

La. 'General' Card Kicks Up Novel Storm

By BOB ENDICOTT

(Special to the States-Item)
COLUMBUS, Ohio—A white wallet-sized card promises to kick off as much trouble for Gordon Novel as his refusal to testify in Kennedy assassination investigation at New Orleans.

The card says the 29-year-old former night club owner is a brigadier general on the staff of Louisiana Gov. John J. McKeithen. It's similar to a Kentucky colonel's commission, but much more rare.

Novel showed it to reporters yesterday, apparently as supporting evidence that he is telling the truth in the bizarre probe.

BUT GOV. M'KEITHEN quickly denied he had given Novel an honorary commission.

"I've never heard of him, and I've never signed a brigadier general's card for him," the governor declared. "This has got to be a forgery."

A telephone check with McKeithen's office at Baton Rouge set off a quick check of the files. Novel's name was not among those commissioned, an aide said.

McKeithen puts a lot of importance on the honorary commissions, and generalships are reserved for the highest of high-ranking visitors to the state.

"**THE GOVERNOR** approves every one of the commissions personally, and only he can sign the certificate," William Redmann, the governor's chief counsel, said. "It's fantastic that Novel has one if it's genuine."

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About 40 cards have been issued during the McKeithen administration. Armed forces generals usually receive them. Gen. Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua received a unique admiral's commission during his visit last week.

"You really have to be somebody before we hand them out," Redmann said. "We give Louisiana colonelcies to everybody else."

REDMANN SAID some blank generalship cards were missing and could have been passed out by someone outside the governor's office. The cards disappeared from the old gubernatorial offices about two years ago.

Novel is wanted in New Orleans as a material witness in Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigation of the Kennedy slaying. He also faces a charge of conspiracy to burglarize a Schlumberger Wells Service munitions dump at Houma in 1961.

He was arrested in a Columbus suburb last Saturday, and released on bond yesterday. A hearing will be held May 3 on the fugitive charge. Novel has said he will fight extradition.