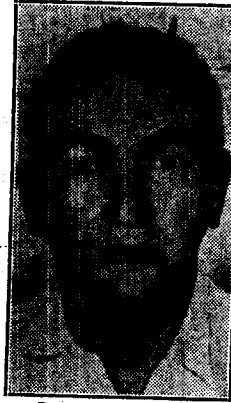


Coroner Chetta



David W. Ferrie

Death in New Orleans added to assassination mystery.

JFK: New Orleans Adds Its Chapter To Dallas Mystery

The assassination of President Kennedy became a closed book officially with the Warren Commission report's finding that Lee Harvey Oswald alone committed the crime. But the case was reopened last week in the office of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison with the appearance of a strange figure, purportedly a part of a conspiracy against the President.

David W. Ferrie, 49, free-lance flier and self-designated psychologist, who wore a red wig, false eyebrows and makeup to conceal scars caused by an explosion, boasted openly that he had been "pegged as the getaway pilot in an elaborate plot to kill Kennedy." Many were inclined to agree with Ferrie's appraisal of the whole affair as a "big joke"—until he was found dead.

U.S. Government Considers Case Closed

The information that emerged in the ensuing uproar contributed nothing conclusive to previous knowledge about the death of the President. As far as the federal government was concerned, the case remained closed. But another footnote was written to the tragedy of Nov. 23, 1963 in Dallas.

District Attorney Garrison set out to reexamine the case last November with a sincere suspicion that the President had died as the result of a plot hatched in New Orleans.

He conducted his examination quietly, which was not at all characteristic of the man. Garrison, 45, a burly six-foot-six former professional football player, had been gaining a reputation as a pistol-packing crusader against crime since 1962.

His inquiry came into the open, much to his displeasure, when a newspaper, the New Orleans States-Item, reported that his office had spent more than \$8,000 on the case. The expense accounts of the investigators were a matter of public record.

Garrison conceded publicly that the investigation was under way. He complained that, because of prema-

**The Week
In Focus**

WHAT IN



Lee Harvey Oswald, in white shirt at left, hands out pro-Castro leaflets in New Orleans, where district attorney now claims to have "solved" President Kennedy's assassination. Amid rising skepticism in Washington, New Orleans DA says Oswald was one of several co-conspirators who plotted to kill Kennedy.

ture publicity, arrests which were "probably just a few weeks away" were now "most certainly months away." But he insisted that "there is no question there will be arrests, charges and convictions."

He traced Oswald's activities in New Orleans for six months before the assassination. A native of that city, Oswald had returned there in 1963 after serving in the Marines and visiting the Soviet Union. He became active in pro-Castro agitation.

Ferrie identified himself as one of the persons being linked—wrongly, he maintained—with Oswald.

Ferrie had figured in the Warren report. A New Orleans detective testified that he had checked Ferrie's plane at the local airport "with the thought he may have transported Oswald to Dallas," but had found that the plane was not flyable.

Another witness testified that Ferrie and Oswald had served together in a civil air patrol unit, but federal authorities let that line of inquiry drop after careful examination.

Ferrie himself explained that he did not know Oswald, and he was in New Orleans at the time of the assassination.

He said he went to Texas later that day with two friends, but to Houston, not Dallas, and that they went hunting for geese. Upon their return, Ferrie was held for questioning, but then released. He was placed under watch when Garrison resumed his investigation.

Ferrie was found dead in bed Wednesday morning in his apartment in a middle-class neighborhood of New Orleans.

The district attorney promptly pronounced the death an "apparent suicide," which "ends the life of a man who, in my judgment, was one of history's most important individuals."

Garrison said "evidence developed by our office had long since confirmed that he was involved in events culminating in the assassination," and that he had decided to arrest Ferrie next week.

"Apparently we waited too long," he said.

Coroner Nicholas Chetta announced, however, that Ferrie died of natural causes. He said an autopsy

showed "no indication whatsoever of suicide or murder," and that death was caused by a ruptured artery of the brain. Ferrie had a medical history of high blood pressure and hemorrhage.

Garrison, left without a key witness for his case, told reporters besieging him for further information that "no further comment or statement will be initiated by our office in the foreseeable future."

Amid rising skepticism about the value of his investigation, a group of New Orleans businessmen rallied to the support of the district attorney. Members of the group said they realized Garrison was "getting criticized a lot," and that they wanted to "back him up" by helping him to finance his work.

Garrison, on his way to a meeting with the group, commented once more that "we have solved the assassination and will arrest every individual" involved.

He hastened to explain that by "solved" he meant that he knew the names of persons involved in a plot on the life of the President, but that the arrests might take "thirty to forty years."

So Far, No Basis for Federal Action

Washington sources insisted that the New Orleans investigation, so far at least, had produced no new evidence and had provided no basis for further federal action.

There were strong suggestions from Congressmen and members of the Warren Commission that if Garrison really had important information, he should forward it to the United States Attorney General and the President.

"I am running this investigation, not the President, not the Attorney General," Garrison replied.

Politely, he commented that the Warren Commission was "composed of the highest type of men," but that they did not have "sufficient evaluation machinery." He said federal intervention would bring a "colossal fact-gathering enterprise in which relevant leads became lost among truckloads of trivia."

He was still working on the closing of the New Orleans chapter of the Kennedy case.