasion.

An Eastern Airlines steward, John Harris, told the FBI that during August 1961 he had seen hand grenades in the trunk of Ferrie's car. Later that same day, Ferrie brought two of the hand grenades to Harris' apartment. Harris did not know where Ferrie had

obtained the grenades or why he had them. (9)

Ferrie became involved with Smith, Gordon Novel and Layton Martens in a raid on a munitions dump in Houma, Louisiana. (10) The HSCA discovered that in the summer of 1963, Novel, Martens, Ferrie and others associated with New Orleans private investigator Guy Banister, robbed the munitions bunker owned by the Schlumberger Company of Houma, Louisiana. The men took the stolen munitions to Banister's 544 Camp Street office. Novel claimed that the raid was not an illegal act but arranged by the CIA in Operation Mongoose, an official operation against Cuba, developed by the National Security Council with the blessing of JFK in November 1961. Novel lied to the FBI about the CIA's involvement in the Houma theft because he felt he was expected to lie about it. In a suit against *Playboy*, for having published Jim Garrison's claim that Novel was with the CIA, Novel testified that Guy Banister and Sergio Arancha Smith worked under CIA operative David Atlee Phillips. In the same testimony, Novel admitted that he had known Clay Shaw since 1959.

HSCA investigator Gaeton Fonzi looked into a possible link between David Atlee Phillips and Lee Harvey

Oswald. It is Fonzi's belief that Phillips and another CIA man, Maurice Bishop, are the same person. An ex-accountant, Antonio Veciana, worked as a Cuban freedom fighter with the anti-Castro Cuban exile group Alpha 66, and was involved with CIA operations through Maurice Bishop. Veciana told Fonzi that he had seen Bishop talking with Oswald (there was no doubt it was him according to Veciana) in the lobby of a Dallas office building in late August or early September 1963. Although Oswald was residing in Louisiana during late August and early September, Fonzi believes that there are definite periods when Oswald's whereabouts are unknown, specifically September 6th through the 9th, 1963.

Rose Cheramie

During the night of November 20, 1963, Rose Cheramie (aka Melba Christine Marcades) was either pushed from a car or abandoned by two men on Highway 190, outside Eunice, Louisiana. During her stay in the East Louisiana State hospital, she had told Dr. Victor Weiss and another attending doctor that her two companions had been discussing a plot to kill the President in Dallas. She said that the two men looked Italian and that the "underworld" was involved in the plot. Her story was later confirmed by Lieutenant Francis Frugé of the Louisiana State Police.

Frugé testified to the 1978 HSCA that during a follow-up enquiry, he checked with Mac Manual, owner of the Silver Slipper Lounge, a brothel where Cheramie had been with her two companions. Manual told author Anthony Summers that he examined photographs shown to him by Frugé and had picked out Sergio Arcacha Smith and a Cuban exile named Osanto as the men who had accompanied Cheramie. The HSCA confirmed that Arcacha Smith was a friend of David Ferrie and supposedly had contacts with Carlos Marcello. Frugé confirmed to Garrison that Cheramie had indeed worked as a dancer for Jack Ruby, information which she had divulged to him during an interview. Cheramie confirmed Manual's identification of Osanto and Smith when she told Frugé at the hospital that one of her travelling companions had been called Osanto and the other Sergio Arcacha Smith.

Frugé contacted the Dallas police after the killing of Oswald but they were uninterested in his story. Cheramie died in 1965 in an auto accident. Her past was checkered with crime: 28 offenses, and in 1947 she had been declared criminally insane. She also told investigators that she was on a drug run from Louisiana to Houston for Jack Ruby and that Oswald and Ruby knew one another.

Guy Banister

In March 1962 Ferrie began work as a private investigator for G. Wray Gill,

Marcello's New Orleans attorney. This arrangement continued through 1963. Eventually Ferrie worked extensively for Marcello and Guy Banister, an ex-FBI agent, anti-Communist, who kept an office at 544 Camp Street (also known as 531 Lafayette) in New Orleans, a location known as a hot-bed of sinister activities surrounding right-wing and anti-Castro organizations. It has been suggested by authors Michael Canfield and Alan J. Weberman that CIA agent E. Howard Hunt helped Sergio Arcacha Smith link up with Banister at 544 Camp Street. (11)

Banister enjoyed a colorful professional past that included involvement in the 1934 police killing of America's Public Enemy Number One John Dillinger plus work with Naval Intelligence. Guy Banister conducted background investigations of CRC members for Smith. Mercenary Gerry Patrick Hemming identified Banister as the man who, in September 1962, offered him a contract to assassinate JFK. (12) Banister died of a heart attack on the summer of 1964. His files were scattered to various individuals. His widow sold some of the files to the Louisiana State Police. The HSCA's review of these files found Oswald's name associated with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee but they found no documentary evidence that Banister had a file devoted solely to Oswald. Guy's brother Ross, a Louisiana State policeman, said that Guy "had mentioned seeing Oswald hand out Fair Play for Cuba literature on one occasion." Ross Banister theorized that Oswald had stamped the 544 Camp Street address on his literature to embarrass Guy. (13)

Ferrie worked with Banister at the same time he was employed by Gill. It was at 544 Camp Street that Lee Harvey Oswald may have kept company with Banister and Ferrie. The three men all frequented the Mancuso Restaurant on the first floor of 544 Camp Street. (14) A part-time private investigator, Daniel L. Lewis, told Garrison that he was drinking coffee with Banister's secretary, Delphine Roberts, when Carlos Quiroga, a Cuban exile involved in the Cuban Revolutionary Front, walked

into the restaurant with a man he introduced as Leon Oswald. A few days later Lewis said he entered Banister's office and found a meeting in progress involving Banister, Ferrie, Quiroga, Leon Oswald and another person. (15) Although the owner of 544 Camp Street, Sam Newman, told the HSCA that he had not rented office space to Oswald, (16) former Banister undercover worker Dan Campbell told Jim DiEugenio in a 1994 interview that Oswald was assigned an office at 544 Camp Street in the summer of 1963. (17)

Guy Banister's secretary, Delphine Roberts, told author Anthony Summers that at least once, Oswald and Ferrie went together to a Cuban exile training camp near New Orleans for rifle practice. According to Roberts, Banister told her directly that Oswald was working with their office. This information was obtained by Summers only when he paid her for an interview related to a television documentary. Roberts told Gerald Posner that she did not tell Summers "all the truth." When Posner interviewed Roberts and her daughter concerning Oswald and his associations at 544 Camp Street, he became aware of a woman who spewed hatred for the U.N., blacks, and Jesse Jackson and believed that every Japanese person should have been wiped off the face of the Earth. She also claimed that she was the last person to read the sacred scrolls that God had written and placed in the Ark of the Covenant. Posner also interviewed Roberts' daughter who declared that Oswald did not have an office at 544 Camp Street, but he lived in an apartment there for two or three months, a fact that is in direct contrast to Marina Oswald's claim that Oswald was always at home at night. The daughter also claimed that she met Marguerite Oswald in 1963, although Mrs. Oswald was living in Texas at the time.

Lake Pontchartrain

In February 1967, a New Orleans policeman claimed that he had seen Oswald and Ferrie together in a car near the mysterious training grounds of Lake Pontchartrain early one

morning in the fall of 1963. This would have to have been the early fall since Oswald spent most of the fall of 1963 in Dallas. One of the men identified himself as Oswald but the police officer was not clear on how the other man identified himself. Since then he has identified the other man as David Ferrie. Although the officer took the men to police headquarters, they were released due to the lack of evidence of any wrongdoing (18)

Cuba intelligence chief General Fabian Escalante told authoress Claudia Furiati that "In New Orleans, in April and May 1963, Oswald's primary activity in the Banister unit was as Dave Ferrie's assistant in the traffic of weapons for Pontchartrain. Banister would also realize that Oswald was the perfect person to set up a pro-Castro front." (19)

If Banister had some kind of "business" relations with Oswald or Ferrie, the purpose of a relationship begs some questions: Why is an anti-Castro ex-FBI agent working directly with (1, Oswald) a Soviet defector who has shown allegiance to pro-Castro activities, and (2, Ferrie) a rabid, anti-Castro, self-styled investigator who is linked with a major Mafia figure (Marcello)? Were Oswald's activities designed to create a specific intelligence persona, or "legend"? Peter Dale Scott has developed a theory concerning the manipulation of not only Oswald by people like Banister, but Ferrie as well. Scott contends that Jack Martin's false accusations against Ferrie were orchestrated by Banister to set up Ferrie's legend. "Ferrie was probably in the same position as Oswald; an employee of a private investigator, who at some point was hired, probably unwittingly, to create a record or 'legend' falsely linking himself to the assassination." (20)

Civil Air Patrol

Although Ferrie officially denied knowing Oswald, it is widely believed that they met one another long before their alleged liaison at 544 Camp Street, New Orleans. In 1955, both Ferrie and Oswald were members of the Louisiana Civil Air Patrol. Ferrie

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was asked to leave the air patrol just before Oswald joined but he apparently remained close to the members of the organization. Although Ferrie denied any relationship with Oswald, Edward Voebel, a former Oswald schoolmate claimed that he, Oswald and Ferrie all worked in the Civil Air Patrol. Voebel told the Secret Service that "when he joined the CAP, Captain Dave Farrie (*sic*), a former pilot or co-pilot for Delta or Eastern Airlines, was the commander." (21) Voebel also claimed, with no additional substantiation, that he spotted Ferrie on television in a Dallas crowd only hours after the assassination in Dallas. (22)

Several other members of the Civil Air Patrol said that Ferrie and Oswald were in the organization at the same time. A photograph taken by John Ciravolo in the summer of 1955 at a Civil Air Patrol picnic shows Ferrie and Oswald together. (23) Roy McCoy, a former member of the same CAP, called the FBI on November 27, 1963 and told agents about a phone call his wife had received from Ferrie earlier that day. Ferrie was "seeking information about Oswald and photographs of Oswald to show that he was not acquainted with Oswald." (24) Another CAP member, Jerry Paradis, told the HSCA that "Oswald and Ferrie were in the unit together. I know they were because I was there. I specifically remember Oswald. I can remember him clearly, and Ferrie was heading the unit then. I'm not saying they *may* have been there together, it is a *certainty*."

On the day that Oswald handed out pro-Castro leaflets in New Orleans bearing the 544 Camp Street address, Ferrie was leading an anti-Castro demonstration a few blocks away.

Oswald joined the Civil Air Patrol in 1954. In an interview with *Look* magazine in 1967, Oswald's brother

Robert told a reporter, "According to Lee's own statement, 1954 was the year when he first became interested in communism ... I can't help wondering whether it might have been Ferrie who introduced Lee to Communist ideas. I realize that I have nothing solid on which to base such a speculation, except the timing." Recently the existence of a second photograph showing Ferrie and Oswald engaged in conversation has been mentioned by researcher Sheldon Inkol. (25) Author Norman Mailer questions what Oswald did during his leave from Keesler Air Force Base during his first year in the US Marine Corps. Only two hours from New Orleans by bus, Oswald returned to New Orleans every weekend on pass. His relatives did not see him during these weekends. Could he have been spending time with people like David Ferrie? (26)

On September 15, 1960, Arthur W. Koon, Federal Aeronautics Administration Tower, Moisant Airport, told the FBI that "a former secretary in his office, a Mrs. John F. Barrett of Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, had told him that her 14-year-old son had been influenced to join an organization called 'Omnipotent.' She stated that he had been influenced by a 19 or 20-year-old boy whose name was unknown to her. Members of that organization had to swear allegiance and obedience to the 19 or 20-year-old boy and that the purpose of this organization was to train people concerning what they should do in the event of an all-out attack against the United States. A 'Dr. Ferrie' was behind this organization." (27)

Jack Martin

Ferrie's difficulties with the authorities concerning Kennedy's murder started with an FBI interview between agent Jerry P. Stein and New Orleans private investigator Jack S. Martin. on

November 25, 1963. Martin told the FBI that David Ferrie had a relationship with the accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. This certainly must have been unwanted news to the FBI; just the day before, the only suspect in the case had been murdered and now there were others to investigate. For the FBI, Martin's claims were equally disturbing and outrageous: Ferrie had instructed Oswald in the use of a rifle; he may have hypnotized Oswald to shoot the President; he had seen rifles like the one Oswald supposedly used to kill the President in his (Ferrie's) apartment, and Ferrie was in Texas on the day of the shooting, acting as Oswald's getaway pilot. Martin's claim that Ferrie was in Texas was found to be false. Ferrie's Stinson Voyager airplane was found to be inoperable. An FAA document showed either that Martin believed that Ferrie's airplane was airworthy as of July 1963, or that Ferrie had access to a Stinson. Martin later retracted his allegations concerning Ferrie in a statement to the Secret Service. (28)

In 1978 Martin told the HSCA that on the afternoon of November 22, 1963 he was having drinks with Guy Banister when their discussion began to revolve around long-distance phone calls and politics. The two returned to Banister's infamous 544 Camp Street office where they came to blows over

unwelcome news. He told Ferrie's friend Layton Martens that Oswald's wallet had been found to contain a library card with Ferrie's name on it. Oswald's former New Orleans landlady, Mrs. Jessie Garner, was paid a visit by a visibly agitated Ferrie, who wondered if she knew anything about the card. Ferrie then rushed to an ex-neighbor of Oswald and again asked for information about the card but was again frustrated from finding an answer. (29) Mrs. Doris Eames, another neighbor of Oswald, told New Orleans District Attorney investigators in 1968 that Ferrie had also come to her house to enquire about the library card. If Ferrie never had any contact with Oswald, then why was he so concerned, and unless the media quickly published or broadcast Oswald's exact New Orleans address, how would he have known where Oswald had lived? Immediately after searching for information about his library card and finding none, Ferrie made a telephone call to Houston to reserve a room at the Alamotel, a motel owned by Carlos Marcello.

The Trip to Houston

When asked why he took the trip to Houston, Ferrie told federal authorities that he and two male companions drove through the night of November 21/22, 1963, 350 miles, through a

this trip show two calls to radio stations WSHO and WDSH in New Orleans and a collect call to the Town and Country Motel, Marcello's New Orleans headquarters. (31) Was this visit to Houston the first leg of a trip to Dallas designed to eliminate Oswald through Marcello's orders, or was Ferrie to act as a getaway pilot? Garrison felt the ice rink was a message center for Ferrie, though who Ferrie called, and his objective at the ice rink have never been revealed.

While Ferrie was in Houston, law officers and some of Garrison's investigators broke into his home and confiscated books, photographs and other material including a library on hypnotism, abstracts on post-hypnotic suggestion, three U.S. passports (stamped but with no pictures or descriptions) and weapons. (32)

An FBI teletype from the New Orleans office to FBI headquarters informed Director Hoover that Carlos Marcello's attorney G. Wray Gill had notified Ferrie about the library card. An inventory of Oswald's personal property by the Dallas P.D. shows no record of a library card. On the evening of November 23, 1963 Ferrie drove to Galveston, stayed the night and returned to New Orleans the next day. There is no record explaining why Ferrie went to Galveston. Noel Twyman declares that there may be a possible connection with Ferrie and Ruby through Ferrie's Galveston trip after the ice skating rink episode. He writes that Ferrie was in Galveston at the same time that Ruby called his friend Breck Wall at Thomas McKenna's house (11.44pm, November 23). Twyman does not elaborate on why Wall and McKenna would be involved, but he sets forth a theory that Ferrie could have passed the word from Marcello through Wall that Ruby was to eliminate Oswald. (33)

There is the possibility that the card never existed and was used to frame and provoke Ferrie. Framing Ferrie would implicate Marcello, an act that would only benefit possible conspirators. (34) The FBI questioned Gill about how he learned that Ferrie's library card had been found in Oswald's wallet but Gill replied that

He also claimed the trip was designed to gather information on how to run a skating rink.

Martin's off-hand remark, "What are you going to do. kill me like you all did Kennedy?" Banister became furious and beat Martin with a pistol. Martin called the New Orleans police but eventually refused to press charges. This incident may have been the impetus for the interview with the FBI on November 25th.

Ferrie's Library Card

At 1 p.m. on November 24, 1963, Marcello attorney C. Wray Gill visited Ferrie's apartment with some

fierce thunderstorm to go goose-hunting in Texas. The purpose of the trip was "rest and relaxation." (30) He also claimed the trip was designed to gather information on how to run a skating rink, a business he wished to open in New Orleans. On the 23rd of November Ferrie visited Houston's Winterland Skating Rink, which was managed by Chuck Rolland. Rolland later told authorities that he never spoke to Ferrie about the skating rink business. All Ferrie did, said Rolland, was make and receive telephone calls for hours at a pay phone. Records from the motels Ferrie used during

he could not recall who told him the "rumor." The FBI dropped the matter. (35) In another version, Gill said that he spoke to a man named Hardy Davis, who in turn was told about the library card by Jack Martin. Martin told the FBI that the library card story came from "a television program which mentioned the possibility that David Ferrie was associated with Lee Harvey Oswald ... that Oswald had used or carried Ferrie's library card." However, there is no record of any New Orleans television stations reporting anything about Ferrie's library card. (36) The entire library card story seems to be another false accusation concerning Ferrie that can be traced to Jack Martin. Why was Martin accusing Ferrie? I have previously mentioned Banister's possible motives to create a suspicious legend for Ferrie, but more likely the reasons rest with the fact that Ferrie had physically thrown Martin out of Gill's office in May 1963, an act that may have created a grudge against Ferrie. A Secret Service report concluded that "information furnished by Jack S. Martin to the effect that David William Ferrie associated with Lee Harvey Oswald at New Orleans and trained Oswald in the use of a rifle" was "without foundation." (37) The report further stated that Martin had the appearance of an alcoholic and had a reputation of furnishing incorrect information to law enforcement officers. Additionally, Martin told the FBI that his information about Ferrie and Oswald was "a figment of his imagination and that he had made up the story after reading the newspapers and watching television." (38)

Although the Secret Service and FBI refused to investigate Ferrie any further, the New Orleans District Attorney's Office continued to follow Ferrie and secretly photograph and film his apartment in December of 1963.

Perry Russo

In September 1963, Perry Raymond Russo, a New Orleans insurance agent, attended a party at David Ferrie's apartment. In an interview with Andrew Sciambra in February

1967, Russo detailed how, after the party broke up, a group of anti-Castro Cubans began talking of the possibilities of assassinating Fidel Castro. Ferrie introduced Russo to a tall, distinguished-looking, white-haired man named Clem Bertrand, a name Garrison thought was an alias of Clay Shaw. Whether Russo really encountered Shaw became the subject of acute controversy during the Garrison trial of Clay Shaw. Ferrie also introduced Russo to a bearded man named Leon, whom Ferrie said was a real nut about guns. The conversation eventually drifted on to the subject of Kennedy's inability to control the communists in Cuba. Ferrie dramatically took the floor and discussed the possibility of killing Castro and illustrated his points by showing his audience a map of Cuba, where the assassination team could land, and the routes to and from Havana.

Russo claimed that he and Ferrie became friends and had several meetings. They were acquainted from 1962 to 1965. Russo and Ferrie met through a mutual friend, Al Landry. According to Russo, Landry's mother asked Russo to try to break the relationship between her son and Ferrie. Landry was supposedly the subject of hypnotic trances induced by Ferrie. Russo encouraged Landry to break off their relationship. Ferrie turned to Russo and told him that either he or one of his men would kill Russo for what he had done to Ferrie and Landry. (39)

Russo said that at one time Ferrie spoke of killing Kennedy and blaming it on Castro. This would give anti-Castro activists an excuse to invade Cuba. An assassination followed by an invasion would rid Ferrie of two of his enemies, Castro and Kennedy, and open Cuba to free enterprise. He believed that Kennedy could be killed by a triangulation of rifle fire. Ferrie elaborated on his plan of triangulation saying that two shooters would create diversionary shots and the third

shooter would make the kill. (40) There would be one shooter who would take the blame. In his 1967 *Playboy* interview, Jim Garrison discussed finding a book on firearms characteristics in Ferrie's apartment. The margins were filled with notations and the most heavily annotated section was one that described the direction and distance a cartridge travels from a rifle after ejection.

Russo also spoke of Ferrie's weird weekly black masses where he wore a black toga, worshipped with a chalice of animal blood and called himself a priest of the American Eastern Catholic Orthodox Church. Russo additionally claimed that Ferrie tried to hypnotize him.

Questions about Russo's testimony were immediate. *Saturday Evening Post* author James Phelan reported that he had seen the original 3500 word memo, written by Andrew Sciambra, a Garrison aide. Sciambra interviewed Russo on 25 February, 1967, three days after Ferrie died, but Phelan said that the original report had no mention of any assassination plot, the party at Ferrie's apartment or any identification of Shaw or Oswald. It was two days later, when Russo was put under the influence of sodium pentothal, the truth serum, at New Orleans' Mercy Hospital, that any indication of the plot, the party or of seeing Shaw or Oswald was given. (41) Garrison had Russo placed under hypnosis three times to help him to "refresh" his memory. Niles Peterson was one of two friends that Russo claimed had attended the party. Peterson was at the Ferrie party but saw no one who resembled Shaw or Oswald. It has never been entirely clear why Russo suddenly spoke up about Ferrie and Shaw after Ferrie's death and years after the death of Kennedy.

In the February 27, 1967 memo from Sciambra to Garrison (re: Interview with Perry Russo), Sciambra wrote that in the summer of 1963 "Ferrie became obsessed with the idea that an

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assassination could be carried out in the USA...he was the kind of person who could successfully plan an assassination...asked him [Russo] 'How many times do you remember seeing Eisenhower riding in an open top automobile exposed to everyone without any protection whatsoever?' He was the key to the availability of exit as he could jump into any plane under the sun and fly it out of the country to a place that would not extradite, such as Cuba or Brazil." Russo also recognized a picture of Sergio Arcacha Smith when Sciambra showed it to him; Russo's brother Steve also recognized Smith as being associated with Ferrie.

When Russo was shown a picture of Clay Shaw, he said that he had seen the man twice; once at Ferrie's service station and another time when JFK spoke at the Nashville Street Wharf. Later, Russo, upon reviewing the memo with James Phelan, said he "should have said three times, counting the party." When shown a photograph of Oswald,

Russo said it was "the person Ferrie had introduced to him as his roommate. He [Russo] said that the only thing that did not make him stand up and say that he was sure beyond a shadow of a doubt is the fact that the roommate was always so cruddy and had a bushy beard ... the name Leon really rings a bell."

The March 15, 1967 issue of the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate* reviewed a television interview with Russo. Russo said that "Ferrie never mentioned Oswald's name." Marina Oswald testified at the Shaw trial that Oswald never wore a beard and he never mentioned the names of Shaw or Ferrie. She did admit that Oswald had kept her in the dark when it came to what her husband did and who his friends were.

James Phelan met Perry Russo after he published his critical review of the Garrison case in the *Saturday Evening*

Post. To Phelan's shock, Russo told him that he would like to see Shaw "so I'd be sure." After positively identifying Shaw in a court of law as the man who sat in Ferrie's apartment talking about killing the President, Russo wanted to "just sit in a room with him" without lawyers. Phelan tried to set up a meeting but Russo backed off, fearing possible perjury charges from Garrison. Five days later Russo told Phelan that the real reason he did not want to meet with Shaw was "that I'd know he's not the guy and then all I could do is go on the run".

Phelan was stunned by Russo's comments, but no more than by what Garrison said concerning Russo's associations with Shaw, Oswald and Ferrie. Just days before NBC would broadcast a critical program concerning the Garrison investigation, Garrison discussed a question that Phelan had posed to him previously; why had supposed criminal masterminds like Ferrie and Shaw

present, walk into the room and then walk out and state on television that he had never known Shaw, that Oswald was never at Ferrie's apartment and that he never knew of any plot to kill JFK. Russo told an interviewer for the 1992 John Barbour video *The Garrison Tapes* that "I didn't go to Biloxi because what Walter Sheridan was asking me to do was an absolute lie. Shaw was there [in Ferrie's apartment], Ferrie was there, Oswald was there." (43) Barbour's video also produced a shadowy, black-and-white photograph of poor quality that surfaced "a few years after the Shaw trial" that supposedly shows Ferrie, Oswald and Shaw together.

Clay Shaw

During his testimony at his trial in New Orleans, Clay Shaw categorically denied ever knowing or meeting Lee Harvey Oswald. He did admit knowing Ferrie's roommate Layton Martens but denied knowing that Martens was associated with David Ferrie.

Nicholas and Matilda Tadin testified to the contrary at Shaw's trial. The Tadins knew Ferrie as

a flight instructor for their teenage son. In the summer of 1964 they saw Ferrie and Shaw exit together from a hangar at Lakefront Airport in New Orleans. Nicholas Tadin quoted Ferrie as saying that Shaw was a friend of his and that he was in charge of the International Trade Mart. The Tadins' testimony was questioned by Shaw's attorney but was never found to be false.

A March 1967 FBI report cited Jim Garrison's investigation that "a group of Cuban refugees training near Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, presumably during the period Oswald resided in New Orleans ... these Cubans reportedly had been 'left in the lurch' and had become angry at everyone ... some of these Cubans attended a meeting in the apartment of David William Ferrie. One of the Cubans

"...why had supposed criminal masterminds like Ferrie and Shaw discussed the assassination of a President in front of a person they barely knew...?"

discussed the assassination of a president in front of a person they barely knew? Garrison told an incredulous Phelan, "Perry Russo had to be a part of the conspiracy, that's why they talked about it in front of him." Phelan argued that there would be no motive for Russo to accuse his co-conspirators of plotting a murder in which he was involved. Phelan told Garrison, "If he does that, how does he know that Shaw isn't going to turn around and finger him back? And they both go down the tube." Garrison dropped the issue with Phelan. (43)

NBC investigator Walter Sheridan, in his 1967 quest to gather incriminating information about Garrison's investigation, asked Russo to state unequivocally, once and for all, that he had never known Shaw. He asked Russo to go into a Biloxi, Mississippi motel room where Shaw would be

was named Diaz ... also present at the meeting were Clay Bertrand, aka Clay Shaw ..." (44)

It is well known that Oswald used the alias A J Hidell and more recently there is evidence that Clay Shaw, the subject of Jim Garrison's New Orleans investigation into the assassination, used the alias Lambert. An affidavit accompanying the HSCA RG 233 document claims that Georgian Edward J Girmus stated in 1967 that one of Clay Shaw's aliases was Lambert. Girmus told Assistant District Attorney James Alcock that he had met with Clay Shaw and Oswald in New Orleans during April 1963 to discuss the purchase of guns. Shaw told Girmus that he knew people who wanted to buy guns. (45) After Shaw made a phone call, Oswald and an unknown man entered the office to discuss the deal. Girmus said that he saw Shaw and Oswald at a party held at an old colonial house he thought was owned by Shaw.

The mysterious Flight Plan

HSCA records released in 1993 revealed a flight plan (HSCA RG 233) dated April 8, 1963. The flight plan names the pilot as "Ferrie" who was flying three passengers, Hidell, Lambert and Diaz, from New Orleans to Garland, Texas. This would appear to be a very important document linking Ferrie, Oswald (Hidell) and Shaw (Lambert), though it was never mentioned in the Shaw trial. On November 8, 1978 the HSCA interviewed Garrison and asked him about this remarkable document. He was asked if the document came from his files and he merely said that he believed that it had. The only other comments he had about the flight plan was that "it looked quite credible" but he and his investigators were unable to determine if it was genuine.

Although Shaw and Ferrie denied knowing one another, two 1949

photographs appear to show them together at two different social gatherings. (46) The HSCA disclosed that Shaw and Ferrie flew to Montreal in the fall of 1963. The HSCA speculated that they were there to meet Major L M Bloomfield, a board member of Centro Mondiale Commerciale (CMC). CMC was an international trade organization centred on Rome and was a CIA front organization used for international secret spying and a classified information communications conduit among countries where the CIA operated. (47) Bloomfield, a Canadian lawyer, was allegedly a confidant of J Edgar Hoover and a major force in the organization Permindex, to be discussed later.

The sightings of Shaw and Oswald together are extremely rare and usually have less than credible witnesses. Vernon Bundy, a self-confessed heroin addict, testified at the Shaw trial that he saw Shaw meet Oswald along a lake one day in June 1963 while he [Bundy] was shooting heroin. In testimony only two weeks after Shaw's arrest, Bundy described "Oswald" as a "real junkie" and said that his name was "Pete." (48) Ludicrous as this sounds, Bundy survived cross-examination by Shaw's attorney Irvin Dymond. Several members of the Garrison camp did not want Bundy to testify but Garrison insisted. Bundy's testimony provided some interesting observations: that Shaw and Oswald met at a Lake Pontchartrain beach; that Shaw gave Oswald money; that Oswald said "What am I gonna tell her?"; that a Fair Play for Cuba leaflet fell from Oswald's pants as he stuffed the money into his pocket; that Shaw had a twisted walk (due to a bad back, Shaw did walk with a halting gait); and that Shaw arrived at the lake in a black limousine, which sounded similar to the limousine witnessed in Clinton, Louisiana during the voter registration incident.

Walter Sheridan's one hour NBC program on June 19, 1967 on the Garrison investigation featured two fellow Parish Prison inmates. John Cancler and Miguel Torres both stated that Bundy told them that he had been approached by members of Garrison's staff to give perjured testimony against Shaw. Cancler claimed that he was approached by the DA's staff to "plant" some kind of incriminating evidence in Shaw's home. Torres told his story of how he was to testify that he had participated in sex orgies with Shaw. Torres later repeated the same story to author James Kirkwood, who wrote in detail about the Garrison investigation in his book *American Grottesque*. When Garrison investigator James Alcock was questioned by Kirkwood about the sensational charges of Cancler and Bundy, Alcock said, "... That's totally ridiculous. Can you imagine us having him plant evidence? ... They had this other man, this burglar Torres, said we'd offered him a month's vacation in the Bahamas and something like a couple pounds of heroin. I mean that's totally absurd." (49) Other Garrison assistants and supporters declared Cancler and Torres' stories to be false. The two convicted felons were branded as unreliable and in the case of Torres, ironically, unreliable because he was a heroin addict.

Another sighting of Shaw and Oswald, with overtones equally bizarre as the Bundy sighting, came from a New York accountant, Charles Spiesel. Spiesel testified at the Garrison trial that he met Shaw at a party through his old Air Force buddy David Ferrie. No one seemed to question the fact that Ferrie had never been in the Air Force, although there is some evidence that he may have been part of some kind of Armed Services reserve program in 1950. (50)

How to kill the President

At one point during the party, President Kennedy became the subject of conversation. Spiesel said that Shaw was "amused" about the conversation, which eventually focused on killing the President with a high-powered rifle. Shaw, said Spiesel, declared that the killer could

Shaw ... declared that the killer could be whisked away to safety by the piloting talents of Ferrie

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be whisked away to safety by the piloting talents of Ferrie. The party took place at a building which was owned by Clay Shaw. Spiesel led the jury to an apartment on Esplanade Street in New Orleans where he claimed the party had been held. Shaw testified that he owned the very same building until 1962 or 1963 when he sold it. Upon further questioning by Shaw's attorney Irvin Dymond, Spiesel claimed that he had been hypnotized fifty or sixty times by a New York psychiatrist, by the police and by "others", all under the auspices of a possible communist conspiracy. Spiesel had filed a \$16 million suit against the New York psychiatrist and the City of New York concerning his undesired hypnosis. He also testified that he had been followed by New York officials when he had travelled to New Orleans. (51) Spiesel told the jury that he checked his own daughter's fingerprints at his New York apartment when she returned from New Orleans. He feared that the government had replaced her with a duplicated person. Spiesel joined the growing ranks of "witnesses" with questionable credibility. (52)

Alvin Beauboeuf, one of the friends who had accompanied Ferrie on the mysterious Houston ice rink trip, claimed that he was offered \$3,000 and a job with an airline by Garrison investigators if he agreed to further associate Shaw with Ferrie. Fred Lemanns, owner of a New Orleans Turkish bath, alleged that Garrison had offered to finance a private club for Lemanns if he would sign a statement maintaining that he had known Clay Shaw as Clay Bertrand and that Shaw and Oswald visited his establishment. (53)

The HSCA discovered that the CIA had planted a number of agents on Garrison's staff. According to Victor Marchetti, CIA Director Richard Helms was concerned about Garrison's investigation and that he might open some doors that the CIA would prefer remained closed. (54)

Conclusion

Aside from Oswald, Shaw and Ruby, no other person in the vast cast of characters mentioned in the assassination of JFK has been more maligned or investigated than David William Ferrie. His associations and activities concerning the assassination make him a suspicious character. The first questions concerning Ferrie's possible involvement in the assassination came from his associate Jack Martin. Martin's initial allegations have been shown to be false and malicious. Martin eventually said himself that the allegations were "a figment of his imagination."

Ferrie was associated with an inordinate number of anti-Kennedy figures and men directly investigated following the assassination: Oswald, Shaw, Marcello, Smith, Banister and many anti-Castro figures with possible motivations to harm the President. Ferrie contradicted himself about his relationship with Oswald and there is some solid evidence that he lied about knowing Clay Shaw. Rose Cheramie's credibility is highly questionable but her claims of travelling with Smith and Osanto had some degree of corroboration from Silver Slipper owner Mac Manual.

Ferrie has been pictured with Oswald and seen with Oswald on more than one occasion and by numerous witnesses. In his final interview, only hours before his death, Ferrie denied that he knew Oswald.

It is a similar story with Clay Shaw. Ferrie was supposedly pictured more than once with Shaw and seen with Shaw on several occasions but both men clearly denied any relationship. Ferrie worked directly with Carlos Marcello and Guy Banister. Both men have been quoted at least once that they desired to depose the President in a violent manner, curiously a threat that has been attributed to Ferrie more than once. He was associated with Sergio Arcacha Smith, who was

identified as a figure who may have been plotting the death of the President.

The HSCA concluded that the Oswald-Ferrie relationship was a significant Oswald association. "David Ferrie's experience with the underground activities of the Cuban exile movement as a private investigator for Carlos Marcello and Guy Banister might have made him a good candidate to participate in a conspiracy plot. He may not have known what was to be the outcome of his actions, but once the assassination had been successfully completed and his own name cleared, Ferrie would have had no reason to reveal his knowledge of the plot. Further, fear for his life may have prevented him from doing so." (55)

Transcripts of Ferrie's FBI interview have been buried in the National Archives. They were not turned over to the Warren Commission. Author John H. Davis, a member of the Board of Advisors to the Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, DC, has reported that a 30-page FBI report on Ferrie is missing from the National Archives.

Although the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 has released a significant amount of key documents, in August 1993 two HSCA documents concerning Ferrie were officially restricted from the public record. Both records, according to the National Archives, were "withdrawn from this file" because the records contain "otherwise restricted information." One record, whose subjects included Sergio Arcacha Smith, Ernesto Betancourt, Ferrie and Juan Dill, was withdrawn by the authority of the FBI, INS and HSCA. (56) The other record, whose subjects were Ferrie, Broshears, Jim Garrison and Lyndon Johnson, was withdrawn by the authority of the Secret Service. (57)

My next article on David Ferrie, due to appear in the March 1999 issue of this journal, is entitled *David Ferrie: Assassination Mastermind?* In it, I will investigate Ferrie's relationship with Carlos Marcello and Jack Ruby; overheard comments made by Ferrie at an airport in 1964; Ferrie's mysterious death; his possible connection to Permindex; the Clinton, Louisiana incident; and incriminating

"Ferrie denied that he knew Oswald".

comments made by CIA contract agent Robert Morrow and Ferrie's roommate Raymond Broshears.

Sources and footnotes

1. HSCA X, (394).
2. HSCA X, p. 109.
3. JFK document 014904.
4. HSCA Report, Section IC3.
5. Groups investigated by the HSCA included Alpha 66, the Cuban Revolutionary Junta (JURE), Commandos L, the Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (DRE), the Cuban Revolutionary Council (CRC) which included the Frente Revolucionario Democrático (FRD), the Junta del Gobierno de Cuba en el Exilio (JGCE), the 30th of November, the International Penetration Forces (InterPen), the Revolutionary Recovery Movement (MRR) and the Ejército Invasor Cubano (EIC).
6. The HSCA reported that the FAA, vol. 5 Attachment QQ document listed the submarines as being found "in Ferrie's house. Also discovered among Ferrie's effects were: a Morse code key, four model 1903 Springfield rifles, two .22 caliber rifles, one rifle, a flare gun, a .38 caliber revolver, a sword, a quantity of ammunition, three maps (of Havana Harbor, the coast of Cuba, West Indies, Cuba and North Coast)..."
7. FBI 62-109060-4344, 62-109060-4535; CIA 1363-501.
8. HSCA X, p. 109.
9. FBI 105-104340-3, 105-104340-1.
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25. Researcher Sheldon Inkol's letter to the Editor: *The Fourth Decade*, vol. 5, no. 5, July 1998; p. 38.
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29. HSCA XII, (456).
30. HSCA XII, (451).
31. HSCA XII, (455).
32. James and Wardlaw; p. 44.
33. Noel Twyman: *Bloody Treason*, Laurel Publishing, Rancho Santa Fe, CA, 1997; p. 275.
34. Mike Sylwester: *The Kennedy Contract: A Review*, *The Fourth Decade*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 1993; p. 25.
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39. James Kirkwood: *American Grottesque*, Harper, USA, 1968; p. 260 (Sciambra Memo).
40. Andrew Sciambra's interview with Perry Raymond Russo at the Mercy Hospital, New Orleans on February 27, 1967.
41. James and Wardlaw; p. 79.
42. Interview with James Phelan by James Kirkwood. See *American Grottesque*; pp. 168-171.
43. "The Garrison Tapes", written and directed by John Barbour, JFK Productions, 1992.
44. FBI report 62-109060.
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52. "The Garrison Tapes" video.

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56. HSCA 180-10078-10412.

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54. Gaeton Fonzi: *The Last Investigation*, Thunder's Mouth Press, New York, 1993; pp. 239 and 375.

57. HSCA 180-10076-10172.

(Editor's note: This and John Craig's follow-up article on David Ferrie (which will appear in our next issue)

55. HSCA X, (515).

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