

## FOLLOWS DEVIOUS PATH

# 'Letter' by Novel Adds to Mystery

A letter written by fugitive witness Gordon Novel added a new cloak-and-dagger twist today to the Kennedy assassination probe.

Attorney Steven Plotkin said Novel actually wrote the communication. Further, he said his client was working for the Central Intelligence Agency here in 1961.

But Novel called the letter a "trap" set for Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, who is attempting to bring Novel back to New Orleans for questioning.

**WHATEVER THE** authenticity of the document, the circumstances of its discovery read like a chapter in a who-done-it.

The letter came into the hands of States-Item reporter Hoke May. This is how it happened:

The letter turned up when two girls were doing their spring housecleaning. It was well hidden in the fugitive witness's French Quarter apartment.

**SO WELL HIDDEN**, in fact, that a team of Federal Bureau of Investigation Agents and officers from Garrison's investigative squad missed it when they searched the rooms after Novel left town in March.

The girls, who rented the Novel apartment after his departure, found it during a thorough housecleaning and refurbishing session.

One of them turned it over to her boy friend. He, in turn, showed it to his professor at a New Orleans university.

The professor is a friend of May's.

**THE LETTER** was addressed to a Mr. Weiss and probably was written in late January or early February of this year, judging by the time sequence it describes.

When a copy was sent to

him, Plotkin reviewed its contents, spoke to his client and told the States-Item Novel had drafted the letter.

He said, "Everything in the letter as far as Novel is concerned is actually the truth."

The contents of the missive are compounded of cryptic references, code names and a plea for Weiss to get Novel "out of this mess" by an unspecified date in March, of 1967.

**THE LETTER** appears to be a draft which later might be recopied or typed. There is no indication it was ever mailed, however, and Plotkin said he does not know whether the draft was sent "to the addressee."

Presumably, Weiss is connected with the CIA.

Novel departed New Orleans about mid-March after receiving a subpoena to testify in Garrison's Kennedy death plot investigation. He went to McLean, Va., the headquarters of the CIA.

**HE WAS MET** there by a former official of the Justice Department who now works for one of the radio-television networks.

The 29-year-old former bar owner took a lie detector test at McLean and ducked under cover for another few days, a time when he was reported to be in Montreal.

His next appearance was at Gahanna, Ohio, a Columbus suburb where he was arrested April 1 on a warrant from Garrison who charged him with conspiracy to burglarize a munitions dump at

Houma in 1961.

**AN INDEPENDENT** handwriting expert says the letter is in Novel's handwriting. The expert, Gilbert Fortier of New Orleans, compared the penciled letter with other samples of Novel's writing and printing.

"It is my conclusion that the same person who wrote the handwriting specimens also wrote the draft to Mr. Weiss," Fortier asserted.

He said he checked especially for the possibility the letter might be a forgery but concluded it was not probable.

"It was written too easily and too freely to have been forged," Fortier said.

**THE LETTER** to Weiss begins:

"This letter is to inform you that District (Attorney) Jim Garrison has subpoenaed myself and an associate to testify before his Grand Jury on matters which may be classified TOP SECRET. Actions of individuals connected with DOUBLE-CHEK CORPORATION in Miami in first quarter of 1961."

(The book, "The Invisible Government," identified Double-Chek Corp. of Miami as



—States-Item Photo.  
**JOSEPH C. DEBLANC** has been elected president of the Executives Club of Louisiana, Inc. Other officers named at a meeting at the Monteleone Hotel yesterday were Thomas Youngblood, George Brewer and John H. Hammell III, vice-presidents; Randolph Fox, secretary, and Al Barnes, treasurer.

a CIA front organization which recruited pilots and other Cuban personnel for the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961.)

"WE HAVE NO current contact available to inform of this situation," the letter continues. "So I took the liberty of writing you direct and apprising you of current situation . . . expecting you to forward this through appropriate channels.

"Our connection and activity of that period involved individuals presently . . . about to be indicted as conspirators in Mr. Garrison's investigation.

"We have temporarily avoided one subpoena not to reveal Double-Chek activities or associate them with this mess. We want out of this thing before Thursday 3/ /67. Our attorneys have been told to expect another subpoena to appear and testify on this matter. The Fifth Amendment and/or immunity (and) legal tactics will not suffice.

"MR. GARRISON is in possession of unsworn portions of this testimony. He is unaware of Double-Chek's involvement in this matter but

has strong suspicions. I have been questioned extensively by local FBI recently as to whether or not I was involved with Double-Chek's parent holding corporation during the time. My reply on five queries was negative.

"Bureau unaware of Double-Chek association in this matter. Our attorneys and others are in possession of complete sealed files containing all information concerning matter.

"In event of our sudden departure, either accidental or otherwise, they are instructed to simultaneously release same for public scrutiny in different areas . . .

"APPROPRIATE counter action relative to Garrison's inquisition concerning us may best be handled through military channels vis (a) vis D.I.A. man. Garrison is presently colonel in Louisiana Army National Guard and has ready reserve status. Contact may be had through our attorneys of record, Plotkin, Alvarez, Sapir."

Plotkin confirmed that he has tapes and records held in escrow for Novel to be released in case of his death.

One final footnote of interest relates to D.I.A., which apparently refers to the super-secret Defense Intelligence Agency. It was created by President Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs invasion to shepherd all U.S. intelligence and espionage operations. The man appointed to head it was Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

# DA Seeking Copies of 'CIA' Letter by Novel

Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison today asked for copies of a letter purportedly directed to the Central Intelligence Agency by fugitive witness Gordon Novel.

The letter, which Novel's lawyer said was written by his client, came into the possession of the States-Item. It was reported to have been found in Novel's former apartment in the French Quarter. It apparently was written before Novel's departure from New Orleans after he was subpoenaed to testify in Garrison's Kennedy death plot investigation.

NOVEL, WANTED both as a material witness and on charges of conspiracy to burglarize a munitions dump at Houma, is free on \$10,000 bond at Columbus, Ohio, awaiting an extradition hearing.

A copy and transcript of the penciled draft were given to Steven Plotkin, Novel's New Orleans attorney, early this week. Yesterday, Plotkin said his client worked for the Central Intelligence Agency here during 1961.

Plotkin said Novel wrote the draft, and added "everything . . . as far as Novel is concerned, is actually the truth."

But Novel appeared to contradict his lawyer late yesterday when he said the letter was a "final trap" for Garrison.

"Mr. Garrison has finally fallen into the last trap. I thought his fine Cajun gumshoes were going to miss it. Under the rug, ha, ha!"

ACTUALLY, THE letter was delivered to the States-Item by a college professor who is a friend of a reporter on the staff. A student gave it to him, and the stu-

dent received the letter from a girl friend who is renting Novel's former apartment. It was found under linoleum on the kitchen sink drainboard.

Noting a story about the letter in yesterday's final edition, Garrison asked the States-Item to give his office copies. He would not comment further.

The statement by his attorney that Novel worked for the CIA here confirmed a report of the witnesses' government activities published first in the States-Item on April 25.

Garrison has charged the CIA with engaging in a "monstrous coverup" following the Kennedy assassination and of duping the Warren Commission into inaccurate conclusions.

The Warren Commission concluded that Kennedy was slain by a Communist-oriented, distraught youth, Lee Harvey Oswald. It said it could find no evidence that Oswald was aided by anyone.

GARRISON HAS said that "Latin adventurers" employed in CIA-sponsored anti-Castro operations killed Kennedy out of anger over an abrupt end to their support by the U.S. government.

Plotkin said Novel worked with the CIA as an "intermediary" with anti-Castro Cubans. But he said his client's CIA activities "had little or nothing to do with the Bay of Pigs invasion and certainly had nothing to do with the assassination of President Kennedy."

Sunday, Novel told police he was fired upon several times by a hidden sniper in Nashville, Tenn. He said he was wounded by flying glass. A Nashville radio-TV newsman who was with him told the same story.

In the letter draft which Plotkin said Novel wrote, the 29-year-old former bar owner asks "Mr. Weiss" to get him out of "this mess" by an unspecified date in March.

The letter says the writer had received one subpoena to testify in the Garrison probe,

but has been able to avoid it. It adds that attorneys have informed him other subpoenas would be issued.

The letter asks Weiss to help him so that he will not have to reveal "top secret" activities of an organization he refers to as Double-Chek Corp. of Miami.