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Ferrie Death Natural, Coroner Study Shows

New Orleans Official States There Is No Evidence of Violence of Any Kind

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NEW ORLEANS — An official coroner's autopsy report Tuesday confirmed that David William Ferrie, principal figure in the controversial investigation here into President John F. Kennedy's assassination, died of natural causes.

Dr. Nicholas J. Chetta, the Orleans Parish (county) coroner, said, "No evidence indicated any violence of any kind, certainly not of murder or suicide."

Chetta's final report directly contradicted Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, who has insisted that Ferrie committed suicide. Garrison, who launched the investigation three months ago, last Thursday called Ferrie a central figure in the investigation—the day after Ferrie died.

'Layman's View

The coroner said, "If you want to look at this as a suicide, you have to think he died of the pressure he was under. But that is a layman's view."

At a 90-minute news conference, Chetta also read three notes he found in Ferrie's cluttered apartment. Ferrie died in bed with his sheet pulled up to his chest. All the notes were undated and without addresses. Chetta said he selected them over numerous other papers he found because he considered them pertinent.

One was a rambling diatribe against Garrison and his office and against his alleged ill treatment by Garrison's staff when he attempted to obtain some unidentified criminal records. It also contained an attack against what he termed a lack of justice in the United States. Another was written to his brother and was filled with medical terminology. The third was addressed to "Dear Al."

Of his troubles with

Garrison's office, Ferrie wrote:

"Daily we are propagandized more and more about a rising crime rate. But how do we know it is true? We don't, for we Americans have little or no access to the truth. Today I went to the police headquarters to see these 'public records' of this rising crime rate and nearly wound up in jail for my trouble.

"I was searched, interrogated, verbally abused, had my record checked, and finally threatened. Needless to say, I did not see the 'public records.'"

The note, the first paragraph of which was released last week, concluded: "If there be justice, let justice be damned."

In his letter to his brother, found beside a medical dictionary opened to a page concerning gallstones, Ferrie advised his brother that he did not suffer from gallstones. Ferrie also gave him medical advice and opinions.

Third Note

The third note, addressed to "Dear Al," said in part: "When you receive this I will be quite dead. All that I can say is that I offered love and the best I could. All I got in return in the end was a kick in the teeth. Hence, I die alone and unloved."

Chetta did not call the letter a suicide note.

Chetta noted he was aware that Ferrie, who had a homosexual record, had been living under an emotional strain. He described him as a man who lived in a "world of fantasy . . . an intellectual psychopath . . . a dangerous individual with paranoid tendencies." But he stuck by his report of death by natural causes.

He said Ferrie's unstable temperament, his known feelings of alienation, persecution and emotional upsets might have made Dist. Atty. Garrison think

Ferrie had committed suicide.

Chetta also said that a series of thorough tests revealed Ferrie had not taken any pills which might have caused suicide.

He listed the official cause of death as "Berry aneurysm with a brain hemorrhage." This was the substance of statements he made last week when he said he would withhold final judgment until the complete and final autopsy tests Tuesday.

Medical History

Ferrie, he said, was born with a weakness at the base of his skull and had a history of high blood pressure.

In Ferrie's apartment, the coroner said, officials took into custody piles of miscellaneous papers, photographs, a sword, several cameras, boxes of rifle and shotgun shells, a chalice cover, three rifles, radio receivers, a flare pistol, a bayonet, a four-foot dud aerial bomb, earphones, two U.S. Signal Corps field telephones and a small chemistry laboratory with which Ferrie had been working.

Cancels Conferences

The coroner said he received a telegram Monday from Rockford, Ill., signed by a P. T. Ferrie, asking him to turn the body over to a New Orleans attorney for placement in a funeral home.

Meanwhile, Garrison scheduled three news conferences during the day, the first for 10 a.m. and the last between 3 and 4 p.m. But shortly before 5, an assistant district attorney told a group of about 35 newsmen waiting in Garrison's office that the district attorney was busy, had no statements and would hold no news conference.

The assistant district attorney announced that a man identified only as "James Lewallen" had been subpoenaed. He refused to elaborate. It was believed that Lewallen and Ferrie's parents knew each other in Cleveland, where Ferrie grew up.

Dist. Judge Bernard Baggert, who signed the subpoena, said Lewallen had refused to take a lie detector test and that the subpoena was issued to require him to report to Garrison's office to make a statement.