



The theory of an Oswald conspiracy

"A man who in my judgment was one of history's most important individuals," was the way New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison (*above left*) described David Ferrie (*right*). Ferrie, a key suspect in Garrison's investigation of a possible conspiracy in the Kennedy assassination, was suddenly dead—an apparent suicide.

To those who knew Ferrie, Garrison's description seemed not only excessive but ironic. Ferrie was a depraved, tormented operator on the frayed edges of society. He owed his sudden notoriety only to an alleged acquaintanceship with Lee Harvey Oswald, which he denied. "They've got me pegged as the getaway pilot," he scoffed.

District Attorney Garrison's case against Ferrie—and against others he has not named—grows out of his conviction that President Kennedy was the victim of a plot which originated in New Orleans in late 1962 or early 1963. Oswald lived there from April 1963 until two months before the assassination, and Garrison's theory links Oswald, Ferrie and others with Cuban and American anti-Castro extremists. Garrison is convinced that a few members of this group decided to kill the President after his trip to Dallas was announced. Garrison acknowledges contradictions—how, for example, could Oswald be anti-Castro if he was also a Communist and active in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee? But he insists that these will be clarified when he is ready to take his case before a jury. "There will be arrests," he says, "charges and convictions."

This was not the first time Ferrie had come under official scrutiny. It was Garrison, in fact, who had arrested him in November 1963, three days after the assassination, on information that Ferrie

had known Oswald and had made an abrupt departure for Texas shortly after Oswald's arrest. An FBI investigation failed to connect Ferrie with any conspiracy. Garrison therefore dropped any connection with the case until last November, when new information on the assassination reminded him of Ferrie's strange account of his activities on and immediately after Nov. 22, 1963. Ferrie had told authorities that on the evening of Nov. 22, he and two young men left by car for Houston "to hunt geese." They had gone to Galveston on the 23rd and returned on the 24th to New Orleans, where Ferrie learned the district attorney was looking for him. "I felt," says Garrison, "that it was a very curious trip by a very curious man to a very curious place at a very curious time."

Ferrie was, indeed, a very curious man. In his mid-40s, hairless, save for pasted-on mohair wig and eyebrows, a homosexual, he was a highly skilled pilot. He had flown for a major airline for more than 10 years until fired in 1963. He had studied for the priesthood, spoke Spanish and read Latin and Greek, was listed in the city directory as a psychiatrist (he was not) and worked intermittently as flying instructor and private investigator. D.A.'s men staking out his apartment in recent weeks had observed him pacing back and forth in his living room, hour after hour. He had declared repeatedly that he hadn't long to live.

Entering the apartment after his death, authorities found a clutter of books and articles about the assassination. There was also a note, undated and unsigned: "To leave this life is, for me, a sweet prospect. I find nothing in it that is desirable and on the other hand everything that is loathsome."

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