

"I have positively solved the
assassination of President
John F. Kennedy."

--Jim Garrison, February 24, 1967

CHAPTER

THE GARRISON AFFAIR AND THE OLIVER STONE FILM

Lee Harvey Oswald was born and grew up in New Orleans. He still had family there in 1962, and when he returned from the Soviet Union, he went to live and work in New Orleans, then for a time moved to Ft. Worth and Dallas, then returned to New Orleans in 1963 where he remained until not long before he allegedly killed President Kennedy.¹ As a high school student years before, Oswald was in a Civil Air Patrol group in New Orleans who's leader was one David Ferrie,² a person who forever afterward figured prominently in possible conspiracy scenarios of the assassination.

Oswald, upon arrest in Dallas an hour after the assassination, was taken to jail, where he went unrepresented by a lawyer until the moment of his death. He tried to obtain a lawyer, and for whatever reason, it was claimed that Dean Andrews in New Orleans received a call from a "Clay Bertrand" who asked him to go to Dallas and represent Oswald.³

In the period leading up to the assassination, Ferrie, an enigmatic and mysterious figure, was closely connected to Carlos

Marcello of New Orleans,⁴ the Mafia chiefton for all of the South, not including Florida.⁵ Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the fiercest enemy the Mafia and the Teamsters ever had in the United States, had previously deported Marcello from the United States without due process.⁶ Ferrie allegedly flew Marcello back,⁷ and they were in court at the moment Kennedy was assassinated, winning an acquittal that day on immigration and other charges.⁸ It was later alleged that the District Attorney of New Orleans, Jim Garrison, and some of his staff, had connections to Marcello and the Teamsters, or in some way was protecting Organized Crime.⁹

Ferrie was also deeply involved with the CIA's operations against Cuba, flew planes for them, trained and armed guerillas, was a priest in a heretical Catholic church, and indulged in other aberrant behavior often involving young boys and men. In fact, he tried to pick up this author in my younger days one of the times when I lived in the French Quarter. Ferrie also worked for a former FBI agent, Guy Banister. He had been an excellent pilot for Eastern Airlines until he was fired for an arrest on a ^]morals charge. I remember him as an intense and sinister, cynical, disgusting, sloppy individual who was excited at the prospect of preying upon the vulnerable, the helpless, and the innocent, if possible--virgin.

Banister had his office at 544 Camp Street, which was the same small building where Lee Harvey Oswald claimed to locate

his Fair Play For Cuba Committee Operations in late 1963, though some had the address of 4907 Magazine Street stamped on the pamphlets Oswald handed out,¹⁰ and others had the 544 Camp Street address.¹¹ In June of 1963, Oswald handed out his leaflets on the dock where the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier Wasp was berthed.

One can only conclude from the available evidence that Oswald operated out of Banister's office. Banister had been in the Office of Naval Intelligence during World War II, and he had been the chief of the FBI's Chicago office. He was primarily engaged in counterintelligence operations in the New Orleans area, and that basically meant that he spied on and kept massive files on Leftists and pointed provocateurs at them, of whom Oswald was obviously one. At the same time, arms and ammunition passed through his office, destined for the exiled Cubans who continually prepared attacks on Cuba and hoped for an invasion.

On the day of the assassination of President Kennedy, for unaccountable reasons, Ferrie drove in one of the worst rainstorms on record to Houston, Texas, with two other men, Alvin Beauboeuf and Melvin Coffey, and then to Galveston and waited two hours in a skating rink to receive a phone call. Meanwhile, Jack Martin, an investigator who also worked for Banister, became deeply disturbed after a fight and pistol whipping from Banister and went to the police in New Orleans. He told them that David Ferrie was probably involved in the

Report. Then one day in November of 1966, Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana was riding tourist class on an airplane with the District Attorney of New Orleans, Jim Garrison, who had always been troubled by the arrest of David Ferrie. Long expressed his severe doubts about the findings of the Commission,¹⁶ just as the prominent Congressman from Louisiana, Hale Boggs, was doing, and Boggs had been one of the seven men on the Commission. Long also had ties to the Teamsters, and led an effort to get Jimmy Hoffa, the president of the Teamsters Union, out of the jail Robert Kennedy had finally succeeded putting him in.¹⁷ Hoffa and the Teamsters were at that time and for many years synonymous with the Mafia.

Garrison said he was troubled by indications that the plot to kill the President had been hatched in New Orleans, and he suspected that some of those involved were still there. Garrison, normally highly visible, went into seclusion and hit the books, reading the books published by the Warren Commission and what else was available. He studied the case against Oswald and concluded that Oswald not only didn't do it, but that there were several gunmen, one of whom was in the sewer alongside the car, and two in front, and that there was a plot by the CIA Cuban group partly based in New Orleans, led by someone named Clem Bertrand, that killed the President.

How Clem Bertrand became Clay Shaw has never been documented. Jim Garrison writes in his book, On the Trail of the

Assassins, a sort of personal history of those times, that his investigators were gradually able to obtain statements from people in the French Quarter of New Orleans that Clay Shaw, a prominent businessman with a secret homosexual life and even more prominence in Europe, used the name Clay Bertrand when he was prowling the famous gay bars of the district.¹⁸

For what followed, Scott Van Wynesberghe writes in The Third Decade that a "malevolent force", which involved the Teamsters, hung over it all.¹⁹ Van Wynesberghe details the Teamsters connections of some of those on Garrison's staff, and even one of the judges involved in the case.

Garrison put some of the people in his District Attorney's office to work on the Kennedy assassination, and spent about \$8000 when reporter Jack Dempsey of the States-Item got wind of how he was spending the taxpayer's money, and mentioned it in his column. This got the John Wilds of the city desk interested and he put Rosemary James on the story with Dempsey, to act as "Good Cop" or as it was known in those days, "Low Man." The hardnosed Dempsey was the bad cop, and he hated Garrison about as much as Perry Russo hated Kennedy over the Bay of Pigs. The Republican Russo was to become the chief (and probably phoney) witness in this set-up.

A lot of people had assumed that the Warren Report had closed the case and for that reason wanted to let sleeping dogs lie. As Senator Long, one of his staunch supporters was later to

say, Garrison had a perfect right to do what he was doing--conduct a criminal investigation into the assassination. In fact, when it later came to a hearing, a three judge panel summarily threw out the Warren Report, refusing to admit it into evidence. One of the judges was tight with the Teamsters.

But Garrison was already in a another kind of trouble. Plenty of people did not want the case investigated, and there was a ravenous media that would seize upon such a thing and bring it into the public eye before the investigation could bear fruit, even if it was on the up and up. Everyone knows that the guilty will run away when they find out that they are wanted. The kindest way of discussing the sad history that followed is to say that the glare of the public spotlight somewhat unbalanced Garrison and those who worked for him so that mistakes were made, and their hand was forced. One of his staff, for instance, told Ferrie in advance what was going on.

In those days it was often the practice to surprise a defendant with unexpected witnesses or evidence in a criminal proceeding, in spite of the decisions in this country that defendants have a full right of discovery and disclosure. They have the right to face their accusers and prepare a defense. From the beginning of the Garrison affair, the often obscure failures and conflicts in prosecutorial methods in our system of jurisprudence was at the root of a certain amount of the nightmare and sensationalism that followed. One might bring into

this discussion the matter of ethics, since the same questions arose to a certain extent over the actions of Oliver Stone and his producers of the film made in 1991 about the Garrison/Clay Shaw case, though no-one really noted questions of ethics as a root cause of some of the trouble Stone had.

In addition, before going on, it is worth saying that if there never really was a case against the ultimate defendant in Garrison's trial of Clay Shaw, Garrison had to know it. That is, he had guilty knowledge. What was the effect of the whole business? Years later the Chief Counsel of the Assassinations Committee, Robert Blakey, stated that (though it was not an official finding either explicit or implied) Carlos Marcello was involved in the assassination of President Kennedy. David Ferrie worked for Marcello. If there were Mafia ties to the government of New Orleans and Louisiana as many have always believed, then the trial sacrificed some scape goats and deflected attention away from Marcello and the Teamsters.

It was later well demonstrated that Shaw in fact was on more than intimate terms and employment with the CIA,²⁰ but so what? Garrison does not present any hard evidence in his book or other writings that Shaw was somehow involved in the plot to kill Kennedy. He convicts him only for allegedly talking about killing the President, something thousands of people probably did, as they do every president. Even the evidence Garrison claims, (talk) is not illegal unless it is in the form of an

overt threat. Garrison writes, "Had the jurors been aware of Shaw's Agency connection, the verdict might possibly have been different."²¹ This is very lame reliance on guilt by association, and the talk of someone who has lost and who should not have been fighting in the first place. Garrison goes on to write, "Even as it was, every juror Lane questioned agreed that the prosecution had established that President Kennedy had been killed as the result of a conspiracy. To me, this was important. The jurors had acquitted Shaw as an individual, but they had not accepted the federal government's great lie about the assassination." ²²

Garrison's explanation for the failure of his case is to describe the terrific assault of everyone--including all of the major media--from the Attorney General of the United States (Ramsey Clark) to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Earl Warren) jumping on him, which he likened to Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea having his great fish picked apart by sharks before he could get it home, and "Looking back, I can see that this is pretty much the way it turned out when we finally got Clay shaw to trial in Criminal District court....Our office had been infiltrated by the Federal Government, and Bill Boxley had stolen many of our files. As if that were not enough, a week or two before the trail began Lou Ivon learned that the young Englishman from Oxford who was in charge of our archives had given copies of many of our files to the defense. Almost as

important, some of our key witnesses--e.g., David Ferrie, Gordon Novel, Sandra Moffett--had died or been scared off or moved from New Orleans with no chance of my extraditing them."²³ It is highly doubtful that anyone in this group, and the others he later discusses either knew anything or were credible.

That doesn't mean that Garrison wasn't on the right track all along. It means that he really had nothing, and all the rest of the smoke and mirror show is just that: a show. Gary Rowell describes an interview of Garrison by one of the gadflies of this research where Garrison claims to have a tape recording or claims that the House Assassinations Committee had a "f--king confession from one of the guys participating in the meetings. As an accessory. On tape. Hours. Dates, places, trips to Dallas in preparation...Its corroborated by a thousand things that I've sent up."²⁴ We would sure like to know about that tape.

Like so much of what is said and done in this research, there are a few hard facts, and a lot more loose talk, mistakes, excess, lies, and wrong statements put out by slick and not so slick operators who get into the action looking for exposure, success, and a buck.

Walter Sheridan of NBC went to New Orleans with a crew to investigate the investigation. Sheridan (Sheridan and Garrison hated each other) formerly worked for Robert Kennedy, and knew that the Kennedys had conducted a secret investigation of the assassination and that it pointed in the direction of the matrix

because it is against the wishes of the people that really govern us and who have found a way, with a gun in their hand, to get around the idea of elections and democracy. No strong leaders, only weaklings who are front men for a Committee that governs us behind the scenes. The power behind this does not want anyone whom the public can look to for real leadership, and in a way, Stone's film serves this purpose. It is overkill, and in so doing, may have killed for all time the message we have to get out, and that is new evidence in this case. He wrote finis to the case in 1969 as though nothing did in fact happen after that. He did not help us get out our new evidence, which he knew very well about. After many lies about what he was going to do with the new developments in the case, what we got was a presentation of conspiracy theory according to "Mr. X" as evidence. Theory is not evidence. Myself and others like me have new evidence, but Stone closed the door on us.

The bottom line of the Stone affair is an absence of responsibility and intolerance of criticism. When a man or a film company does not act in a responsible way, they make a joke of a great tragedy. Oliver Stone made a joke of everything. He brought Robin Hood, Sissy Spacek (sexual arousal and heavy breathing in the bedroom at the moment the Garrison couple have heard that Robert Kennedy has been killed) and the Merry Wolves into the case, and we are forever condemned to argue the enormous tragedy of John Kennedy's murder in the shadow of