

MARK LANE: ASSASSINATIONS YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

PART TWO OF EVO'S INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR OF "RUSH TO JUDGMENT."

by Claudia Dreifus

Mark Lane first became involved in the investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy after an Oklahoma woman named Shirley Martin sent an article he had written to Mrs. Marguerita Oswald, mother of the alleged "lone assassin." The article was a lawyer's brief emphasizing points Lee Harvey Oswald's attorney might have used had his client lived to see a trial. Mrs. Oswald liked Lane's brief and suggested that he attempt to represent her dead son's interests at the Warren Commission hearings. The Commission, of course, refused to permit Lane to act as Oswald's lawyer. But undaunted, he began a five-year investigation into the JFK assassination and the others that followed.

For the past year Lane has been living in New Orleans where he worked as an associate of D.A. Jim Garrison. It was while participating in the New Orleans investigation that Lane began unraveling an uncanny pattern in the four major assassinations of the nineteen sixties. For Lane the pattern is clear: America has become a land where political assassination is the major weapon employed by the military and the intelligence community to prevent social change.

CD: You worked with New Orleans District Attorney James Garrison for nearly a year. Tell me something about him. The media tended to characterize Garrison as some kind of mad politician who was robbing the grave of John Kennedy in an effort to grab national headlines. They always seemed to portray him as power-hungry, publicity-seeking and partly insane. One tends to be rather distrustful of media descriptions, so I'm curious to know what he's really like and what he was trying to do.

ML: Garrison is one of those rare people this country produces on occasion. He is wise, brilliant and unintimidated. I don't believe in the cult of personality, but there are few men such as Jim. In my life I've met just a handful: W.E.B. Dubois, Bertrand Russell, Jim Garrison and Dick Gregory. Garrison gave up what was a tremendously promising political career to conduct a real investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy. He was one of the most promising figures in Southern politics. He'll probably be defeated in November when he's up for re-election as New Orleans' DA.

You know, right after Clay Shaw was acquitted, when the New Orleans newspapers were really out for Garrison's head. Dick Gregory sent him a telegram: "To the hip folks, you're a hero. Never mind about the fools." That's kind of how I feel about him, too.

CD: With the exception of PLAYBOY, it seems that most of the media was hostile to Garrison's investigation and tended to distort the facts about his effort. You were down in New Orleans while he was preparing the Clay Shaw case. What really happened?

ML: The media was about as accurate in reporting what was taking place at the trial in New Orleans as they are about everything else. Let me give you an example: Huntley-Brinkley. They sent down an ace reporter, Chuck Quinn, to cover the trial. I know Quinn from the time he was the Herald-Tribune's legislative correspondent in Albany. I was an Assemblyman at the time, and we often had drinks together.

Now, Louisiana is one of those states where they don't pay jurors for jury service. People thought the Clay Shaw trial would go as long as eight weeks, so every prospective juror was told that he could be excused for financial reasons if he wanted to be. Because of that, most of the jurors, over a thousand, were excused. Louisiana is a poor state, and a lot of people just can't afford to be without an income for two months. It's not a good system for jury selection at all.

For the first three days Shaw's attorneys asked every prospective juror, "Do you believe the Warren Commission was correct in its findings?"

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The late MALCOLM X

Photos by Bob Furum



Bullet holes in lecterns at the Audubon Ballroom



Malcolm X being rushed to the hospital

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Commission Report?" Of the ninety-six who were asked that question, ninety-five answered, "No, I don't believe the report...No, he couldn't have fired that fast...No, the shots came from too many different directions." Just one juror said, "Well, I'll have to go along with the government." One prospective juror out of ninety-six believed the Warren Report! Finally, the judge had to order the defense attorneys to desist from asking that question because he was afraid he'd never get a jury. At any rate, as the days passed juror after juror was excused because of financial reasons. Finally, on the next to last day of jury selection they had found twelve jurors and one alternate. And David Brinkley that night, in his first comment on the trial, said something like, "the flamboyant DA Jim Garrison is prosecuting Clay Shaw down there, but he can't get a jury--The reason for this ~~being~~ that he's gone through 1,000 jurors so far and most of them say they believe the Warren Report."

The fact is that only one of 1,111 said that. Ninety-five prospective jurors said they disbelieved that piece of official fiction. And the other 1,000 were never even asked that question. Well, I talked with Chuck Quinn and asked him how such a blatant lie could get onto NBC national network news. Chuck said he couldn't understand it, and he was as upset as I was. He promised to find out the truth. Here's NBC's only correspondent in New Orleans and he never gave David Brinkley that information. It's an absolute lie and it is presented by Brinkley to the whole nation as a fact. This is just one example of the kind of reportage that came out of New Orleans.

CD: Perry Russo, the prosecution's chief witness against Clay Shaw, came off terribly poorly in the media. In New York, one always got the impression that he was slightly deranged.

/ML: Perry was often more maligned by the press than even Garrison. Here's another example of misreporting: TIME magazine described Perry as "Drug Addict Perry Russo," therefore he became a drug addict in the eyes of the nation. Perry has never taken an aspirin; he's never taken a drug in his life. But since TIME had decided that he was a junkie, the whole country thought that the main witness against Clay Shaw was some kind of pill and needle popper. Perry had attended a meeting at which the impending assassination of John F. Kennedy was discussed by Clay Shaw, Lee Harvey Oswald and David Ferrie. His credibility was central to the prosecution's case.

CD: What exactly happened during the Clay Shaw trial?

/ML: Well, Garrison destroyed the Warren Report at the trial, that's what really happened. Two things were attempted by Garrison: Number one, to prove that there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy, and secondly, to show that Clay Shaw was part of that conspiracy.

The press revealed that polls were made of the jurors and that Garrison had failed utterly in his two-fold attempt. Well, I personally polled all of the jurors several times and had long interviews with them. The jurors were convinced that Jim Garrison had destroyed the Warren Report at the trial and a conspiracy existed beyond any doubt. Every juror I talked to was confident there was a conspiracy to kill John Kennedy. Then I asked if they thought Clay Shaw was part of the conspiracy. Most of the jurors believed he was. But the jurors said they did not believe the evidence was strong enough to prove his involvement beyond a reasonable doubt.

CD: So, why didn't you get a conviction instead of an acquittal?

/ML: The reason for this is that Perry Russo was very much afraid that information of a derogatory personal nature would come out about him at the trial. There was something in his personal life about his relationship with David Ferrie which he did not want revealed. Clay Shaw and his lawyers were very much aware of this. Through reporters like Jim Falen of TRUE magazine, who work as reporters, I believe, as a cover, information was delivered to Perry that if he wouldn't be "rough" on the

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defense these questions would never come up at the trial. And finally, he was told that he would hear the key question. And the key question did come up. It was: "Mr. Russo, you were present at this meeting where you claim that Clay Shaw discussed the killing of President Kennedy with Lee Harvey Oswald. Did you believe that this meeting was a conspiracy or just maybe a 'bull session'?" Russo reluctantly said he thought it was a "bull session." That was all the defense required. When they summed up to the jury, this was the point that the defense lawyer Diamond hammered away at. "If there was a conspiracy," Diamond said, "and if there was a meeting, the only person who was present and told you about it was Perry Russo. He says it was a bull-session. Can you say that you are positive beyond a reasonable doubt that it was in fact a conspiracy and not a bull-session, when you heard this one witness say that p was?" Every juror I talked to said that this was the turning point in the trial for him. Since Perry wouldn't say that the meeting was definitely a conspiracy, they couldn't go as far as to vote "guilty."

CD: Weren't there other witnesses that placed Shaw and Oswald together?

ML: Yes, there were many—in fact the national press just seemed to gloss over and forget. The first nine witnesses in the trial were CORE and Klu Klux Klan members from Clinton, Louisiana who saw Clay and Oswald together during a CORE voter registration drive.

CD: How did Jim Garrison first get started on the JFK case?

ML: His investigation began right after the assassination. Two days after Dallas, he arrested David Ferrie, who had just returned to New Orleans by car from Texas. The charge was "conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy." Garrison questioned him and was convinced that Ferrie was involved. So he turned Ferrie over to the FBI who kept him for awhile and then released him, saying he didn't know anything about the killing. As far as Garrison was concerned, that was good enough for him. At the time he still had a lot of faith in the FBI. After he read my book, DOWN TO JUDGMENT, he decided to reopen his investigation.

CD: What was Garrison like before all this? He seems like one of those odd, remarkable flakes that every now and then the South produces. They're weird and they're good in strange ways—like William Fulbright — or Huey Long.

ML: Well, he was an establishment figure. He's a Southern prosecutor who was a strong supporter of the war in Vietnam. While independent politically, he was a part of the New Orleans Establishment. But what he's discovered since he opened the JFK investigation has made him change his position politically.

The national press really had a hard time destroying him because he was such an establishment figure. But they certainly did their job. A perfect example of a media lie was one that appeared in the CHICAGO TRIBUNE, THE NEW YORK TIMES, and just about every other important publication in the country. It was an exclusive story that originated from sources unknown in Washington. The story was that Garrison had been given a mental discharge from the military at the end of World War II. The fact is that Jim flew an unarmed Piper Cub over enemy lines as a spotter for artillery. At the end of the war, a grateful government awarded him the Air Medal for his services. Also, he received an honorable discharge and was made a Lieutenant Colonel in the Reserves. So the story has absolutely no basis in fact. But it appeared all around the country in some of the nation's most respected journals.

CD: You said that Garrison had changed his political views radically since he began the assassination investigation. How does he reconcile these new attitudes with being an officer in the military reserves?

ML: Garrison has resigned from the reserves as a protest against the war in Vietnam.

CD: During the course of your five year investigation of the murder of President Kennedy, you've also done some inquiry about the assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy. Do you think the four assassinations are connected?

ML: Well, I don't think that all these murders are the acts of "lone, crazed assassins." I do know that the CIA killed John Kennedy. I don't know who specifically killed Malcolm or King or Robert Kennedy. But an ordinary police technique requires an examination of that question. If there appears to be a similar motive because a similar kind of person is killed, you can develop some hypotheses to work on.

Frankly, these four crimes have many frightening similarities. All of the victims were men who had the ability and charisma to move masses of people to change the direction of this country. They were men who spoke out against the war in Vietnam, against control of this country by the hardware manufacturers and the

Pentagon, and against racism. All of them are dead, killed, according to official explanations, by "lone assassins" or Black Muslims. Similar methods were used in three of the cases. And in the deaths of John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, the assassins all escaped from the scene.

CD: With the exception of a piece in the REALIST, very little has been written in the non-black press about Malcolm X's assassination. Why do you think Malcolm was really killed? Almost no one that I know in the Black community believes the Muslims did it.

ML: Evidently Malcolm didn't think he was being threatened by the Muslims, either. Shortly before his death, when he knew he was a marked man, he told his wife, his sister, and his biographer that he thought the CIA was about to execute him.

I think he was eliminated for very important political reasons. When Malcolm X was spokesman for Elijah Muhammad he was receiving more column inches in TIME and NEWSWEEK than Martin Luther King. But when he returned from Mecca and said Blacks and Whites could work together, the press began to ignore him. He was really beginning to get effective just before his assassination. He was building a very important political base for himself in Harlem. But he did something even more unforgivable than that: he developed important ties with African leaders which really could have brought revolutionary changes in terms of the black liberation movement at home. When he moved in these two areas it became clear he was a threat to those who run the country, so he no longer was on television. And you never read about him anymore. And then he was dead. In his autobiography he points out how he was trying to develop a radical coalition of Blacks and Whites. He felt his work would probably be responsible for his being killed—perhaps before he finished his book—which is what happened.

CD: That's precisely what the Black Panthers today are trying to do: get radical whites working as allies of revolutionary blacks. That's also why they are getting killed and jailed. But back to Malcolm, what precisely happened?

ML: On the day he was killed the New York City cops were in the Audubon Ballroom in droves. Malcolm had asked for police protection because his house had been bombed a week earlier. Well, he never got very much police protection, but he did get a lot of police witnesses to his death. They saw several men walk up to Malcolm and fire at him at a public meeting in Harlem. One of Malcolm's bodyguards who fired at one of the killers, was arrested for assault and violating the Sullivan Act, while the assassins escaped.

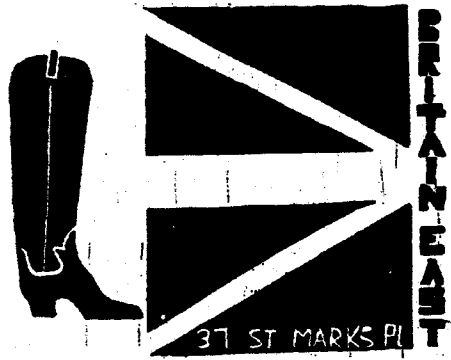
CD: Getting back to RFK's death. How is the public ever to know the truth about his killer's true "sponsors"?

ML: I don't think a real investigation can ever be launched into this case. People just don't seem to care. The case has many questions which will probably forever remain unanswered because of the mini-trial in Los Angeles. It was like the trial of Jack Ruby and James Earl Ray in many respects. The prosecution and defense were in absolute agreement about one question: it was essential to prove there was no conspiracy. In Dallas it was essential to prove that Jack Ruby was not involved in a conspiracy to kill Lee Harvey Oswald when clearly he was. In Los Angeles, it was urgent to prove that Sirhan acted alone, and the same holds true for the Memphis mini-trial.

CD: Why?

ML: Because the federal government has taken the position in each of these cases that there was no conspiracy and that each man acted alone. We have a lot of lone, unhappy nuts running around the country killing people today.

CD: Don't you think that if they found a conspiracy they would have been certain to pin the rap on the left. Mayor Yorty was spouting on a good deal about Sirhan's alleged affiliations with the Dubois Club. (Continued on Page 19)



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...they might have. But we all know that nobody in the DeMunn Club or on the left is involved in assassinating important officials in this country. It's never been that way. Who's been killed on the right in this country? My goodness, Bull Connor was never shot at! How do you explain that in a rational society??? Assassination is really a concept of the extreme right. The Minuteman advocate it openly. But in practice, political assassinations of high public officials seems to be limited to well-organized intelligence agencies.

CD: While you were working as an associate of James Garrison in New Orleans, did you come across any information relevant to Senator Kennedy's murder?

JML: Robert Kennedy sent two emissaries to see Jim Garrison at two different times after he had declared for the Presidency. One of them was the only man whom I know of who went to school with both Robert Kennedy and Jim Garrison—different schools at different times. But he knew both of them well.

CD: What was the purpose of his mission?

JML: He told Garrison that Robert Kennedy had sent him. Robert Kennedy wanted Jim to know that if he were elected President, he would apprehend and prosecute those responsible for killing his brother. He also wanted Jim to know that he supported the New Orleans investigation.

CD: So, what RFK was saying was that he thought that Garrison was on the right track and that he believed in what he was doing.

JML: Right. He said he supported the investigation. He also said that there were assassins of his brother, that they had not been apprehended or prosecuted, which meant that he didn't accept the fiction of Oswald's lone assassin.

CD: Do you think Kennedy sent the emissary in an effort to get Garrison to cool things with Sirhan's situation?

JML: That is a possibility. But I tend to think that was the situation. A second emissary came from New Orleans shortly after the first one. This time he came from the New York area. The interesting thing is that both of them carried the same phrase from Senator Kennedy: the phrase was: "I CAN'T SAY ANYTHING NOW. THERE ARE GUNS BETWEEN ME AND THE WHITE HOUSE."

CD: How did you know that?

JML: No one familiar with the case believed that the boys they finally picked up and charged were involved in the murder. But by that time, the Black community was alienated from the police that they declined to make the investigation and trial. The DA's office at the trial tried to pin the rap on the Muslims. But in Harlem there's a great deal of cynicism about that explanation. Malcolm himself told many people just before his death that he was afraid he was due to be executed by the CIA.

CD: Getting on to the Robert F. Kennedy assassination, here again there seems to be a very similar pattern to earlier political murders. For instance people who were witnesses to the assassinations seem to be dropping off like flies. At least a dozen witnesses to the JFK assassination have died—some of them from very curious causes. There was a reporter who interviewed Jack Ruby, who was garroted chopped to death in his jail. And then there were all these people who "committed suicide" in police stations and elsewhere. And now this girl who was an important witness in the Robert Kennedy assassination, the "girl in the polka-dot dress," has just "committed suicide." She was the blonde who was seen talking with Sirhan just before he pulled the trigger. It was also said that she ran from the assassination screaming "We killed him! We killed him!" What do you know about this?

JML: I haven't really done as much work on this case as I would have liked to. However, I was in Los Angeles shortly after the assassination and I did talk to a number of the witnesses. I talked to several witnesses who gave their names to the police and who saw a great deal of what there was to see that night. They were never called by the police, never questioned, and never testified at the trial.

CD: What did they see?

JML: Well, they saw the girl in a polka-dot dress closely associated with Sirhan. Also, originally there was information which indicated that a car would be made available to Sirhan—at least Sirhan thought there would be.

CD: Yes, didn't the police find the keys to a car that belonged to a Hotel Ambassador kitchen worker in Sirhan's possession?

JML: Yes, they found that key. But they brushed that off as a coincidence. If you could give Sirhan a license, he could get a car. If that thing really worked, and he could show he was involved with the CIA or an intelligence

agency. Because if we was involved with such a group, he would not have the faintest idea that he was. There are various ways intelligence organizations motivate people to do things without their knowing they are doing them on behalf of a certain group. Sirhan's Arab nationalism could easily have been played upon as his motive for the murder could bear no relationship to the original sponsor.

CD: What is a "sponsor"?

JML: It's an intelligence term. If the CIA or a far-left group wanted to murder JFK, they would be the sponsors. They would establish "false sponsors." The left, for example, would be a sponsor for those of a conservative host. For them, the record shows Oswald's associations with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and his trip to the Soviet Union. For the moderates, there is Jack Ruby and his Mafia connections. We're all against that group. For the left, we can condemn and suspect H.L. Hunt and the Dallas oil forces. These theories are encouraged. Only if you brush the false sponsors aside and dig deep into the matter do you come upon the classic pattern of an intelligence operation. Neither the right nor the left—and certainly not the moderates—are involved. Just a group of gentlemen with fine manners, socially accepted in all ways—except for one: they wanted JFK out of the way. They have modest, almost-merely control of the entire planet. Now probably the moon as well.

JML: I met one of them while I was down there. The other emissary was in New Orleans when I was out of town giving a lecture. But Jim told me who he was and that he said pretty much the same things as the fellow I met.

CD: Why didn't Garrison press Senator Kennedy into making the assassination into a conspiracy issue?

JML: Well, he did not try to persuade Robert Kennedy to make his position public—if not for political reasons, but for RFK's own personal safety. What Garrison told

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the enthrallment was that... Tell Robert Kennedy that there is no sanctuary in the White House. There is no immunity. Your brother was killed not when he was a candidate, but when he was President. And secondly, I would give you the same advice that I would give any other witness. Don't be the repository of exclusive information. Make it as public as possible—otherwise your life may be in danger. ... But RFK's answer was adamant. He would say nothing until the FBI Primary the next day. At that time he would make his position known. "There are guns between me and the White House."

CD: And so he was dead several hours after the last primary was over. Yes, there were guns between Robert Kennedy and the White House. But for all these months before the assassination, weren't you tempted to split the story to the press?

ML: I was. But I couldn't say anything because Garrison had asked me not to. On numerous occasions when I was speaking on college campuses or on T.V. talk shows, I was asked "does Robert Kennedy accept the Warren Report?"—as if the fact that he did not was proof that Oswald was the lone assassin.

I've always felt this was not a family affair and the assassination of a President had implications for the people who were not members of the Kennedy family—the assassination had ramifications for everyone. But Garrison said I shouldn't say anything and I didn't, until one night last June. I was on a T.V. program in Washington, D.C. and the question was of RFK's endorsement of the Warren Report came up. So I said, "I know his position, but I'm not allowed to discuss it. Let's see, it's ten o'clock here in Washington. That means that it's seven in California and the polls will be closing soon. Nothing I say here can have any effect on the primary election out there. So I think I can tell you

this without betraying any confidence." And I reported the entire conversation him and with the enthusiasm I ended by saying that RFK's final message through his courtiers was "I can't say anything now. There are guns between me and the White House." Later on T.V. I saw him shot to death.

CD: One might have thought the press would have picked up on your very important revelation, but I don't remember reading about it anywhere.

ML: No, the TIMES does not exactly pick up on this. The only paper to mention what I said was an industry magazine called BROADCASTING. They featured an article by Jack Anderson, Drew Pearson's associate. Anderson was in the audience when I was on the air.

CD: What about "Teddy Kennedy"? If your theory that any charismatic leader bent on improving the country is fated for assassination is correct, then Teddy would be a logical next victim. Do you think the forces that killed JFK and RFK also have Edward Kennedy on their list?

ML: Well, that depends. "Teddy" has something going for him that nobody else in the country has. He has that last name, which means he has built in charisma.

CD: He's also the last of a matching set.

ML: What does that have to do with it? There'd be no reason to kill Ted Kennedy unless he started using that charisma for concepts considered radical in this odd society.

CD: He seems to be using his talent and his position as an active opponent of the very people you say killed his

brothers, the intelligence community and the hardware manufacturers. His statements on the ABEI, on the Space Program, and on the year must make the folks at the Pentagon shudder just a little.

ML: Today Kennedy may become President of the United States, but he's a long way from that now. The question is what will be done if he is elected? We'll know more about it between now and 1972. I believe it is plain that if he would do things that displease the hardware manufacturers and the Pentagon he may be eliminated as a candidate. No intelligence group wants to use "executive action," their term for assassination, unless it has to. It is engaged in as a last resort when all other techniques fail. But if he is a serious threat, if he cannot be eliminated any other way, his life may well be in danger. I hope he knows this by now. I mean, the family can't lean that slowly.

The second of two articles, "For Mark Lane's presidential assassination of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy, see last week's EVO.

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