

Intrigue Is Not New Game for Bribery Case Figure

Gervais Was Fired from Police Department

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Cynical, shrewd and cool, Pershing Gervais is the federal government's key man behind charges that Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and nine others took part in a bribery scheme to protect pinball machine gambling in New Orleans.

Gervais, a close friend and associate of Garrison, agreed to do undercover work for the government last November.

The affidavit, which is the basis for the charge, said Gervais carried marked money from pinball operators to Garrison and secretly taped conversations about the scheme.

The clincher was an alleged payoff Tuesday night. The government said Gervais handed Garrison \$1,000 in marked 20 and 50-dollar bills which Garrison locked up inside the middle drawer of a desk in his study.

FIRED BY NOPD

The complaint was filed Wednesday. Garrison and the others were arrested.

Gervais, 50, is reported in a foreign country under federal security. A grand jury investigation is expected and Gervais would be asked to testify.

Intrigue is not a new game to Gervais.

A member of the New Orleans police department in the 1940s and early 1950s, he was fired on charges of "infraction of rules and regulations ... sufficiently grave to warrant his dismissal."

He had earlier been suspended from the force for taking an apparent unauthorized trip to New York where he was supposed to have "shared a bedroom with a woman not his wife" and for engaging without authority in the jewelry business.

TAKES MONEY

His testimony before a parish

for prosecution. Klein apparently felt Gervais did some of his duties.

About a year later, Gervais resigned in the wake of charges of splitting reward money with policemen. The money was allegedly supplied by a bail bondsman.

CHARGES MADE

A 1964 article in a national magazine alleged that Gervais met with reputed crime boss Carlos Marcello and that Gervais acknowledged Marcello proposed that Garrison accept money each week on each pinball machine Marcello had an interest in.

Garrison testified in federal court that the proposition was a fiction Gervais created to inflate the district attorney's importance.

Since then, Gervais has again been a private investigator, was in the bailbond and surety bond businesses, and has owned and operated bars. The government says Gervais has owned and operated gambling type pinball machines.

In a recent interview, Gervais said the bailbond business wasn't for him.

"It's impossible to stay in the

business and make money. You have to be nice with the judges, the police, the lawyers and the sheriffs and I don't like to live that way," Gervais said.

'CAN'T GET WEALTHY'

"You can stay in it and be honest but you're not going to be wealthy, and I'd like to be wealthy," he said.

He said Garrison is an overpaid member of the "Tulane and Broad" club, for which he has nothing but disdain.

"I can't imagine a God existing who could resist the opportunity to get rid of so many bums with one bolt of lightning."

Several months before Gervais agreed to work with the government, the affidavit reveals, he furnished agents with "facts regarding numerous violations of law, particularly bribery payoffs to elected public officials and law enforcement officers."

Grand jury was considered instrumental in public bribery indictment brought against Police Capt. Joseph L. Scheuering, the man who canned him. The grand jury investigation led to a shakeup in the department.

Gervais was quoted in the New Orleans Magazine about office graft.

"I came in late one day and everyone else was lined up for call. When I pushed open the captain's door, my eyes almost popped out. His desk was just covered with money. They didn't have a chance yet to cut the cake," Gervais said.

He said he took the money, thinking what kind of crime would it be to steal illegal mon-

Gervais then became a private investigator and did some work for the New Orleans Metropolitan Crime Commission.

ARROGANT-KOHN

Aaron Kohn, managing director of the MCC described Gervais:

"He is a very cynical man. He has a great deal of natural intelligence. He is a good reader of thoughts. You really never know what he thinks about you. He is more than self-confident, he is arrogant," Kohn said.

Kohn said Gervais worked for the commission on a parttime basis in various matters related to organized crime.

"He was half undercover agent and half confidential informant. He did reliable work," Kohn said.

Gervais stayed in touch with people and events at "Tulane and Broad" — the intersection that applies to police, the court system and the district attorney's office in New Orleans.

In 1962, he became the chief investigator on the staff of Jim Garrison, after his election as district attorney.

STIRS CONTROVERSY

At the time, Garrison said the MCC had given "Gervais a complete clearance."

Gervais had said he would help the DA in his program to carry out "modern, efficient law enforcement."

But the appointment stirred controversy because of Gervais' record in the police department.

Gervais' power drove a wedge between Garrison and his first assistant, Frank Klein, who resigned two years later, saying office problems stem from Gervais.

It was alleged that Gervais worked as an assistant attorney, determining whether or not cases should be accepted