BIZARRE CASE DISSECTED

Triangulation... Code...a Riddle

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Frangible bullets, a hypnotized witness, a notebook with a "secret code," a convict-dope addict, an exchange of information with a foreign ally, a comedian turned detective, a triangulation of gunfire, an escape route through a manhole cover, a mysterious hairless pilot, and a middle for newsmen.

"The key to the whole case is through the looking glass. Black is white; white is black."

These were only some of the elements of what might have been a performance of the "Theater of the Absurd."

But this was real—at least in the mind of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison—when he launched his investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

He made the startling pronouncement two years and four days ago:

"WE HAVE POSITIVELY solved the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and will arrest every individual involved—in the course of time. We solved it weeks ago."

Arrest he did, and he talked, despite a warning on Feb. 20, 1967, that "after this I am not going to give out interviews. We don't want publicity."

"Exclusive" interviews appeared in dozens of publications and the attention of the world focused on what many hoped would be serious, professional and ethical investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Kennedy assassination.

IN THE MONTHS that fol-

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lowed, many felt what they were getting from the New Orleans district attorney was something far less.

Garrison had indicated the entire Warren Commission and its conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald, a native New Orleanian, had been the lone assassin of President Kennedy.

According to Garrison, the murder was something much different. Indeed, Garrison said Oswald was a "patsy," used by a conspiracy, hatched in New Orleans, to murder the president. He then revealed Kennedy was killed by a group of conspirators made up of Latin Americans opposed to Cuba's Fidel Castro and of former employes of the Central Intelligence Agency.

FINALLY, HE announced, the CIA, although not involved in the plot, concealed the fact its employes were involved.

To help him conceal his actions from reporters, able to check public records of his spending, a group of private businessmen formed what they called "Truth and Consequences," an organization that would help finance the investigation.

Garrison, always outspoken, reacted violently when he began to encounter opposition from the news media, from witnesses reluctant to testify, and from government agencies who declined to release certain dcuments to him.

IN THE COURSE of time, he accused the newspapers, television networks, national publications, the CIA, FBI, Secret Service, the attorney general—indeed, the whole federal government — of conspiring to hamper his investigation and keep the "truth" from the American public.

Not everyone turned against him. Comedian Mort Sahl, a man who gained a reputation for his personal insults, moved moved to New Orleans and announced he was working with Garrison in the probe.

Mark Lane, a lawyer who turned author and made a lot of money criticizing the Warren Report, moved here and had entree to Garrison's files and office.

PERRY RAYMOND Russo, an obscure insurance agent and sometime taxi driver, remembered—only after he was hypnotized under the auspices of Garrison's office—that he overheard Clay L. Shaw, David W. Ferrie and Oswald conspire at a party in Ferrie's apartment to kill Kennedy.

Vernon A. Bundy, a convicted thief and admitted dope addict, suddenly remembered he saw Shaw and Oswald together on the lakefront in the summer before the assassination.

Based principally on the "recall" of Russo and Bundy, three criminal court judges decided Garrison had enough evidence to hold Shaw for trial.

THEN GARRISON continued talking.

In the continuing course of the investigation, Garrison told newsmen:

"The President was killed by a fatal bullet that was fired from the front. There was a crossfire situation set up, which involved at least two pairs of men in the front —apparently two men behind the stone wall and two behind the picket fence, which is a little bit in back of the stone wall."

HE EVEN speculated at one point that shots could have been fired from in front of the president's motorcade by someone who was hiding in a manhole that was part of the sewer system beneath Dealey Plaza.

About the absence of bullet fragments at the scene, Garrison had a handy explanation.

"It appears they used frangible bullets (Frangible — "capable of being broken" — Webster). They are forbidden by the Geneva treaty, but are the kind of bullets that are quite often used—or would be used — for an assassination project by intelligence forces or forces employed by an intelligence agency. . . . Frangible bullets explode into little pieces."

Garrison also reported he had solved a mysterious cryptogram in Oswald's notebook through what he said was a simple enciphering system based on standard encoding principles.

BY DISCOVERING the code, Garrison claimed he found the private telephone number of Jack Ruby, the man who gunned down Oswald in the Dallas police station. Although it confused almost everyone, Garrison said it was all very simple —all you had to do was unscramble some numerical digits in the notebook.

Important as it was, it was never mentioned in the long trial just ended.

At still another point, Garrison announced his office had exchanged information with the intelligence agency of a foreign country which "successfully penetrated the assassination operation" against President Kennedy.

HE SAID the information received from the foreign country verified his statements that Kennedy was killed by "elements of the Central Intelligence Agency."

The DA went on and on. Shaw, he said, met with Ruby and Oswald in a Baton Rouge hotel prior to the assassination. Oswald was not a Communist. He said Ferrie, whom he described as one of history's most important persons, took his own life, despite a coroner's verdict that he died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

As the trial moved closer, even Garrison's staunchest supporters were desmayed at the turn of events. One of his own investigators had left long ago, claiming the whole case against Shaw was worthless.

FINALLY, GARRISON hollered that he needed the autopsy reports on Kennedy if he was to successfully prove his case. And he also required the services of Texas Gov. John Connally, who was with Kennedy in the death car and was wounded.

Well, Conally finally agreed and a Washington judge ordered the autopsy records—sealed at the request of the Kennedy family until 1971—sent to New Orleans for the trial.

Major victories, bue Garrison closed his case without calling Conally and without attempting to use the autopsy records.

The case which Garrison said would rock the world was, in most people's eyes, a drab fizzle.