

Contradictions Mark DA's Probe

By JACK WARDLAW

Newsmen from around the globe converged on New Orleans this week, the biggest such influx within the memory of long-time Crescent City journalists.

They were here because of a story which broke in the States-Item last Friday — the story that Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison is investigating a conspiracy in the death of President John F. Kennedy.

This is sensational news because it contradicts the report of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

Garrison, however, says, "I have no reason to believe Oswald killed anybody on Nov. 22, 1963."

THE DA SAYS HE HAS SOLVED THE assassination case and promises arrests and convictions. But the timetable for these actions has ranged all the way from a few weeks away to 30 years, depending on which statement of Garrison's you read. He later said he was joking about the 30 years.

Ironically, the person least happy about all the attention is Garrison, according to his own public statements.

When the story first broke, he refused to confirm or deny it. Two days later, he acknowledged the probe was under way, and castigated the States-Item for revealing it,

complaining that the "premature publicity" had slowed down his investigation.

He said that instead of having arrests within "a few weeks" it would now be "a few months."

Garrison said, "Anyone who says I had seen that story before it was published is a liar."

"THAT STORY" IS THE ORIGINAL STORY published Feb. 17 by the States-Item. The fact is that a reporter showed him a copy of the story the previous day. He looked at the first page, threw it down and said: "I will not comment on this. I refuse to confirm or deny it."

Garrison did not ask that the story be withheld. He did not say that it would damage his investigation.

The reporter then told Garrison the States-Item planned to use the story.

"Go ahead," said Garrison.

Then why was Garrison so furious when the story appeared? One explanation is that he planned to break the story himself, in a national magazine under his own byline, thus gaining the maximum national publicity for himself.

This was only the first of a series of puzzling statements by Garrison on the case. The others centered around the man whose sudden death in the midst of all the publicity

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threw such a bombshell into the case.

THE DEAD MAN IS DAVID WILLIAM FERRIE, the self-styled psychologist, pilot, hypnotist and private investigator who Garrison calls "one of the most important individuals in history."

This assessment of Ferrie is curious in the light of a previous statement by Garrison that "none of the people so far named" are very important in the investigation. Ferrie's name was the first to be mentioned, largely because he came forward of his own accord to tell his story after it was revealed that the investigation was under way.

Ferrie was arrested shortly after the assassination in 1963. His alleged role in the "plot" was to fly the getaway plane for Oswald. He made a motor trip to Texas on the day Kennedy died. He did not go to Dallas, however.

FBI files in Washington reveal that Jack S. Martin, a New Orleans private detective, told Garrison's office of an alleged connection between Oswald and Ferrie, and the "getaway plane" story.

THERE WAS A MORE FANCIFUL THEORY that Ferrie, who practiced hypnosis, was supposed to have put Oswald in a trance with a post-hypnotic suggestion to kill Kennedy.

Ferrie was questioned about all this by the FBI shortly after the assassination. His information was known to the Warren Commission, which mentioned him obscurely in its report.

With all of this information before them, none of the bodies — the Warren Commission, the FBI, the Secret Service — probing the killing took any action about Ferrie.

This is the man who, Garrison said, was "one of the most important individuals in history."

The day before Ferrie died, Garrison said no arrests were planned in the case "for months." After Ferrie died, Garrison said he had planned to arrest Ferrie within a week.

WHEN FERRIE DIED, GARRISON said his office had reason to believe the death was a suicide. As of yesterday afternoon, Garrison was still maintaining his contention that Ferrie took his own life.

But Coroner Nicholas Chetta says Ferrie died from natural causes. The autopsy revealed he was killed by a brain hemorrhage. The coroner says there is no way for a suicide-bent person to induce such a hemorrhage at will.

Even Garrison admits that Ferrie was nowhere near Dallas on the day of the assassination.

Garrison has refused to give any findings he may have made thus far to federal authorities, on the grounds that they would slow his progress and that any crimes committed are punishable under Louisiana law, not federal law.

He was criticized on this score yesterday by a member of the Warren Commission, Rep. Gerald R. Ford, R-Mich. He said, "I am amazed that public officials would refuse to cooperate with federal authorities."

ANOTHER PERSON CONNECTED WITH THE commission, Prof. Wesley J. Liebeler of the University of California at Los Angeles, who headed the phase of the investigation connected with New Orleans, echoed Ford's call to cooperate with other agencies.

Gov. John Connally of Texas, who was shot while riding in the parade with Kennedy, said yesterday he doubts that Garrison's investigation will produce "anything new or revealing."

"I am confident in my own mind that the FBI and investigative agencies went into the state and concerned themselves with these individuals," he said.

What further ground Garrison may be breaking is a matter of conjecture at present. A number of books have been written finding fault with the Warren Report and there is a widespread feeling, particularly in Europe, that the truth about the assassination has been covered up.

No one, however, has produced solid evidence.

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Only Escape for Plotters Suicide, Garrison Claims

District Attorney Jim Garrison says that he has "solved" the Kennedy assassination "plot" and that death is the only escape for those he believes are involved.

Garrison claims that his office discovered the answers he was seeking "weeks ago" and that now he and his staff are working to build air-tight cases against the individuals involved.

ALTHOUGH the district attorney says that arrests are "months away," he said yesterday: "The only way they are going to get away from us is to kill themselves."

Garrison said that he would not say they had solved the Kennedy murder unless he had evidence "beyond a shadow of a doubt."

He went on to say: "We know the key individuals, the cities involved and how it was done."

YESTERDAY was the first time Garrison used the word solved.

Garrison's investigation into circumstances surrounding President Kennedy's murder was revealed by The States-Item in a story Feb. 17. The paper obtained from public records a list of agents, trips they made and money spent in seeking clues.

In order to keep reporters from checking future trips, Garrison got a \$2,500 bank

loan 48 hours after the story appeared.

YESTERDAY a group of 50 New Orleans citizens, led by Willard E. Robertson, Joseph M. Rault Jr. and Cecil H. Shilstone, met at the Petroleum Club and pledged \$100 each a month at least for three months.

This will allow Garrison to investigate the possibility of a plot without accounting publicly for funds.

A reporter, joking with Garrison, asked, "Are you expecting a contribution from the Central Intelligence Agency?"

GARRISON laughed and replied, "No, but I'm expecting some from the FBI."

Garrison admitted for the first time he had accepted some aid from Life Magazine in developing his case. "But our office initiated the investigation," he said.

He told newsmen on his "word of honor" he will give them the story when arrests are made. "But it may be

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months away. We want to get jury verdicts, and we are confident we will."

MEANWHILE, a Baton Rouge insurance salesman claimed that David William Ferrie told him about a month before Mr. Kennedy's death, "We will get him and it won't be long."

Perry Raymond Russo, 25, was a student at Loyola University here when he knew Ferrie. He said that the assassination of a president was discussed several times by Ferrie in general conversation.

Russo said on two occasions he saw Ferrie in the company of Spanish-speaking persons dressed in green fatigue uniforms and helmets.

Russo said he met Ferrie through a friend who was a member of the Civil Air Patrol.

THE FRIEND told Russo he was training with Ferrie in jungle warfare "to help bring about more democratic government."

The friend's family had contacted Russo in an effort to break "Ferrie's hold on their son."

Ferrie, who was called a central figure in the investigation by Garrison, was found dead Wednesday in his apartment at 3330 Louisiana ave. pkwy.

He died of a ruptured aneurysm, a condition which could have been aggravated by extreme anxiety and a resulting rise in blood pressure.

Suspicion that he committed suicide was not confirmed by anatomical or toxicological tests.

IN VIENNA, Mark Lane, author of "Rush to Judgment," said today he offered the material of his investigation of President Kennedy's assassination to Garrison.

Lane said he made the offer in a telegram to the district attorney two days ago.

The author said he will meet with Garrison when he returns to the United States—in about two to three weeks.

Lane, who is in Vienna to discuss a German translation of his book, said, "Garrison is the first who has seriously tried to find out the truth officially."