

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
PARISH OF ORLEANS
STATE OF LOUISIANA

JANUARY 30, 1967

STATEMENT OF: JOHN IRION
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I believe I met Dave Ferrie in the summer of 1956 or 1957 at the New Orleans Air Port during a Civil Air Patrol cadet meeting. I found out at this time he was to be our new senior squad commander and that he would revitalize the squadron into an active flying unit and that he would increase the membership and the quality of people in this squadron.

His teaching programs were very unusual in that they usually contained college subjects such as astrophysics, medicine, biology, and he attacked all the other aviation subjects from a college level. Of course, this was a tremendous impetus to every member of the squadron to improve his grades in school and this approach to academics led to the study of rockets and missiles at which time the cadets did research to develop solid state missile fuel.

Another project was to design and construct an electronic microscope. Because of his imagination and overwhelming authority and his personality, there was no question on the part of any of the cadets whether or not they were capable of accomplishing these projects. So that these projects and many others dealing with CAP and some of Mr. Ferrie's private ambitions involved most of the cadets to the extent that they had personal loyalty to him.

Q. Did you at any time know that Dave Ferrie was a homosexual?

A. No, I didn't.

Many of these projects were continued in the home of Dave Ferrie with his own equipment and at his own expense. Another one of his projects was to build a submarine and there were many other projects which I could recall if necessary.

The submarine was to be constructed of the, I believe, wing tip fuel tank which I think was from a bomber, B-47, which I assumed he had acquired through war surplus channels. This was a project among some of the other

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This is for PR

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cadets. I don't think it ever was completed.

Q. Were you aware of Ferrie's affiliation with Lee Harvey Oswald at this time?

A. There was no "affiliation" - I don't think they were privately associated in any project or ambition nor private goals other than the C.A.P.

This submarine project took place long after any connection between Dave Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald. Lee Harvey Oswald came into the C.A.P. as a recruit and I think it was 1957 and this submarine project didn't occur until about 1961 or 1962. Lee Harvey Oswald by this time was no longer with the New Orleans C.A.P. unit. In fact, sometime shortly after he entered the C.A.P., he was dismissed.

Q. For what reason?

A. I don't remember.

Q. Would these reasons be on record?

A. I think so but these records are kind of hard to find. I think they have been looked for before and haven't been recovered.

So, any direct association between Lee Harvey Oswald and Dave Ferrie to my knowledge would be small and I don't think that the relationship would have been very close from my own personal knowledge. Any subsequent connection between Dave Ferrie and Lee Harvey Oswald could only have occurred some years later at the time Lee Harvey Oswald was distributing pamphlets in downtown New Orleans for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. At this time Dave Ferrie and some of the members of his C.A.P. cadet unit, the Falcons, were working with several Cuban refugees. I don't know the names of any of the Cubans but it is possible that if I saw some of these Cuban refugees who were working with the C.A.P. that I might recognize them. This unit with Dave was working with the Cubans to obtain funds to support the Cuban Revolutionary movement based in Miami.

Q. Did you ever meet or have occasion to talk to Lee Harvey Oswald?

A. Any specific encounter with Lee Harvey Oswald would be hard for me to remember.

When the president's assassination was published and photographs of Oswald were published, I remembered vaguely the face. The name was familiar and it occurred to me that he had been in our squadron. I remembered that he was a recruit and that there had been some disciplinary problems with him which I don't remember but for which he was dismissed. So to the best of my own personal knowledge he didn't share with the rest of the squadron a personal relationship with Dave Ferrie in these projects either at the airport or at Dave Ferrie's house.

Admits knowing Oswald

Who were the FALCONS in 1962??

Dave Ferrie was employed, I think, in a law clerk capacity with G. Wray Gill who was representing Carlos Marcello and at this time he was asked to go to Guatemala to investigate the alleged Guatemalan birth certificate of Carlos Marcello. At this time he asked me to accompany him on this trip. I didn't go. I didn't want to get involved in anything of that sort. Dave alleged that unofficially the United States government wanted to deport Carlos Marcello so badly that Judges Christenberry and Ainsworth had conspired with a local authority in Guatemala to produce a forged birth certificate.

Of course, after the assassination and it was published that Lee Harvey Oswald was a member of the same C.A.P. unit that Dave and I were in, I was immediately curious to know to what extent this squadron would be involved in the investigation. I thought that perhaps Dave Ferrie better than anyone would remember Lee Harvey Oswald and would be able to shed some light on the whole situation.

So, I went to his house late one evening to speak to him. I was greeted by the F. B. I. and I think a member of the local police department who stopped me in the dark. All of the lights were turned off. They took me into the house, turned the lights on and then I saw several other people who knew Dave and were there for the same reason I was. I was questioned as to my relationship with Dave Ferrie, whether or not I knew Lee Harvey Oswald, and if I knew where Dave was. That was briefly all they question me on. Then I was requested to give my name, address, telephone number and be available for any further questioning. I was dismissed. So, I assumed that that later on I would be contacted by the Secret Service or the F.B.I. and questioned as I knew other members of the C.A.P. had been, but I was never contacted and it seemed very unusual because I knew Dave perhaps better than most of the people in the squadron and I was also a high ranking cadet officer.

One of the boys in the squadron, Albert Cheramie, lived in a bad family situation and was having difficulties at home with a drunken father and a highly nervous mother and he wanted to leave home. He did leave home and stayed with me for two days at which time he went to live with Dave Ferrie. I want to mention this incident in connection with another incident which inevitably concluded in a charge by two parents in the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Division of, I think, homosexuality, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, I was asked to testify in this particular case not as to any particular incidents which were alleged but as to Dave Ferrie's character. As a result of this charge he was dismissed by Eastern Airlines for whom he was employed. He was acquitted of the local charges, and I think he had taken some measures to counter-charge and file suit against the local authorities and the parents. I don't think these charges were ever realized in Court.

About a year later I was summoned to appear before a trial Court which was composed of members of the Airline Pilots Association and Eastern Airline representatives. This Court acted under the authority of the Railroad Labor Act and had the constitutional authority to act with the force of law and decide his future status with Eastern Airlines. His attorney in this case was G. Wray Gill of New Orleans. The investigation, I think, was done by

Guy Banister. Whether this investigative help by Guy Banister was contracted for or done out of personal friendship I am not sure, but I began to know Guy Banister and it seemed to me that possibly this was an act of personal friendship. He seemed to have a great deal of personal loyalty to Dave and his personal involvement led him to a great deal of excitement. It seemed to be mostly a private thing.

Q. At the time of this incident with the airlines do you know what flight he had - from point to point?

A. I think he was flying from here to Houston.

Guy Banister was with G. Wray Gill and Dave Ferrie in Miami when the trial began and a day later Dave called me long distance and asked if I would come to Miami to testify in his behalf, which I did. I arrived in Miami late in the afternoon before I was to testify the next morning and in the motel room that night, G. Wray Gill and Dave Ferrie spent some time with me in covering at great length exactly what I should say and I felt sure that many of the things I had been asked to testify on would involve perjury on my part. We had some arguments on this at which time they backed off and I did in fact testify the next morning.

Q. Can you remember any specific questions that were asked of you at this trial and your answer?

A. Some of the questions, of course, were based on the trial presented in the Jefferson Parish Juvenile Court which involved the charge of homosexuality and, of course, one question I was asked was had he ever involved me or approached me, and my answer was no to the best of my knowledge up until that time, I was totally unaware of any homosexuality. I was also asked questions involving Dave's religious activities, which were asked of me to determine if Dave was mentally sane. Most of these questions referred to the possession of sacred vessels, that is a chalice and ecclesiastical vestments, whether or not Dave had been to a seminary etc. I was also questioned as to the validity of his educational diplomas which were in question due to his claiming that he was a doctor of philosophy which he obtained from Phoenix University which upon investigation turned out to be in Italy.

Q. In your own opinion do you feel that Dave Ferrie was a radical or psychotic?

A. In my own opinion I feel that Dave was an extra unusual person of great intellect capable of a great many staggering and imaginative schemes and ambitions. He wasn't a common man by any standards and he always strove to do the unusual no matter what it was. He was always in something involving a certain element of danger and adventure and usually aimed at provoking a great deal of controversy. I don't feel qualified to say he was psychotic. Some of his schemes I considered so fantastic, out of reality and so far above the capabilities of those people he involved that the whole situation often seemed real queer.

Q. Before the time of the assassination of the president had Dave Ferrie mentioned any trips to Dallas or asked you to go on any?

A. No, to my knowledge. He never asked me to accompany him to Dallas.

Q. Were you aware that he was involved with a very beautiful young colored girl whom he entertained young boys with sexually?

A. No, I wasn't.

Normally I would have known about such a thing but at the time President Kennedy was assassinated my relationship with Dave was coming to a fast close and I was really not aware of all his activities in or out of the C.A.P.

At approximately the same time that Lee Harvey Oswald was distributing pamphlets and street preaching for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee of which he was president, Dave Ferrie was with members of his Falcon "C.A.P." cadet squadron and a few Cubans on Canal Street distributing pamphlets and collecting contributions for the Cuban Revolutionary movement. These Cubans and these cadets were being trained for what Dave termed IMSU which stands for Internal Mobile Security Units. These IMSU units consisted of a 5-member team - small weapons unit. These units were to be trained in guerrilla warfare tactics under the auspices of the U. S. Marine Corps for action in Cuba. Dave alleged that the U. S. State Department had unofficially asked that these units be trained for the purpose of freeing U. S. hostage in Cuba in the Sierra Madras mountains. The unit was trained in night navigation in the swamps for use of celestial reference, karate, judo, escape and survival techniques. This training took place in Abita Springs, Louisiana, on a piece of property owned by the family of a cadet named George Paupart.

supposedly

Who were the Cubans

near?

(a Falcon CAP cadet? Should know the Cubans)

Somewhere in the beginning of this training period, Dave Ferrie was mysteriously absent for a week's time which he explained was a small invasion by a group which tried to reach these hostages. He claimed that he had been wounded in the attempt which had failed and he supported his claim by showing bandages which he claimed were wounds.

1961

Q. At this time of the alleged incident, you saw no actual wounds?

A. Yes, that is correct. I didn't actually see any wounds and I didn't believe that he had any.

During this training period and the period that we spent distributing information about the Cuban Revolutionary movement, several key personnel from the Cuba Revolutionary movement in Miami came to New Orleans to met with Dave. One of the names I remember in particular was Arcacha Smith.

1963

Mie Cover

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Paupart

Q. Do you know his whereabouts now?

A. No

Q. Have you ever seen him since then?

A. No, I haven't

Q. I have here in my hand three pictures that you identified by sight. I understand that you can't place any names with these pictures, is that correct?

A. Yes, these are the three pictures I have selected because they seem vaguely familiar. I don't attach any particular significance, that is the names or events with these faces. But they do trigger some memory.

Q. Were you completely shocked by the assassination of the president?

A. Yes, I didn't believe it at first.

Q. How about the fact that Oswald may have been connected with it?

A. Well, I was shocked by the coincidence that Lee Harvey Oswald was in the same C.A.P. unit that I was.

Q. Do you think Oswald assassinated the president?

A. Well, I think from the evidence that I have read in the newspapers and the Warren Report that he definitely fired a shot, however, other questions have been raised as to whether or not he could have fired two shots in such rapid succession as to have secured direct hits at a moving target. It is my own personal opinion that it is entirely possible that another person was involved in the assassination of the president and that the other person could have fired either the first or second shot.

The following are questions by District Attorney Jim Garrison. Not all questions and answers are recorded - only those that were not covered previously by the statement.

Q. Oswald was in the C. A. P. for awhile and Ferrie was the commander?

A. Yes - It is possible that I know some one else who could answer these questions better - Robert Baylston.

Q. By '63 you weren't seeing too much of Ferrie so you weren't in the apartment much?

A. No, the only occasion I had was when Vincent Bonomo was killed. - - - - -

Q. What is the statement he made (Ferrie) about the assassination?

A. Dave claimed that he was working with the FBI on the investigation. I didn't believe it.

What does Baylston say?

Condon Novel

Q. When we were at Dave Ferrie's in '63 on the 24th of November, Martens and Labuef were there, was there any particular reason you were coming, who called you?

A. No one, I went out of curiosity. I wanted to know to what extent the squadron was involved.

Q. By that time you had recalled that Oswald was in the C. A. P.?

A. There was some publicity about Oswald and there was a television broadcast in which a boy by the name of Al Vobel stated that Lee Harvey Oswald was in C.A.P. and there were several articles in the newspapers. Naturally I wanted to find out as much as I could about him and see what was involved.

Q. Did you call before you went to Dave Ferrie's?

A. No, I don't think so. I don't remember.

Q. Do you remember talking to him afterwards, when he finally got out after the inquiries? Did you meet him after?

A. I haven't discussed this with him since.

Q. Do you recall anything about Cubans that you saw him with?

□ A. His involvement was always kind of vague. (We met a few of the people at the time they were collecting contributions on Canal Street at Elks Place and I think there was one of the Cubans training with the IMSU unit.)

Q. Could you find this place on the map?

A. I think it was out of Abita Springs, La.

□ Q. Do you know how many Cubans were trained in his Cuban C.A.P.?

A. Several Cubans from Miami were here.

Q. Where did they stay at night?

A. One was living with his girlfriend.

Q. Did they come back here at night?

A. I don't think they spent any time out there, just weekends and I think they made two or three training trips.

Q. What was the submarine for?

A. He didn't disclose that. I knew that he and several other boys were interested in skin diving. I figured it had something to do with that.

Q. How many Cubans trained with him?

A. I remember two. I don't remember their names or what they looked like.

Q. Two Cubans in this private C.A.P. that he developed?

A. The IMSU connection with the Cuban Revolutionary thing was his own project.

Q. What did they do during the week? Did they work.

A. I don't know.

Q. Do you ever recall seeing a Cuban, short, unusual build?

A. I remember one who was a bit shorter than I was, real good looking fellow, very handsome, black wavy hair, built very well.

Q. Was he athletic?

A. Very - possibly a wrestler or football player.

Q. How tall would you say he was?

A. 5'8" or 9"

Q. Was his hair short, medium?

A. His hair was well groomed, black, full head of hair, combed in duck fashion.

Q. Definitely not short?

A. No.

The only name that comes to me is the name of one of the leaders - Arcacha Smith.

Q. Any other connections you can recall?

A. I am sure he (Ferrie) knew most of them. He claimed to be part of a large movement and I am sure his claim to be in this small invasion and he claimed to have a personal knowledge of all the large revolutionary figures.

Q. Does he speak Spanish?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. How did you happen to know that?

A. I have heard him.

Q. To whom was he speaking?

A. One of the boys in the squadron married a Spanish girl and he spoke to her and to some of these Cubans.

Q. Do you remember the name of the boy who married the Spanish speaking girl?

A. No, I can't think of it.

This is a series of questions and answers by Assistant District Attorney Alvin Oser relative to the location of the IMSU camp near Abita Springs, La.

Q. John, this is the area of Abita, Springs, what do you remember about it?

A. Nothing unusual.

Q. You remember how you got there? Did you go through Mandeville to get to Hwy. 59?

A. I don't remember how we got there.

Q. Did you go into Abita Springs or turn before?

A. I don't know.

Q. Did you go across the Causeway?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you turn right immediately after crossing the causeway?

A. Where we went, I don't know.

Q. After you got off the Causeway about how long did you ride?

A. 35 to 40 minutes.

Q. Do you remember passing a restaurant, drive-in theater and a road?

A. We turned off the main highway onto a dirt road. One Sunday we went to church and the ride took only about 10 - 15 minutes.

Q. In town or rural?

A. On the outskirts.

Q. Do you remember the name? - Lord's chapel.

A. I don't know.

Q. On the way to camp did you cross railroad tracks on the dirt road?

A. I don't know.

Q. When you finally got to camp, did you go through a fence?

A. Yes, a wooden fence, woods, cow grate.

Q. Would you describe the property? Usual?

A. Totally undeveloped - nothing there - no houses.

Q. What did you do?

A. We worked on problems of navigation at night. We never fired any weapons not on the particular occasion I went.

Q. Think you could find the place?

A. No, I might recognize it.

Q. Can you give any estimation how long you rode on the dirt road?

A. No, I don't know. I have a feeling we turned right, I don't know.

Q. Did anybody ever tell you who owned this property?

A. Yes, George Paupart's family - his relatives.

Q. What time of year was this - what year?

A. Spring or early summer, 1961.

Q. How often did you go over there?

A. I made only one trip. I think they made three or four trips over there.

Q. About how many men?

A. 12

Q. Did you go by truck or bus?

A. Bus - some may have furnished their own transportation. There was a school bus that Ferrie had bought and painted blue.

Q. What happened to the bus?

A. I don't know.

Q. You can't recall whether or not you went through Abita Springs?

A. I don't remember. I don't think we went directly through the heart of Abita Springs? I think we skirted around it.

Q. Did you know of any other camps going on?

A. No, these other camps are totally new to me.