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Garrison personality bjt

By Bernard Gavzer

New Orleans, Feb. 24 (AP)- Toward the end of World War II, Jim Garrison along with many other soldiers, burst upon hideous places in Germany where men, women and children were systematically destroyed.

He saw first the gaping mouth of an emaciated man. The eyes were lost in the deep sockets of this human who had hours or days before been a living skeleton. The man had escaped the gas chamber, but not the SS Machinegunner.

This was the Dachau concentration camp.

That memory has never left Jim Garrison, who says it is perhaps ~~was~~ the one event which has most colored and changed his life.

To him, the Nazi slaughter of six million humans was the end product of man's indifference to man, of a society which said that it did not pay to get involved in other people's troubles.

More than 20 years later, Jim Garrison -- district attorney of Orleans Parish (county) -- assaults what he considers America's indifference to the greatest tragedy in a century: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

"The full story is <sup>NOT</sup> ~~now~~ known," he says. "And yet there are people who say, 'it's all over, it happened three years ago, forget it.' They say 'don't rock the <sup>g</sup> goat.' They want to maintain the status quo, to leave things as they are.

"We do not know the ~~shizzizanz~~ whole truth behind the assassination. I do not believe that it is beyond discovery. I am not willing to forget it."

Garrison decided in November that he had all the authority necessary to launch his own investigation. ~~By~~ his reckoning, there was evidence of a conspiracy which was ~~rooted~~ <sup>ROOTED</sup> or which had flowered in New Orleans. He ordered his staff to begin ~~g~~ <sup>that</sup> gathering information ~~that~~ he says "began to connect people all the way to that tragic moment in Dallas."

The investigation went along quietly until last week when the New Orleans States-Item reported Garrison's probe.

At once, he was in the glare of public curiosity.

Who was this man who seemed to be playing into the hands of critics attacking the Warren Commission findings? Wasn't he recklessly contributing to the disturbing controversy stated by people like Mark Lane and Edward Epstein and a host of others?

He thinks the critics have been a great service to the nation because they've caused people to question what happened in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

"If there is one phrase which expresses what I think, my philosophy if you want to call it that, it is: 'let justice be done though the heavens fall.'"

It is this sort of literary observation that strangers hardly expect from a 45-year-old father of five children who physically seems like a cartoonist's version of a middle-aged ex-offensive tackle on pro football team.

He is big, 6 foot 6. And although 220 pounds on a frame like that isn't hardly beefy, his penchant for wearing a vest makes him appear heavier.

The fact that he keeps a revolver strapped to his belt makes it easy to refer to him as a gun-packin' or gun-totin' law man.

But even his detractors say Jim Garrison is nobody's dummy.

If a law degree is testimony to intelligence, Jim Garrison has one -- from Tulane University. In conversation, his language flows.

One evening, talking about officials who he said preferred to keep people ignorant, he said:

"You know the story in (playwright Henrik) Ibsen's 'Enemy of the People' in which the water is found to be polluted and the city fathers decide it is better not to tell the people since it would only disturb them."

Even friends concede that Garrison sometimes seems to be shooting from the hip and makes extreme statements. Garrison, for example, said flatly that he does not concede that ~~Jim~~ "(Lee Harvey) ~~Oswald~~ Oswald killed anyone in Dallas."

It seemed reckless and an ~~affront~~ affront to the physical evidence cited in the Warren Report and reminded of this, Garrison said it was "a subjective thing. It is my personal feeling."

But Jim Garrison's personal feelings are those of a prosecutor who has the weight of a fact-gathering organization behind him.

Another district attorney who is not enchanted by Garrison says "Jim seems to blow up and say irresponsible things but I know enough about him to know that he would not go so far out on the limb if he didn't have something substantial to hang on to. I don't think he is bluffing."

To the person who suggests that Garrison has used his challenge to the Warren Commission report as a means of stepping into the political arena, Garrison responds:

"I'm not interested in the governor's chair or the Mayor's office. I just want to do the job I'm doing."

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