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Garrison's Assassination Probe To Be Tested In The Courts

NEW ORLEANS, La. (AP) — Back when big Jim Garrison's Kennedy assassination probe was new he said: "The key to the whole case is through the looking glass. Black is white, white is black."

The cryptic Alice in Wonderland allusion puzzled many at the time. But it proved to be an accurate description. A year later, it still applies.

About the only thing the Warren Commission and Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison agree on is the date of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, slain in Dallas, Tex., Nov. 22, 1963.

In the conflicting versions, black often does become white—if you take that to mean that opposite conclusions are drawn from the same circumstances.

Now Garrison's controversial case—with its reverse English approach to one of the century's great crimes—is due to be tested in court, under legal rules of evidence.

F. Irving Dymond, a defense lawyer for Clay L. Shaw, said the Orleans Parish (county) Criminal District Court trial is tentatively set for Feb. 13.

The charge against Shaw, which he emphatically denies, is conspiring to murder the president.

Shaw is 54, a tall, lean, wealthy, well-tailored, retired businessman with craggy features. His silvery hair lies flat in tight, precise waves. He was an Army major in World War II. He says he hasn't the faintest idea why Garrison accused him of plotting to kill Kennedy.

"The defense will not seek a continuance," Dymond said. "Of course, we will have a few motions to make before the trial."

The motions, Dymond added, may include a request for a change in venue. If granted, this would switch the trial to some other Louisiana judicial district. Garrison, however, could remain as prosecutor.

Shaw was the first to be charged in Garrison's probe. Arrested March 1, 1967, he has been free under \$10,000 bond and it is not unusual to see him enjoying an evening out at one of the city's plush restaurants.

The 46-year-old, 6-foot-6 district attorney packs a small pistol under his coat and has a political reputation as a fast draw with a sweeping statement. He snapped back at his critics with gusto.

"The involvement of high officials of the U.S. government in the affair becomes more and more apparent," he says.

Among other things, Garrison said FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was warned five days in advance that an assassination attempt would be made in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963. And he repeatedly accused President Johnson of having "actively concealed evidence about the murder of his predecessor"—a reference to the secret label on some aspects of the investigation.

White House spokesmen shrug off the statements.

There was no comment from the FBI—or from another frequent Garrison target, the Central Intelligence Agency, which he accused of covering up evidence.

Garrison bases his case on his contention that the assassination was a devious conspiracy involving several men—and that the conspiracy originated in New Orleans.

This runs counter to the official report of the Warren Commission which investigated the

assassination. It says former New Orleans resident Lee Harvey Oswald, 24, shot the president. But the commission said it had found no evidence that Oswald was part of any conspiracy.

Other examples of Garrison's black versus white include:

In the commission view, Oswald was motivated by, among other factors, a sore ego, hostility toward society and a commitment to Marxism and communism. Not so, says Garrison. He says Oswald was anti-Communist, a CIA agent and was set up as a "patsy" by other conspirators who found out he was an undercover man.

Garrison lists Jack Ruby, the Dallas strip joint owner who killed Oswald in a Dallas police station, as a conspirator. The commission said it found "no sign of any conduct" which suggests that he was involved in the assassination.

And so it goes. A conspiracy charge similar to the one against Shaw was

filed Dec. 20 against Edgar Eugene Bradley, 49, of North Hollywood, Calif. It differs in that it does not name any of the "others" in the alleged conspiracy.

Bradley said he will fight extradition from California. "This man is either being highly paid to do this or he's off his rocker," he said.

Garrison has kept the activities of his investigators secret as much as possible. When public accounting of expenditures gave hints of their operation, he turned to private sources for money.

A group of businessmen formed Truth and Consequences of New Orleans, Inc., and chipped in to form an operating fund. Cochairman Joseph M. Rault Jr., a wealthy oil man, said the secretive organization remains unchanged, despite the growing controversy.

"Our position is the same as it was at the start," he said. "We supply the money for the investigation. We leave the rest to the courts."