

2 Views of Grotesque Trial In the Assassination of JFK

A HERITAGE OF STONE.
By Jim Garrison. (Putnam's.
\$6.95.)

AMERICAN GROTESQUE.
By James Kirkwood. (Simon
& Schuster. \$11.95.)

By **ELMER GERTZ**

These two books deal with the same subject—the assassination of President Kennedy as dramatized in a New Orleans production—but they are as different as day and night.

Jim Garrison, the author of the shorter and much the lesser book, concocted the outrageous "case" against Clay Shaw, aided and abetted by the imaginary meanderings of a strange attorney, whom he subsequently indicted for perjury, and an assortment of pseudo-witnesses whom, mercifully, a jury chose to disbelieve.

His book can be disposed of briefly, having due regard for the laws of libel. He is ginger-

Gertz, a Chicago attorney, wrote "Moment of Madness: The People vs. Jack Ruby."

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Jim Garrison
... Strange lights

ly in dealing with Shaw. His alleged concern is the assassination of the President and the diabolical forces which, according to him, brought it about. Despite Garrison's failure in the Shaw case, he professes to find a continuing and augmented conspiracy of

many people high in public life, including at least two Presidents of the United States, a Chief Justice, leaders of both parties, the CIA, the FBI and other individuals and agencies. If his phantasmagoria was not tragic, it would be funny.

James Kirkwood's book, a monumental study of the case, drives home what is implicit in the Garrison fiction.

His book deals with the trial in depth — from how the jury was selected, the opening statements of the attorneys, the kind of evidence presented, the interplay of opposing counsel and witnesses to the temperaments and qualities of the judge the court personnel and the men and women of the media who covered the trial. He conveys well the general atmosphere: Mardi Gras was the time and carnival the spirit.

After completing his account of the case, Kirkwood gives his eloquent and useful book its greatest value. He reports on his interview of the judge, several of the jurors, the defendant, the attorneys for the state and the defense, the principal witness — that strange character, Perry Raymond Russo — and others. Some of what emerges is very strange, indeed.

Kirkwood's fascinating and important book is not simply American grotesque as he calls it, but American tragedy.

A decent, cultured, discriminated man like Clay Shaw has gone through agony because of the machinations of others.

He still faces trials and tribulations. Is there no meaning to it? Is there no way that there can be retribution?

Anyone who reads Kirkwood's book should have the courage to stand up against the American system that has to be changed. The result is to create a nightmare.