

Fearless Garrison Tilts On

By Bill Lynch

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Jim Garrison has a penchant for taking on dragons in high places.

The ranking New Orleans District Attorney's latest target is the Warren Commission and its conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy.

Garrison, without disclosing details, says there was indeed a conspiracy — involving Oswald and others during Oswald's six-month stay here in 1963.

Garrison, now serving his second term as District Attorney, has challenged everyone from local politicians and judges to the State Legislature and the Governor.

A former FBI agent, Garrison swept onto the Louisiana political stage in 1962 when he upset an entrenched politician in the district attorney's office.

Within two months, the new prosecutor started a series of undercover operations cracking down on drinking and prostitution in the French Quarter.

The eight judges of the State Criminal Court in New Orleans promptly cut off his funds, saying they were not for investigative purposes.

"When Garrison denounced the action, the judges charged him with defamation. Garrison shot back: 'If the judges have been injured it is by their own conduct, which I have merely publicized.'"

Won in High Court

When the case came to trial, a rural judge was brought in to preside without a jury, and the Attorney General of the State prosecuted it. Garrison was convicted and fined \$1000.

But he fought the issue up to the Supreme Court, and in November 1964, the high court set the conviction aside, on grounds that the law was unconstitutional.

Never repentent, the 6-foot, 6-inch Garrison was jubilant. "Not only has it been reaffirmed that everyone has the right to criticize his public officials without being thrown into a dungeon, but the Attorney General of Louisiana and the Supreme Court of Louisiana have learned something about the rights of American citizens."

While waiting for the U.S. Supreme Court to act, Garrison wasted no time plunging into battles against the dragons of his realm. He had a grand jury indict one of the judges for malfeasance in office for cutting off his funds, but the judge was acquitted. The judges claimed Garrison was usurping police functions.

A month later Garrison was back feuding with them again, this time resuming police functions by raiding lottery shops. Then he got into a hassle with the superintendent of the Police Department, charging him with opposing vice crackdowns because he felt it was bad for the tourists' business.

The Police-DA battle raged so furiously that he arrested nine policemen and charged them with brutality, declaring he was going all out to end "an old Orleans custom—that of police brutality."

In late 1963, with the Louisiana political primaries warming up, Garrison jumped into the race by announcing he would run against his arch foe, attorney general Jack Gremlion. For a brief few months he was on a ticket with John McKeithen, the man who won, but was induced to withdraw.

Rights of Individual
Garrison has ideas about protecting the rights of the individual against the police. In 1963, he refused to accept obscenity charges against a bookstore manager for selling a book considered lewd by the Police Department.

The book was "From Another Country" by Negro writer James Baldwin. Declared Garrison, "The idea of a police officer walking into a legitimate bookstore, removing a book from the shelf that is written by a reputable author and has been critically acclaimed, and then arresting the store manager is outrageous."

When it was disclosed that the inheritance-tax attorney for Orleans Parish received \$100,000 a year in fees Garrison blasted his political pal—Gov. McKeithen—for such patronage.

In 1964, Garrison was ensnared by the Louisiana Legislature when he charged that bribery was involved in the passage of a bill affecting bail bondsmen.

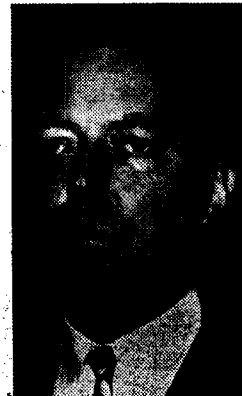
Whatever the "dragons" may think of Garrison, the citizens of New Orleans think of him in terms of King Arthur rather than Don Quixote. Not only have they re-elected him overwhelmingly to a second

term, but they've also installed candidates for the judgeships that he has endorsed.

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JIM GARRISON
... dragon-slayer

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