

Garrison Planned To Link General To JFK Slaying

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NEW ORLEANS—New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, as late as March 1971, was preparing to accuse another person of conspiring to assassinate President John Kennedy.

Garrison's intended defendant this time was the late Air Force Gen. Charles Cabell, former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency and brother of Earl Cabell. Earl Cabell, who later became a congressman, was mayor of Dallas at the time of the assassination.

The Cabell story is brought out in tape recordings introduced in Garrison's pinball bribery trial in federal court here.

The account of how Garrison developed his theory that Cabell masterminded the Kennedy assassination is said by some to suggest the way Garrison developed his case against New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw, whom he did charge.

According to the tape Garrison talked with Pershing Gervais, his former chief investigator and closest friend, about the Cabell theory on March 9, 1971.

Garrison had gotten Gen. Cabell's name from "Who's Who in the South and Southwest." He was prepared to charge Gen. Cabell if he could establish that Cabell had been in New Orleans any time around the date of the assassination, Nov. 22, 1963.

Gervais, at the time of the conversation, had gone to Garrison's home to deliver \$1,000 the federal government says was a pinball bribery payment. Gervais, who then was working with the government, wore a voice transmitter under his coat.

Garrison's imagination was

triggered when he learned Gen. Cabell was former Mayor Cabell's brother. Garrison's theory was that the CIA was behind the assassination and that the Dallas city government and police department cooperated in it. He thought the assassination was masterminded out of New Orleans. He wanted Gervais to check the records at a motel in New Orleans to learn if Gen. Cabell had been there around November 1963.

In the tape, Garrison's voice could be heard saying, "If I can put him in the Fontainebleau Motel, then I've got enough to grab him by the ----- balls."

"OK," Gervais commented. Garrison: "Now the average guy, Joe Smith, don't want to hear any more when he finds out that the Number Two man in the CIA is the brother of the mayor of Dallas."

Later Garrison said, "Wait till the country finds out that—I been yelling CIA, wait till they find out that the Number Two man in the CIA is the man in charge of the Bay of Pigs and the brother of the mayor of Dallas."

Gen. Cabell was deputy director of the CIA until his resignation effective Jan. 31, 1962. His brother, former Rep. Cabell, says the general was "the engineer" of the Bay of Pigs operation.

Garrison faced the possibility that Gen. Cabell just might not have registered at the Fontainebleau around the assassination date. In that case, he said, he would bring up the General's name at some time when he had a national audience—in a television show or in a speech.

There is no evidence in the tapes that Gervais ever checked the motel records. Cabell's name was never mentioned again.

There was a major drawback to Garrison's plan, anyway. He had no defendant. Gen. Cabell had died in 1970—several months before Gervais.

Gervais, who probably knew Garrison better than any other person, was notoriously indifferent to Garrison's assassination theories.

In another tape Gervais told a pinball operator, "Clay Shaw had no more to do with that bull— than you did. Garrison just thought he was going to make himself a big man out of that pile of ----."

Earl Cabell, living in Dallas since his retirement from Congress, had heard that it was him, rather than his brother Charles, whom Garrison hoped to link to the assassination.

At any rate, Cabell was not disturbed. Of Garrison, he said, "That guy is nuttier than a fruitcake."

The story of Garrison's interest in Gen. Cabell could be important in New Orleans. Although Clay Shaw was acquitted of the assassination conspiracy charge, many voters still think Garrison "had something."

In the long run the Cabell story could be more significant than the government's charge that Garrison was guilty of taking payoffs from pinball operators.