

THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR STATEMENTS DELIVERED TO THE ATLANTA POLICE DEPARTMENT
AND DISTRIBUTED WIDELY TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS IN JULY OF 1975

Recently I supplied some information to the Atlanta Police Department concerning a man I am now 99% certain has been operating for twelve years as a sort of "entrepreneur of political assassinations." On the basis of my personal discussions with this individual in the early sixties, and on the basis of all the material I have read concerning the John F. Kennedy murder, in particular, since then, it appears to me that the individual I have named engineered a fatal alliance between all the political enemies of John F. Kennedy he could find who were in positions of government power under Kennedy, who commanded positions of wealth and influence in the private economy, or who could be relied upon to carry out the actual "dirty work" of the murder itself.

Specifically I think this individual obtained the co-operation one or more individuals within the CIA hierarchy who hated JFK because of the Bay of Pigs disaster, and thereby obtained the unwitting co-operation of everyone who was under the orders of this individual or these individuals. Also, I think the man I have named made friends with and obtained the assistance of some person or persons in the Office of Naval Intelligence who had similar control over portions of that bureaucracy -- either that or he struck up such an alliance with the man who was Secretary of the Navy under Kennedy, and thereby obtained the unwitting co-operation of numerous employees of the Office of Naval Intelligence.

This man, I have reason to believe, had also been cultivating for some time previous to the assassination the trust and friendship of the well-known Louisiana underworld figure, Carlos Marcello, who already had numerous CIA connections springing from various anti-Castro activities in which the mob and the CIA had collaborated, as is now well established, in the early sixties.

Either directly or indirectly, the man I have named to the Atlanta Police also must have obtained the co-operation of at least one FBI official in Dallas, an agent by the name of Hotsy, who was deeply involved according to solid evidence in setting up Lee Harvey Oswald as fall guy for the assassination.

Finally, I believe my enterprising acquaintance went to numerous wealthy individuals in this nation who regarded Kennedy as a serious problem, and offered to exterminate the President in return for a considerable amount of cash.

For the most part I think this was a "blind alliance" wherein very few of those who participated in the murder conspiracy were wittingly involved and wherein few, if any besides the central organizer whom I have designated, knew -- or wanted to know -- who else was sponsoring or executing the project.

After the event in Dallas took place, trails of evidence seemed to lead in every possible direction because of the large number of individuals who were unwittingly involved. Moreover, numerous powerful and wealthy people had very good motivations for seeing to it that the truth was covered up, since they had themselves provided the man who organized the Kennedy murder with co-operation and/or money, variously in each individual case.

I feel quite safe in speculating that later on this same individual who master-minded and organized the JFK murder, used exactly the same kind of techniques, adapting them to fit the circumstances, to assassinate both Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy.

The reason I gave information based on my personal interaction with this man to the Atlanta Police was because Commissioner Eaves was then investigating the Martin Luther King assassination. His investigation resulted from the allegations of one Robert Byron Watson. In the area of these allegations concerning a conspiracy to murder King, Watson seemed in my mind to be talking about the man I suspect of having organized the JFK assassination.

31 July 1975

Kerry Thornley

(2)

Gary Kersten or Kirsten or Kursten (or some similar spelling) is the name I knew him by. I was introduced to him by Slim Brooks, a well-known French Quarterite in New Orleans. Slim generally referred to Gary as his brother-in-law. I met Slim in 1961 and became acquainted with Gary later that same year -- probably in the spring or summer. Sometime during the initial phase of the period of time that I knew Gary he purchased some land in Kenner, Louisiana, and built a house on it.

Gary was in his late thirties or in his forties. He was balding and had a somewhat unusually large forehead. Five-o'clock shadowy clean-shaven face. Protruding lower lip that may have gotten that way from his constant pipe smoking. He was not tall, had a pot belly, and tended toward the thin side.

His voice, while quite masculine, was somewhat on the high-pitched side at times, especially when he let out with a brief giggle at one of his own jokes. He had a rather capricious sense of humor which often centered around his own arbitrary prejudices. He spoke at a normal pace but his words were somewhat clipped, for lack of a better way to describe it.

He used to say that he came from a German family in the mid-West and that he was a Nazi and always (?) had been. This, he frequently alleged, was why the government had put him and other Germanic mid-Westerners in the Pacific Theater during the war. He may have told me that he was in intelligence in the service, but that is an extremely vague recollection and I forget whether he was in the Army or the Navy.

He generally wore short-sleeved blue or white shirts and ^{dark} slacks.

I think his small plot of land and the house he built on it were on the Jefferson Davis Highway.

For a long period of time while I knew him he worked at the Anheiser-Busch brewery not too far from where he lived.

I do not recall ever having spent any time with Gary which was not also in the company of Slim (Roderick R.) Brooks. I recall receiving he, Slim and Ola Holcomb as visitors in the apartment on St. Louis (Mrs. George - landlady; next to Napoleon House bar) where Greg Hill and I lived in spring and summer of 1961.

One time, a day or so after one of these visits (possibly the only one), Greg's typewriter vanished, and I always suspected Gary, who made jokes occasionally about being a burlar and a fence for stolen goods. This was a Hermes (I think Italian) model upon which I was then typing the first smooth draft of The Idle Warriors, my forever-unpublished novel based on Lee Harvey Oswald's defection to the USSR. (I would have been working at the Foster Awning Co. as a part-time telephone solicitor when this happened, which was where I met Slim; we reported the incident to the police and they came by and told us from now on not to leave our door unlocked.)

Another visit with Gary took place when Jessica Luck, Slim, and Gary and I went out to look at the property Gary had purchased in Kenner. I can't place when this was, but it was possibly autumn of 1961. I recall Gary warning us about copperhead snakes, and telling us they actually chased people, as we stomped around in the underbrush. It was on this occasion or another one (I seem to recall driving out in the woods for a picnic -- the same four of us, but this is vague) when the car we were in was a black (dark, anyhow) limosine. Later, during the week, Slim told me and I think later repeated to Jessica: "I've got a ~~SURPRISE~~ surprise for you.... That was Carlos Marcello's car you were riding around in last weekend." I was also told or had read in the papers that Marcello was in Guatemala at this time.

24 July 1975

Wendell Thornley
Wendell Thornley

(more to come)

The next time I recall visting at any length with Gary was after his house on the land in Kenner was built. I seem to recall it was Slim's idea that we go out and "spend some time with brother-in-law." It is not clear in my mind whether there was one, two, or three such occasions, but I recall sitting there near the door, across the room from Gary, with Slim on the sidelines, discussing the following:

1) HOW ONE MIGHT GO ABOUT ASSASSINATING JOHN F. KENNEDY. I recall proposing the use of a remote control rocket, for example, a sort of home-made missile to bomb the White House. As far as I was concerned this was strictly a bullshit rap. All Gary and I had in common was our political enemies. He didn't like Ayn Rand because she was a woman and he even said, during one of these discussions, "don't talk to me about that raving Red" in reference to Barry Goldwater. The discussion wandered on at an easy-going pace for a long while, possibly all afternoon. Finally at one point during this discussion or these discussions Gary said words to this effect: "I think the best way to pull off a political assassination and get away with it would be to have a whole lot of people working on it, but kept under the illusion they were working on other things, so that afterwards even those who participated in it would not know it. Don't you think that would be a good way to do it, Kerry?" I agreed. (In other words, before using me, he even obtained my moral sanction!) He next observed that in order to do this one would have to have control of a very large bureaucracy which, as far as I was concerned, established that the whole discussion was purely academic.

2) PEOPLE GARY DIDN'T LIKE. Gary was soft-spoken and light-humored about his admiration for Hitler and other Nazi leaders, and without expressing any particular hatred in his voice used to say frequently that he did not like Jews, blacks, gypsies, etc. He also had absolutely no empathy for jailbirds -- which was the exact, quaint expression he used. I do not recall vividly, but he may even have suggested setting up a "jailbird" to take the blame for the assassination. The use of that one word in the Watson testimony in the Atlanta papers certainly did ring a bell with me -- immediately Gary popped into my mind.

3) LEE HARVEY OSWALD. During the period of time that I met Slim and Gary was when I was working the hardest on the first final draft of The Idle Warriors, my novel based on Oswald's derrection to Russia. Then and thereafter I frequently brought up the themes and characters of The Idle Warriors, and I know we discussed Oswald, but certainly never in relation to setting him up for an assassination.

4) HITLER AND THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND. Gary had some interesting ideas about Hitler which he was as prone to introducing into conversations as often as I was prone to introducing the subject of my novel. In particular, he believed that the secret to Hitler's power had been that he was the least powerful and least ferocious of all the Nazi leaders. He had no independent base of power -- no DIRECT OFFICIAL control over any bureaucracy or branch of the armed forces or police, so he was able to function as a middle-man, a compromise candidate that all the others trusted more than any of them trusted one another. He said he was going to write a book on this subject with the working title of "Hitler Was A Good Guy" and its prime focus was going to be on what a bunch of utterly ruthless ideas the other Nazi leaders had. He induced me and I think possibly even paid me some small amount to do research for him on this book, which as he portrayed it would not advance Nazi ideas (which I wasn't sure he was serious about anyhow) but which would convey this notion of power politics. I'm positive I read at least one book on the subject, made notes, and turned them over to Gary, after which the project seemed to peter out.

(more to come)

25 July 1975

~~KERRY THORNLEY~~ *Kerry Thornley*

3rd Statement on Gary Kersten (1)

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The discussions or discussion mentioned in my 25 July 1975 statement about Gary Kersten probably took place in 1962, but I am not sure.

Another subject Gary discussed briefly, significantly enough, was New Orleans DA Jim Garrison. At the time of this discussion I admired Garrison and we argued. Gary seemed to have a cheerful dislike for Garrison which, as with most of his dislikes, didn't even pretend to have much of a rational basis. (As an Ayn Rand type I was very much against any kind of irrationality, real or projected, in those days.) He finally said that the main reason he did not like Garrison was that "he wears a vest." He said also that he had told this to a man at the brewery where he worked who was a Garrison supporter and that the man had thought it was very funny. Sometimes it was difficult to tell when Gary was joking. This conversation took place during the same period of time that the others at his home took place, I think.

Finally, Gary quit work at Busch. He said there was one guy in particular he did not like there, and that when he decided to quit he walked up behind the fellow and kicked him in the back of the head, then went and turned in his resignation. The way he decribed it, it sounded physically impossible.

I don't remember when it was that Gary made this next remark to me, but I'm pretty sure we were in the French Quarter, perhaps at Slim's or walking the streets nearby. He said he liked having a house which was out in the country because there were no neighbors around to hear screaming. He said this with a delighted, evil smile. I sure as hell hoped he was joking, but really didn't want to find out. That remark really freaked me out, so I think it must have occurred sometime after the other discussions (already mentioned) because I wasn't feeling especially freaked out about Gary when Slim and I were out there at the house. Gary enjoyed cultivating an image of himself as an evil, antisocial person -- a burglar, a Nazi and (in that one incidence) possibly a sadist. Slim also used to joke about how evil Gary was, but -- except for the one scary moment mentioned in this paragraph -- I just interpreted it as a lot of silly talk.

I think I made some effort to acquaint Gary with Carlos Castillo, a friend of mine who owned a Mexican restaurant in the Quarter and who had traditionalist rightist political views. But I think Gary said he didn't like Carlos because Carlos was a Mexican. I'm not sure about this. It is very vague. Slim and Gary and I probably went to Castillo's for a meal once or something like that and I probably told them they should get to know one another.

I don't seem to have any other memories about Gary during the period from 1961 to 1963 except one. Jessica was late on her period one month and thought she was pregnant. Slim said Gary knew where we could get some abortion pills without a prescription. So Slim and Gary and I got together somehow, but Gary did not get to the point, and this puzzled me. He seemed to be toying with my dependence on him. We spent a long time together, and finally drove to a remote spot out in the country where, after we got out of the car and walked over to a spot under a tree, Gary told me the name of a drug store where I could buy these pills from a dishonest druggist who also "sold paragoric to little kids." I decided against the pills

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because Gary went into great detail about how they worked by poisoning the woman's system so as to cause it to reject the fetus, and it sounded very dangerous. I couldn't understand why Gary took me all the way out in the boondocks to tell me this, but didn't ask -- just assumed he was very paranoid about the subject.

Instead of getting the pills I got some Hershey's "KEM" style candies, put them in a Katz & Bestoff credit envelope, and took a couple of white ones out and told Jessica to take them according to an arbitrary schedule, hoping the placebo effect ~~might~~ would cause her to menstruate, since I suspected the whole thing might be psychological anyhow. This worked. Afterwards I told Jessica what I had done. She was amused.

This happened during the period I was living on Napoleon Avenue and I think it was summer. I don't know whether it took place before or after the other discussions.

The next time I saw Gary was around autumn of 1964 after I had testified before the Warren Commission and when I was on my way from Arlington, Virginia (where, as Garrison charged, I had lived for a year after the assassination), to the Freedom School in Colorado. I stopped over for a few days as I recall.

One of the things I learned was that Ola Holcomb had shot herself in the head and killed herself with, as I recall, a .38 revolver a couple of weeks earlier. When I asked about the motive someone told me she was upset over some man she was in love with. I also remember hearing that Ola's mother, with whom she was living in the Quarter, had discovered the body.

Ola and I had been very, very close for awhile in 1961. She was my first convert to Ayn Rand in the French Quarter. She was a very strong person and also very considerate of others and seemed to have great love for her mother, who moved down from Mississippi to live with her later on.

I was shocked and surprised.

In the summer of 1961, I'm pretty sure, was when Ola and Gary began going together. I believe they lived together for awhile.

(This stimulates two other memories of Gary: he was a painter, though not professionally, and had a ground-floor apartment in 1961 in the Quarter, with one of his paintings -- of a stripper -- on display. If he and Ola lived together it was here. I also recall Gary mentioning a couple of times that an art critic once complained about one of Mitler's paintings that it was possible to count the stones in the cobble-stone street, so concrete was the style. Gary asked me if I didn't think that was unfair of the critic.)

During my 1964 visit I persuaded the manager of the Quorum coffee house on Esplanade to allow me to give a lecture there one evening on behalf of "the intellectually respectable right" -- which was to say the more Libertarian of Goldwater's supporters.

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Slim and Gary were both there. Gary was in his usual good spirits and did not seem at all upset over Ola's recent death.

I most vividly recall him sitting out on the patio behind the coffee house after the lecture was over. Slim and I were standing there and whenever anyone I didn't know walked by Slim would introduce me to them, saying: "This is Kerry -- he knew Oswald." This somewhat embarrassed me the two or three times that it happened, so each time I said: "Yeah, I masterminded the Kennedy assassination -- how do you do?" and shook hands.

At this time there was little doubt in my mind that Oswald had acted alone, so it seemed like a harmless, if tasteless, joke.

Well Gary just sat there in the shadows looking at me and smiling the most incredibly smug smile imaginable. He said very little that night, if anything besides the customary greetings -- but he just kept looking at me and smiling. And, stupid ass that I am, it never even crossed my mind that he might have had anything whatever to do with JFK's murder. Even in light of our previously mentioned discussions on the subject, the thought never even crossed my mind. It never occurred to me that he might have the power to do such a thing.

Slim was the first person that I became acquainted with upon arriving in New Orleans in 1961. Later I will put together a more complete statement on Slim. But for now I just want to say that I met him at the Foster Awning Company shortly after going to work there as a telephone solicitor. (Greg Hill, who went to New Orleans with me, brought home a friend from his first job named Ray Allen -- and since Greg got work before I did, I met Ray before meeting Slim, but in the beginning Slim was more my friend and Ray was more Greg's friend. Slim really took me under his wing and showed me around the French Quarter.)

Now, when I went to New Orleans in 1968 in answer to Garrison's subpoena, Slim was again the first person I encountered. I was walking the streets of the Quarter looking for familiar faces and Slim crossed at a corner up ahead of me, so that I could not possibly miss him. I yelled out to him and we joined company and walked along the street together.

He said to me at one point during our conversation: "Look, you don't plan to mention brother-in-law to Jim Garrison, do you?" Since Gary still did not seem at all relevant to anything that was happening, and since I certainly wasn't into stirring up Garrison's paranoia about me any further by bringing up each and every time I had bullshitted about assassinating JFK with someone, I assured Slim that I didn't plan to mention Gary -- but also wondered ~~about~~ why he should ask. Slim said something to this effect: "Because for awhile times were really hard and brother-in-law and I went out and did some midnight shopping, Butch the burglar style, and one time we got caught. But later

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on somebody did us a favor by stealing our police records from the files before our case got into court. So if you mention Gary to Garrison that might provoke some unwelcome memories, and some questions like what happened to the records."

Once again, all I knew for sure about Gary now was that he was a petty burglar and that for one weekend he had somehow managed to borrow Carlos Marcello's car. I still did not know much about Marcello and had not read near enough about the assassination to know that Marcello's name keeps popping up again and again in relation to it. Finally, I had no idea -- until after I testified before Garrison's Grand Jury -- that Marcello and the CIA had been working together in anti-Castro activities in Louisiana just previous to the John Kennedy killing.

So I didn't mention Gary to Jim Garrison, but would have if I had been questioned about something that related to him. I did mention Slim, however, because Garrison was very interested in the period immediately following my arrival in New Orleans in February of 1961 (the day after Mardi Gras). Garrison fired all kinds of names at me for identification, some of them over and over, but Gary Kersten's was not among them.

I did not become really suspicious of Gary until 1973, when the Watergate revelations began making it clear that there is some kind of alliance between the Mafia, the CIA, Big Business in the South, and the military-industrial complex. Even then, he was only one of many suspects in my mind as I tried to figure out why there were so many coincidences linking me to the JFK assassination and how and by whom I had been framed (as I'm sure I was) in New Orleans in 1968.

The appearance of the so-called Mystery Tramp photos in THE YIPSTER TIMES last summer and an article called "Cowboys vs. Yankees" in The Great Speckled Bird (which conceptualized the above described alliance as the "Southern Rim" of the ruling class) focused my suspicions more on Gary, but I still had some alternative theories which I couldn't disregard. Moreover, there being no official investigation, there was nothing I could do about my suspicions, but harbor them.

I believe it was on October 16th of 1974 that Joe Cooper, an ex-cop investigating the JFK assassination in Louisiana, was murdered in a suicide set-up similar to Ola's alleged suicide. He had been committed to a theory that the Office of Naval Intelligence was deeply involved in the assassination and apparently had considerable evidence linking Naval Intelligence personnel to the assassination. Moreover, at the time of his death he had been poking around in the involvement of a prominent Louisiana underworld figure in the assassination. The article on this matter did not say, but I assumed the underworld figure in question was Carlos Marcello. I have also ~~long~~ suspected that the Office of Naval Intelligence of having something to do with the assassination, for reasons which pertain in part to my "subversive" attitudes during the last year I was on active duty in the Marine Corps, Oswald's real or posed Marxism, and Fred Korth's position as Secretary of the Navy under JFK -- Korth being a Texan who was very close to Lyndon Johnson.

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There were other possible theories of my unwitting involvement which did not include Gary, however, and I was hard put to separate the irrelevant from the relevant, the paranoia from the persecution. During the past several months I have been sure that I was very close to figuring it out, and I have also been very fearful that the CIA or someone would find out just how far I had narrowed down my list of suspects and theories.

Some months ago I all but button-holed Reber Boulton and got him to listen to my raving and rambling for three or four hours. Among other matters which still may (or may not) be relevant, I mentioned the most pertinent aspects of my dealings with Gary Kersten -- the "assassination talk" and his alleged connections with Marcello.

Last week Reber asked me if I had been following the Watson case in the papers, which I had not, although I had learned some things about it, all of which were very general, from Mike Raufauf. He then told me that Watson was mentioning some of the same people connected with Marcello that I was, or that Watson was also mentioning people connected with Marcello, I forget which. Anyhow, I checked the papers soon thereafter and read about the man (unidentified) who boasted that he would kill Martin Luther King just as he had killed John F. Kennedy and set up some "jailbird" to take the rap. That had to be Gary it seems to me -- "jailbird" is one of his special words.

Shortly after my discussions with Reber of some months ago (perhaps he will recall the exact date) I furiously scribbled out brief commentaries on all the people I suspected as having ~~possibly~~ been involved in my life and also in the JFK murder ~~possibly~~ and stashed them where they would be found eventually in case of my death. I gave this material to Reber last week, with a few last-minute notes appended.

Finally, last Saturday there was that unearthly event at the Celestial Mansion (described elsewhere), during which I was asked if Kenner, Louisiana, meant anything to me.

There is now precious little doubt in my mind that Gary was wittingly and centrally involved in the JFK assassination and that he is the man Watson is talking about who used the word "jailbird."

27 July 1975

Kerry Thornley
KERRY THORNLEY

I am willing to take any sort of lie detector examination regarding these statements. I am also eager to expand on them by answering any questions anyone may have about points which seem obscure.

Kerry