

## Analysis of Garrison's JFK Probe

# A NEW, DISMAYING

# CHAPTER

(Editor's Note: Merriman Smith, UPI White House reporter who won the Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Kennedy assassination, went to New Orleans last week to look into charges that the murder of the young President involved a conspiracy spawned in Louisiana. Following is his report, in part.)

By MERRIMAN SMITH

NEW ORLEANS (UPI) — For a nation—and a world — still distressed by the assassination of John F. Kennedy, a new and dismaying chapter is being written here in the slaying of the young President.

The central figure is Jim Garrison, politically ambitious district attorney of Orleans Parish. He is an enormous man who has a basso profundo-robusto voice and an investigative technique to match. At times, he looks and acts much like the late Sen. Huey P. Long, whose Roman-circus talents still are remembered fondly in some areas.

The district attorney's firm intention is to prove that Kennedy's death was planned in New Orleans by anti-Communists, American and Cuban, in retribution for the botched-up Bay of Pigs invasion and for the President's failure to pull down Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Garrison's investigation produced its first ar-

rest Wednesday night. Clay Shaw, 54, former managing director of the International Trade Mart in New Orleans, was charged with participating in a conspiracy to murder President Kennedy.

Thursday, Garrison's office charged that Lee Harvey Oswald, Shaw and former airline pilot David W. Ferrie, 49, plotted Kennedy's assassination in New Orleans in September 1963.

Garrison said Shaw used the alias of Clay Bertrand and called a New Orleans attorney the day after Kennedy was assassinated and attempted to arrange counsel for Oswald. Shaw denied all the charges and also denied ever using the alias.

Ferrie was found dead in his apartment Feb. 22.

At this point, it seems doubtful that the investigation and promised court trials will produce much more than the fact that some Cubans in New Orleans in 1962-63 and some American oddballs did in-

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deed speak wishfully of seeing Kennedy killed.

Garrison hopes to prove that Lee Harvey Oswald sat in these sordid councils before going to Dallas where Kennedy was slain. That would be contrary to the Warren Commission conclusion that Oswald was the sole assassin.

Garrison does not believe this. He believes there is a good chance Oswald "didn't kill anybody."

With all respect to the hard-driving, hard-living 45-year-old district attorney this case so far has to be described as flimsy. In his currently powerful position, he can arrest almost anyone for anything. But proof will come harder, particularly considering the credibility of some of his sources.

Having to work with such informants does not dismay Garrison. He has pushed himself almost to the point of physical and mental exhaustion to complete what he considers a durable case.

I spent hours talking with Garrison — in a dignified old restaurant nestled in the city's famous French Quarter and in the book-lined study of his spacious home.

Sipping an incredible mixture of cream soda and gin, the district attorney seemed wracked by exhaustion and spoke of getting away for a few days to sleep and sunbathe. If he has any inner doubts about the strength of his case, he doesn't show it. He exudes scorn for his detractors, of whom there are many in New Orleans.

"We have definitely found out how they killed President Kennedy and we're going to prove it," he told me.

Reminded of his oft-stated promise of forthcoming arrests and convictions, he was asked about timing.

"I'm not going to be stampeded into it," he said. "I'm interested in gathering facts and proving them in court, not in getting premature headlines. I'm going to get every last man involved in killing President Kennedy and a number of other persons who, in my judgment, are ac-

cessories after the fact."

History may not be changed appreciably by the Garrison investigation, but it could influence his own political fortunes. There is considerable talk that his friends may push him for lieutenant governor next fall. Of such talk, Garrison says, "I couldn't care less." For those who do not understand the argot of politicians, this is an understatement.

Garrison, who fought this town's criminal court judges to a landmark decision by the U.S. Supreme Court and won, is not overly impressed by the fact that the Warren Commission believed Oswald acted alone.

The district attorney is convinced, as are many private citizens here and abroad, that the commission stopped far short of a full inquiry.

The moving spirit behind this new investigation is, in fact, highly anti-Washington except for Garrison's warm attitude toward Sen. Russell Long, D-La., who he says, encouraged him to undertake the inquiry.

The six-foot-six district attorney who packs a revolver under his coat (sometimes he forgets the gun and wears only the holster), refuses acidly to share his investigation at this stage with the FBI or any other federal agency which failed to turn up the evidence which he now has.

"I see no reason to delay this investigation another three years," he said.

What makes Garrison so confident of arrests and convictions in the relatively near future? The Iowa native and 1950 law graduate of Tulane University says his files are



overflowing with evidence.

It must be noted, however, that much of this evidence is based on the words and deeds of men and women of known instability.

Most criminal investigations feature one or more witnesses of reasonable stability whose versions can be used to measure or evaluate evidence offered by others. If Garrison has any such witnesses, he has kept it a close secret.

Here are some of those who have figured in Garrison's case so far:

—An unfrocked airline pilot, fanatically religious, who sometimes dressed in vestments of a priest in something he called the "Orthodox Old Catholic Church of North America," and a known sexual deviate. This was David W. Ferrie who on George Washington's Birthday last month was found dead in bed, wearing a red wig and mascara eyebrows.

—A convict of Cuban extraction with a penchant for armed robbery, burglary and pushing narcotics. This professional tough, Miguel Torres, has not behaved so ungraciously of late. Whining for protection, he was questioned by Garrison's men in Angola State Prison, moved to the New Orleans jail, then into the jail hospital for even greater safety. One theory is that Miguel may be more afraid of the Cosa Nostra than he is of Garrison or some of the alleged conspirators.

(Local experts on the subject say the mobsters with big cars, big rings and big cigars — are quite unkind toward independent purveyors of narcotics, pinball machines and girls.)

—Jack S. Martin, 51, a native of Phoenix, Ariz., also known variously as Colonel Martin and Bishop Martin (affiliation, Orthodox Old Catholic Church of North America). A self-styled expert on electronic eavesdropping, Martin describes himself as "author, a former newspaperman, professional soldier, adventurer and philosopher." Asked whether he had been known as Edward S. Suggs, he told me, "I don't want to discuss it. Martin is now my legal name."

Martin has told a variety of stories linking Oswald with Ferrie.

Before I mentioned our conversation to anyone and was sitting in my hotel room studying my notes on Martin's jumbled conversation, he

was on the phone to a New Orleans TV station denouncing the UPI and me for having distorted what he said.

Martin is worth remembering, however. At about the time of Farrie's death, Martin was quite apprehensive about his own safety and left town. We picked up reports of his presence as far away as Rosarita Beach in Baja California, more than 2,000 miles from New Orleans.

In any event, this took financing of a sort. Asked whether he gave Martin walking-around money, Garrison waved off the question and said he would not be so foolish as to attach any definitive importance whatever to information from this kind of source.

—David Lewis, 26, New Orleans bus company freight handler and self-described private investigator, part of the Bannister-Ferrie - Martin set.

Lewis, too, fears for his life enough to disappear periodically. His motivation in the case seems to involve profit and status. He rebuffs reports with a lordly, "no comment." Moments later, he tries to peddle for an outrageous sum a tape recording which he made with Martin "naming names."

What does Lewis know to connect Oswald with the assassination and/or the so-called conspirators? "Plenty," he says to some, "nothing" to others.

—Carlos Quiroga (who may be in either New Orleans or somewhere in Texas) and Sergio Arcacha. Both were involved in the Cuba liberation movement in New Orleans on or about the time Oswald was there. Garrison has been trying to question Arcacha, who is in Dallas. As of early last week, the Cuban refused to budge and would not talk with Garrison's investigators in any place but the Dallas City Jail and then only when flanked by Dallas detectives.

Quiroga and Arcacha must be considerably more important to Garrison's case than some of the other publicly identified figures. Garrison does not like discussing their relationship to his inquiry.

—Bernardo Torres of Miami, Fla., self-styled investigator reported to have offered his help to Garrison. Garrison is not enthusiastic about this Torres (who apparently is not related to Miquel)

because he doesn't seem to have much to offer.

What about Garrison's future? His admirers express confidence he will make it all the way to the governor's chair. Some 50 or more prosperous businessmen are collecting a special fund with which Garrison can finance his investigation without using public money for which there has to be public accounting. They call it "Truth and Consequences, Inc."

The local newspapers, the Times-Picayune and the States-Item, annoyed Garrison no little by examining his expense vouchers which must be filed with a court. In fact, Garrison won't knowingly talk to their reporters. This doesn't bother the papers. Their sources on Garrison's activities have been adequate.

More enthusiastic Garrison people see beyond the govern-

norship. Some say that if he might put him on a future Democratic national ticket, brings off this conspiracy case, his credentials as a high quality law-and-order man possibly as vice presidential candidate.