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Weisburg admits 'touch-up' letter; denies connection

By TOM RAUM
Times Staff Writer

Writer Harold Weisburg has confirmed he originated a request last March 12 asking a California artist to "touch-up" photos of Tampan Kerry Thornley to make them look like Lee Harvey Oswald. But the writer denies that New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison had anything to do with the project.

In a story yesterday, The Times disclosed that a letter bearing Weisburg's name and what appeared to be the official letterhead of Garrison's office was sent to California artist Fred Newcomb asking for the retouching job.

THORNLEY'S lawyer, Arnold Levine, said he believed the touch-up was to be used by Garrison to support a theory that the Tampan posed as Oswald on several occasions when Oswald was away from New Orleans.

Weisburg, who has published four books on the Kennedy assassination, including "White-wash" and "Oswald in New Orleans," told The Times from his home in Frederick, Md., that Garrison did not ask him to write the letter, or tell him to send photos of Thornley to the artist to be retouched.

Then why was the request

on the District Attorney's letterhead? "I dictated it to one of (Garrison's) typists. I never saw it again and I didn't know she had used the letterhead."

WEISBURG SAID he dictated the letter "because of my illegible handwriting. If you saw my handwriting you'd know why I had to dictate the letter."

"At no time have I represented having any connection with Garrison," said the writer.

Weisburg did not explain why he was allowed the services of Garrison's typing pool.

"I have often been accused of being responsible for Garrison's interest in Thornley," Weisburg told The Times. "This is absolutely incorrect. Garrison's interest in Thornley was inevitable."

THORNLEY, 29, who presently resides in Tampa at 726 S. 51st St., was in the same Marine Corps unit with Oswald in 1959. The Tampan is awaiting trial on charges of perjury resulting from a Garrison prompted New Orleans grand jury investigation of the Kennedy assassination.

Garrison contends Thornley lied about an alleged association with Oswald in New Orleans during the months prior to the 1963 assassination.

Weisburg admittedly sent four sets of Thornley's picture to artist Newcomb and requested "What I would like you to do with one of each pair is pretend you were a make-up man doing the minimum necessary to make Thornley look as much as possible like Oswald..."

AFTER BEING read over the phone the entire letter, which was reproduced in yesterday's Times, Weisburg confirmed he was the author.

Weisburg charged that the letter and the partially retouched photos were leaked to The Times as "part of the propaganda campaign being waged against myself and Mr. Garrison."

"Your paper is being used as a dupe," he said.

Weisburg commented he personally "agrees with what Garrison says about the assassination in theory" but disagrees with him on "a number of details."

BRIEFLY, GARRISON holds that Oswald, David Ferrie, Clay Shaw and Jack Ruby, working on the fringe of the CIA, gave birth to the assassination plot while they were in New Orleans in 1963.

It was during this time that Garrison alleges Thornley met with his old Marine corps acquaintance.

Weisburg said he has been to New Orleans "half a dozen times to conduct my own investigation. I never lived in New Orleans, however, and I never spent more than two weeks there at one time."

It was apparently on one of these visits that the "touch-up" letter was written.

An aide to Garrison has denied the district attorney had intentions "of using any 'touched-up' photograph of Kerry Thornley in his trial."

Thornley, who has published a book on Oswald, denies official will represent South seeing the accused assassin anytime after 1959.

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