

Jim Garrison dies; inspired 'JFK'

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Jim Garrison, the flamboyant district attorney whose maverick theories about the assassination of President John Kennedy inspired the movie "JFK," died Wednesday. He was 70.

Garrison served 12 years as New Orleans district attorney and 12 years as a judge on the state's 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, from which he stepped down last year.

His death, at his home in New Orleans, was announced in court by a former colleague, state Appellate Judge Patrick Schott.

Garrison had been ill for months, but the nature of his illness was not disclosed.

His belief that Kennedy was the victim of a CIA plot and government cover-up formed the basis for three books and the nationally publicized trial against New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, who was acquitted.

One of his books, "On the Trail of the Assassins," was the basis of the controversial 1991 movie "JFK."

In the movie, Garrison, ironically, was cast as Earl Warren, chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and head of the commission that



Jim Garrison in "JFK"

concluded that the president was slain by a lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

Directed by Oliver Stone, the movie stars Kevin Costner in the part of Garrison. Stone was in Thailand filming a movie and was unavailable for comment.

It was Garrison's belief that the Warren report was a hastily compiled document issued for the good of the country to quell unrest that might lead to war.

But critics, familiar with Garri-

son's flamboyant early career, said he pursued the Kennedy investigation just to get publicity.

In 1962, reform candidate Garrison was elected district attorney in an upset, the first local politician to make effective use of television. Once in office, his raids on French Quarter vice dens and gambling joints were frequently accompanied by an entourage of cameras, lights, technicians and reporters.

His hypnotic stare, air of poised confidence and rumbling, expressive voice made him a natural for

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the medium.

A series of coincidences led Garrison to believe in a CIA plot, and in 1969 he prosecuted Shaw on a charge of conspiring to kill the president.

The 34-day trial was an internationally publicized circus. One key witness died under mysterious circumstances. Others refused to say on the stand what they had told Garrison's investigators. One witness, a psychologist, destroyed his credibility by testifying that he regularly fingerprinted his daughter to make sure a spy had not taken her place.

The jury took less than an hour to acquit Shaw.

But Garrison won re-election to a third term in a landslide.

In 1973, he was charged by federal prosecutors with taking bribes to protect illegal pinball gambling interests. He conducted his own defense and was acquitted, but the trial left him only a month to campaign for a fourth term, and he was defeated by Harry Connick. □