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Figure in Oswald Inquiry Is Dead in New Orleans

Ex-Airline Pilot's Death Laid to Ruptured Blood Vessel

NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 22 (AP)—David W. Ferrie, a former airlines pilot who figured in District Attorney James Garrison's Kennedy Assassination inquiry, was found dead in his bed today. The coroner attributed his death to a ruptured blood vessel in the brain.

The Coroner, Dr. Nicholas Cheeta, said, however, that a complete toxicology report has been ordered because of a report that Mr. Ferrie had told a friend he was depressed and wanted to end his life.

Dr. Cheeta said a note had been found in Mr. Ferrie's apartment, which was cluttered with religious objects. The coroner refused to disclose the note's contents, except to say that it was one of the reasons he wanted to look into the possibility of suicide. The police declined all comment.

Mr. Ferrie had told friends recently that he was suffering from encephalitis (sleeping sickness).

His nude body was found with a sheet pulled up to the chest. There was no sign of violence.

Listed as Psychologist

Mr. Ferrie, who was in his forties, listed himself as a psychologist and has worked as a private investigator.

He complained recently that Mr. Garrison had him "pegged as the get-away pilot in an elaborate plot to kill Kennedy." He called it a "big joke."

The New Orleans district attorney, in an investigation that started last October, has been trying to prove that a conspiracy hatched here "culminated in the assassination" of President Kennedy, who was slain in Dallas, Tex., Nov. 22, 1963. Mr. Garrison promised arrests and convictions, but kept details secret.

The inquiry has stirred international interest because it supports the Warren Commission critics, who contend that the assassination could hardly have been the work of one man. The Warren report concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Mr. Kennedy, acting alone.

Mr. Ferrie was interrogated by Mr. Garrison's office last November for the second time in connection with the assassination. The first was in 1963.

Turned Over to F.B.I.

"We arrested Ferrie 72 hours after John F. Kennedy was assassinated," Mr. Garrison said today. "The arrest was on the basis of information supplied out of this office. I turned Ferrie over to the F.B.I. on Nov. 25, 1963. As a matter of record at that time, we suggested the F.B.I. take a detailed statement."

Mr. Garrison said he had never seen a copy of the F.B.I. interrogation.



David W. Ferrie. After his eyebrows were burned in an explosion some years ago, Mr. Ferrie wore mascara.

"There are 40 pages relating to the interrogation and report on Ferrie which are in the National Archives in Washington," he said. "Only four of these pages are unclassified."

Mr. Ferrie repeatedly denied that he ever knew Oswald, a former New Orleans resident.

Mr. Ferrie said that he and two companions went to Texas from New Orleans in the afternoon of the assassination. But he insisted it was a pleasure trip.

Unusual Appearance

"We went to Houston, Galveston and back to Alexandria, La.," he said, adding that he had given a "meticulous" account of the trip during the first interrogation.

Mr. Ferrie said it was fruitless to search for an accomplice to Oswald because "my assessment of Oswald is that he would be incapable of any interpersonal relationship, especially anything as delicate as a conspiracy to kill."

Mr. Ferrie's appearance was unusual. An explosion cost him his hair and eyebrows years ago. He wore a shaggy toupee and mascara eyebrows.

Police records showed he was dismissed as an airline pilot after having been arrested in Jefferson Parish (County), which adjoins New Orleans, on a morals charge. The case never went to trial.

Mr. Ferrie, a native of Cleveland, Ohio, has lived in New Orleans for the last 15 years.

Mr. Ferrie said the F.B.I. first became interested in him when a New Orleans man identified as Ed Voble reported that he once served with Oswald in a Civil Air Patrol unit under Mr. Ferrie.

Mr. Ferrie said Mr. Voble was in the Moisant squadron and "I was in the Lakefront squadron."

But Coroner Won't Rule Out Suicide—Note Is Found

'Want to Be Left Alone'

When it was suggested recently that his connection with the Garrison investigation would make him a national celebrity, Mr. Ferrie replied:

"What will being a national celebrity get me? Thirty-five cents and being a national celebrity will get you a hamburger. I want to be left alone to my flying."

Mr. Ferrie ran a private flying service from a coffee shop at New Orleans Lakefront Airport.

"He was always very nice and never got out of line," a waitress who declined to give her name recalled today. "He was intelligent and real serious about flying, because that's all he ever talked about."

Mr. Garrison called a news conference today after receiving word of Mr. Ferrie's death. He said:

"The apparent suicide of David Ferrie ends the life of a man who, in my judgment, was one of history's most important individuals."

"Evidence developed by our office had long since confirmed that he was involved in events culminating in the assassination of President Kennedy."

"Apparently we waited too long."

Says Publicity Delays Arrests

Mr. Garrison, who had said that he was only weeks away from making arrests in the Kennedy assassination case, changed his estimate last Monday in New Orleans to "many months" away.

The delay, he said, resulted from premature publicity in local newspapers. He insisted, however, that "there is no question there will be arrests, charges and convictions."

Mr. Garrison said that arrests "probably were just a few weeks away until the disclosures by the local newspapers. Now they are most certainly months away."

A member of the Warren Commission staff has said that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had accumulated a "great stack" of data on an alleged New Orleans "suspect." The commission member also said that the information indicated that the "suspect" had not seen Oswald in the months just before the assassination and had not been a part of any conspiracy.

Mr. Garrison also said last Monday that he had been disturbed by an editorial in The States-Item, one of two daily newspapers in New Orleans. The editorial had asked:

"Has the District Attorney uncovered some valuable additional evidence or is he merely

saving some interesting new information that will gain for him exposure in a national magazine? Mr. Garrison, it seems, should have some explanation."

Mr. Garrison, who is 46 years old, has frequently made headlines in the five years he has been district attorney of Orleans Parish, which embraces New Orleans. He started a clean-up campaign of what he called prostitution and blackmail along New Orleans's Bourbon Street. His campaign stirred bitter protests from Bourbon Street businessmen.

Checked His Airplane

NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 22 (UPI)—Mr. Ferrie is mentioned on pages 14, 29, 30, and 31 of Volume VIII of the Warren report.

Detective Frederick S. O'Sullivan of the New Orleans police testified that he and police Lieut. Paul Dwyer went to the New Orleans airport to look at Mr. Ferrie's airplane. Detective O'Sullivan concluded that the aircraft was not flyable.

"We went there to check it to see if it was flyable and to see possibly whether he had been flying it lately with the thought he may have transported Oswald to Dallas," the detective testified.

Alleged a Sexual Deviate

A reference to the possibility that Mr. Ferrie may have been a sexual deviate is contained in a Secret Service report dated wald's activities in New Orleans Dec. 3, 1963, concerning Oswald and published as Exhibit 3119 by the Warren Commission.

The report quotes Mr. Vobel as having said that when he joined the Civil Air Patrol, "Capt. Dave Ferrie (the spelling in the exhibit), a former pilot or co-pilot for Delta or Eastern Airlines, was the commander at the time Oswald joined. He said he does not know if Oswald was acquainted with Ferrie, who is alleged to be a homosexual."

In his appearance before the Warren Commission, Detective O'Sullivan testified that he was one of nine vice squad detectives covering New Orleans and that "we handle any vice, gambling, prostitution, homosexuals, handbooks."

The detective was asked: "You have never had any contact with Ferrie in connection with your activities on the vice squad? Is that correct?"

Mr. O'Sullivan's reply, as published on page 31 of Volume VIII of the report on the commission's hearings, was:

"No; Ferrie lives or he did live in Jefferson Parish. We have no authority in Jefferson Parish [Deletion]."

F.B.I. Declines Comment

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22—An F.B.I. spokesman said today that the bureau would have "no comment" on Mr. Ferrie's death.