

How Garrison was Framed (ctd.)

"Most of the people in the town instinctively know what it's for because I've been telling them that the Government had to charge me with something because I have caught them, you know. I caught them.

"Anyway, one of the places they take me to before they mug and print me is the ultra-violet lights where they expect to see my hands all purple from counting the money. Well, I wasn't interested in the money, because it wasn't mine. I supposed it was three or four thousand dollars. I was surprised to find it was just 20 fifties, a thousand dollars.

"And they had to throw away the first four or five Polaroid shots because my hands came out black. But finally by holding them in different positions after about 20 minutes they were able to find, on the tips of my fingers, slivers of purple from touching the envelope, and they pretended to be greatly satisfied by that. And then they mugged me and printed me there, the Internal Revenue. Then they -- seven of them -- two cars -- took me to the Marshall's office where, behind bars, I was mugged again and this went on until 2:00 o'clock. Then I had to go through several hours of arraignment and it wasn't just recognizance. They wanted recognizance plus a \$ 25,000 bond in case I failed to show up. Where the hell am I going to go? Where am I going to get the \$ 25,000? But anyway, that's the way they've been handling it. The recognizance, you know, because I've lived here most of my life and I have position in the community meant that I didn't have to. But the bond was the alternative in case I failed to show.

"Anyway, a few days later I just got kind of curious at this overwhelming use of power by the U.S. prosecutor in New Orleans and it occurred to me -- I was wondering if anybody ever checked if the U.S. Prosecutor was violating the law of Louisiana because I prosecute the law of Louisiana. And he has to have a Grand Jury indictment but I can charge by my signature. And so I went to the Criminal Code and to my pleasant surprise I found that in seven different ways he and the head of the U.S. Organized Crime Task Force down there had violated the law of Louisiana. I charged them. The headlines say 'D.A. Charges Callinhouse.' And he turned beet red and said some unprintable words and spent the afternoon locked in his room surrounded by 10 marshalls to await the arrest. But we don't operate that way. We just let the Sheriff send for them at their convenience -- anybody with any status or any citizen, you know, that's not going to hit the road. We don't believe in that muzzle stuff. We've been able to communicate our philosophy to the police sufficiently well that we have almost no riots. Anyway, that's the story. I've been framed rather neatly.

"There were two other set-ups. One was the one I just told you. There are only a few because the Organized Crime Act is hardly a year old -- less than a year old -- and so they started it then. He (Gervais) just started paying me back. One of them was when I checked out of the Fontainebleau. I told them the bill seemed excessive. I don't want to complain but, you see, if I could receive a special rate simply -- not that I'm trying to be a hustler, but I go to a hotel or something, half the time there'll be no charge and the other time there will be a charge. Just to encourage me to come back. Well, they hit me with a bill like it was a stripping joint, you know? So that's when I contacted him and said, 'Can't you do something about this bill? This seems unreasonable. He's gone about an hour now. He's probably met with the Federal people. They mark the money in advance and so forth. And I didn't even put it in my wallet. He handed it to me in a roll and he said to me, 'Here's another whale,' or something like that. He said, 'I wasn't able to get a reduction but I recently sold some property and I can help you, so it won't be a problem.' And he puts another 'whale' as he calls it, something like that. I think he still owes me a thousand if I remember correctly. So naturally I assumed that he was paying back part of the debt. Oh, I took it without any question. He says, 'Here's another whale toward our straightening things out! See, something like that.

"I understand that they have tape recordings with all the tape spliced. Oh, incidentally, they printed all this in the papers -- the Federal Government.

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In the course of his questioning by Mr. Howard, Di Pierro told the Grand Jury:

"... From that moment on, I just looked at the girl, and I saw him (Sirhan) get down off the tray stand. And when I went to turn, the next thing I saw was him holding the gun. He kind of moved around Mr. Uecker, which (sic) is the Captain at the hotel. He kind of motioned around him and stuck the gun straight out, and nobody could move. It was -- you were just frozen; you didn't know what to do. And then I saw the first powdering or plastering. When he pulled the trigger, the first shot, Mr. Kennedy fell down."

Later on, Mr. Howard Di Pierro: "How close to the Senator was the suspect when this gun started firing?"

The witness replied: "Four feet - four to six feet."

Q. "What did he do?"

A. "He kind of went around Mr. Uecker, and he - from here - he looked like - though he pulled his hand out from here and came around. And when he stuck the gun, he looked like he was on his tiptoes because he wasn't that tall. Mr. Uecker is quite huge, and he tried to get Mr. Uecker out of the way, and he shot him."

Like the testimony of Uecker and Minasian, Di Pierro's deposition also rules out completely any possibility that the fatal bullet that was fired pointblank into Kennedy's head, behind the right ear, could have come from Sirhan's gun.

Here, then, we have three eyewitnesses at the shooting scene whose concordant testimony runs counter to the official story - drastically so. How did the prosecution get around that little difficulty? Quite simply by not calling either Uecker or Minasian as witnesses at the trial of Sirhan. Amazingly, the defense, too, dispensed with the testimony of these two key witnesses which would have completely exonerated their client from the accusation of having fired the fatal bullet into Kennedy's head.

As to Di Pierro, they managed to make him look silly - again with a benign assist from one of the defense lawyers - over the "girl-in-the-polka-dress" part of his testimony with the result that the rest of his story was also dismissed as fantasy. Yet he most certainly had told the truth in every respect.

Still another aspect of the material evidence is clearly in Sirhan's favor. Dr. Noguchi, as we have seen, described the direction of the fatal bullet as having been "right to left, slightly to front, upward." On the other hand, Sirhan, shooting from the steam table, was to the left of Kennedy and cannot, therefore, have fired a shot that passed through the Senator's head from right to left. And he was in front of Kennedy which makes it impossible for a bullet coming from his gun to travel in a direction "slightly to front" after striking the victim's head.

What is the solution, then, to the seemingly insuperable mystery posed by these unchallengeable facts and circumstances?

Well, the answer is simple enough: There must have been somebody else shooting at Kennedy about the same time Sirhan started firing. Somebody who was behind the Senator and very close up against him. Was there such a person?

There was such a man. His name is Thano Eugene Cesar, he was close ^hbehind Kennedy and he ^hwas armed with a revolver. Granted, Cesar had a perfectly legitimate reason for cruising behind the Senator with a gun in his holster, for he was acting as a bodyguard on the occasion. He was not a regular Kennedy bodyguard, though, nor was he on the staff of the Ambassador Hotel, but had been hired at short notice - that is the official story, anyway - from a local agency called Ace Guard Service. In other words, no one in Kennedy's party knew anything about him.

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After the CIA had successfully eliminated President Kennedy and put the more like-minded Lyndon B. Johnson in the driver's seat, its tenacious yet futile campaign to get Castro out of the way through murder continued for several more years. Little news of this ever reached the American people who were, moreover, too preoccupied with Vietnam during that period to pay much attention to Cuba. Foreign sources were more attentive. The London Times, for instance, on June 1, 1966, gave prominent display to a dispatch entitled "Dr. CASTRO MURDER PLOT - Cuba accuses C.I.A." which said in part:

"The Cuban Government said today (May 31) that the two men killed coming ashore from a launch on Sunday night were on a mission to assassinate Dr. Fidel Castro, the Prime Minister. A statement issued by the Ministry of the Interior named them as Sandalio Herminio Diaz and Armando Romero.

"Two prisoners taken out of the water when the launch was destroyed by a patrol boat were named as Antonio de la Cuesta Valle, leader of the group, and Eugenio Saldivar Miques. The Ministry alleged that Cuesta was an agent of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), and that the launch had put out from Marathon Key in Florida...

"The objective of the incursion, according to the prisoners' confession, was to carry out an attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government in order to create conditions favourable for an imperialist aggression," the statement declared.

"This is the second alleged plot to kill Dr. Castro announced by the regime in three months. In March Dr. Rolando Cubelas, a former leader of the student revolutionary directorate, was sent to gaol for 30 years on a charge of conspiring with exiles to make an assassination attempt. He was said to have made contact in France."

Chalk up two more attempts on Castro's life, then, both made in the first half of 1966, for a recorded total of 8 so far. There was more of the same to come, to be sure. On Feb. 16, 1968, the New Orleans Times-Picayune published a dispatch from Washington entitled: "Three Attempts on Castro's Life in 1967 Include August Shootout" which contained these paragraphs:

"U.S. Intelligence experts now have hard evidence that an all-out assassination attempt was made against Cuba's Fidel Castro last summer. Furthermore, they say at least two previous attempts were made on Castro's life earlier in the year, though they are unable to determine if all the attempts are connected...

"The latest attack is the most solidly documented and detailed incident. The story was pieced together from accounts of Cuban refugees, and these accounts were checked against each other. According to the reports, the bearded Communist leader was attending a movie premiere at the Chaplin Theater... in the swank Havana suburb of Miramar one sultry night last August. As the Castro party arrived, a car carrying three men dressed in Cuban military uniforms roared past the theater and opened fire.

"At least one of Castro's bodyguards was killed, but they returned the fire instantly and killed the three attackers as their car spun out of control. Castro himself apparently was unharmed..."

That makes a grand total of 11 assassination attempts - known attempts, that is - over a six-year span. No doubt the series continued and will continue as long as the CIA reigns virtually supreme in the United States.

I have always held, from the start, that President Kennedy was murdered by the CIA. Very few of my fellow-critics were inclined to go along with me in that respect, even though they refused to believe the official version of what had happened in Dallas. Jim Garrison was the only one who, starting out from entirely different premises, arrived at virtually the same conclusions I had reached before. Some time ago, however, I received amazingly strong and significant support for my contention from an altogether unexpected quarter - one that is poles apart from my way of thinking and my political position.

(to be continued in the next issue)