

DEATH OF FERRIE CALLED NATURAL

Autopsy Doctor Rules Out
Suicide in New Orleans

By GENE ROBERTS

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NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 23—A pathologist said today that David W. Ferrie, whom District Attorney Jim Garrison had accused of involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy, died of natural causes and not as a result of suicide.

Dr. Ronald A. Welsh, a pathologist at the Louisiana State University School of Medicine, said he reached the conclusion after conducting an autopsy on Mr. Ferrie's body.

Earlier in the day, Dr. Nicholas Chetta, the Orleans Parish coroner, ruled out murder as a possible cause of Mr. Ferrie's death, but he declined to comment on other possibilities until his investigation was complete.

After Mr. Ferrie's body was found in bed yesterday, Mr. Garrison announced that the death was an "apparent suicide."

Mr. Garrison, who is conducting his own investigation into the Kennedy assassination, called Mr. Ferrie "one of history's most important individuals" and said that he would have been arrested next week if he had lived.

Garrison Is Silent

Meanwhile, the District Attorney continued his silence on his reasons for thinking Mr. Ferrie may have been involved in "events culminating in the assassination."

In discussing the autopsy, Dr. Welsh said that the evidence was "clear cut" that Mr. Ferrie, a former airlines pilot, had died of a berry aneurysm, which he described as a ruptured blood vessel at the base of the brain.

The pathologist added that Mr. Ferrie had had a previous hemorrhage and was a victim of high blood pressure and "hypertensive cardiovascular disease."

He declined comment on a note found on a dining room table. Dr. Welsh said his role in the case had been confined to conducting an autopsy and reporting his findings to the coroner.

Dr. Welsh said that his findings did not amount to a formal ruling in the death and that such a finding could come only from the coroner.

Note Is Quoted

The coroner has declined to reveal the full contents of the typewritten note found in Mr. Ferrie's second-floor apartment, but he quoted part of it:

"To leave this life is for me a sweet prospect. I find nothing in it that is desirable, and on the other hand, everything that is loathesome."

David Snyder of The New Orleans States-Item, one of the last to see Mr. Ferrie alive, described him today as "sick, sometimes scared and bitterly sure that there was no justice for him in this world."

"At the end of his life," Mr. Snyder went on, "the mysterious David William Ferrie lived in the clutter of a second-floor duplex, as he said, 'on a diet of coffee, cigarettes and Jello.' There also were pills—bottles and bottles of them."

Carlos Bringuier, a leader of anti-Castro Cuban refugees here, described Mr. Ferrie in a news conference as a person who spent the last weeks of his life trying to prove that he was in no way involved in the assassination.

Mr. Bringuier, who once engaged in a television debate with Lee Harvey Oswald, whom the Warren Commission named as the lone assassin of President Kennedy, said he first met Mr. Ferrie in 1961 after learning that Mr. Ferrie was interested in anti-Castro activity.

He said he next saw him last month and then again on Monday of this week. He said that on the last two occasions, Mr. Ferrie wanted to know "the date of the supposed plot here in New Orleans" and the name of a man who was reported to have been in New Orleans in 1961.

Mr. Ferrie also said, Mr. Bringuier continued, that "Mr. Garrison wanted to frame him."

"He told me Garrison was going to run for higher office and wanted the publicity," Mr. Bringuier said.

"I told him this is a free country, he can't frame you. And he said, 'You don't know what can happen in something like this when they want to frame you.'"

"I began to wonder," said Mr. Bringuier, who thinks there was a plot to kill Mr. Kennedy and that Communists were involved. "if this man had some Communist entanglements."

"In the stomach, it made you feel bad to look at him," said the Cuban. He was referring to the wig, false eyelashes and meke-up Mr. Ferrie wore to hide burns he had once suffered.