

'BIG JIM' GARRISON LINKS NARCOTICS, CUBA WITH JFK ASSASSINATION

New Orleans' D.A.'s win streak
is impressive; he's never lost
a murder case yet

Again, Oswald a patsy?

BY WILLIAM TURNER

New Orleans

Big Jim Garrison, the free wheeling Orleans parish district attorney who has tossed the Warren Report away and launched his

own investigation of the Kennedy assassination is hardly regarded as a prophet in his own land.

"He's out on a witch hunt," said the desk clerk at the motel where I stayed. "So Oswald lived here a while and had some strange friends," remarked a French Quarter artist. "That doesn't make them conspirators." Although a few New Orleans business men have vowed to subsidize a Garrison's investigation as his public funds run short, the city as a whole seems sharply skeptical.

This scarcely bothers Garrison, who was pushing his investigation with the solid confidence of a man who has bucked the odds before and won. He has in fact an impressive win streak going. In his five years as D.A. he has never lost a murder case. He has given the parole and bail bond systems a thorough shaking. Once he took on the city's judges, charging them with taking too long vacations and running too short sessions. They collectively sued for defamation but Garrison ultimately won in the Supreme Court.

As Garrison sees it the Warren Commission worked too hastily and without proper correlation of the reams of reports and memorandums flowing in from the FBI Secret Service and other agencies. "The Commission was right when it said Kennedy was dead," he commented. "But the rest of the Commission's conclusions are all wrong." As an investigator he said he was perturbed by the Commission's acceptance of one implausibility after another in order to arrive at its finding. But he is unperturbed at the lack of public support for his investigation, pointing that most people simply haven't read the Warren report,

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or if they have they do not possess the forensic background to argue with it.

Besides public apathy, Garrison has been confronted by a wall of silence thrown up by other agencies. The Dallas district attorney and police department have been coldly uncooperative. When Garrison sought to question a Cuban exile now in Dallas the exile rebuffed him with the comment that any talk could only be in the presence of D.A. Bill Alexander and the Dallas police.

The FBI also has remained aloof, apparently hoping Garrison will fall flat on his face. The bureau refused for example to turn over to Garrison a lengthy investigative report on David Ferrie, the pilot who was to be arrested by Garrison but was recently found dead in bed. The FBI report which covers Ferrie's enigmatic trip to Texas at the time of the assassination has also been withheld from the national archives.

Although Attorney General Ramsey Clark has stated that in 1963 the FBI investigated and cleared both Ferrie and Clay Shaw, who has been arrested by Garrison, the D.A.'s staff is unimpressed. "What does investigated mean?" asks Louis Gurvich, a top Garrison aid. "Clay Shaw was a big man around town—head of the International Trade Mart — and the FBI probably handled him with a great deal of deference.

In addition to Ferrie and Shaw, Garrison's trail seems to lead in the direction of anti-Castro emigres. His office has been in close touch with Mrs. Sylvia Odio, a former Dallas resident now living in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Warren Report had discounted Mrs. Odio's testimony that two Latins and Lee Harvey Oswald who was introduced as Leon Oswald visited her in late September 1963. She felt she was being sounded out for financial assistance in helping a para-military effort against Castro and was recontacted on the telephone the day after the visit by one of the Latins. She failed to encourage him and has heard nothing further. Recently she emphatically declared that Oswald was the man using the name Leon Oswald and that the Warren Report is wrong in rejecting her testimony: she complains that she has been "hounded and harassed" by the FBI.

Other elements of Garrison's investigation appear to include the Ruby angle and the possibility that some of the persons involved in the plot were active in narcotics trafficking. There is also evidence that Garrison has considered the possibility that Oswald was framed and did not actually pull the trigger on November 22, 1963.