

Dwight Newton



NBC Whacks At Garrison

The National Broadcasting Company made like Perry Mason for real last night in a one-hour investigating plunge into the JFK conspiracy charges mounted by New Orleans D. A. Jim Garrison.

It quickly was evident that someone at NBC suspects that Garrison's case against Clay L. Shaw has about as much solid footing as a two-ton truck traveling across cracked ice.

If Garrison is roaring mad today, so would you be under the would you be under the accusations that were televised. The program made him appear to be an opportunist, a con- niver, a manipulator of evidence, and a dolt.

The case against Garrison was assembled in a series of on-camera statements from a mor- bidly fascinating array of witnesses — includ- ing one convicted bur- glar, two self-confessed liars, a psychopath, a dope addict and a heavy-jowled and jolly lawyer with shady glasses who admitted he gave Garrison two ficti- tious names "to see which way he was going."

About one of these names, one Emanuel Garcia Gonzales, presumably fictional, the lawyer quipped that he had "the right ta-ta but the wrong ho-ho."

Such a jaunty character with such colorful pat- ter, producer Sheldon Leonard would love to cast in an "I.Spy" episode.

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INDEED, the hour reeked with real life wit- nesses closely paralleling in manner and testimony



FRANK MCGEE,
Interlocutor

the classic heroes and villains on "Felony Squad," "Dragnet," "The FBI," "The Fugitive" and "Mission: Impossible" — the crack magazine reporter, the hypnotist, the innocent bystander, the crook, the jailbird, the nice young lady, the code expert, the fellow who denied being approached for homosexual purposes, the man who said he was offered a bribe, the man who admitted he lied for the sake of money he didn't receive.

Only this wasn't "Mission: Impossible." It was Mission Probable. NBC deliberately — and quite effectively, it seemed — ignited a bomb that may blow the Garrison case clean out of the courts.

Frank McGee was the seasoned interlocutor who manned the home studio, knitting together the isolated segments of film. There were, perhaps, too many of them. They hit the viewer like buckshot. It was difficult to digest so many statements spinning from so many people so quickly.

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PERRY MASON would have made seven epi- sodes of the material at hand. NBC had to hit hard and fast, over and out. It announced yesterday that Garrison had objected and that he probably would demand equal time.

Meanwhile, CBS is winding up for a four-part investigative series on "The Warren Report," next Sunday through next Wednesday, 10 o'clock each night. The Garrison case will be touched upon some- where in the series. In New York recently, I attended a CBS conference at which "Warren Report" produc- er Les Midgley said, "We are still working with him (Garrison). I saw him last week, and he's—well— that's one of the problems we have. We have to fol- low that story right up to air time."

Midgley was asked: "Do you feel, Les — since you say you are going to work up with Garrison — I mean, work with him until the end of this, that he really has something to say? You're not scratching him off as a nut, the way some of the press has, apparently? Is that right?"

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MIDGLEY REPLIED: "Well, I don't see how you can. He's a — he's a fascinating man. But he's also an elected District Attorney. And the story pre- sents a problem, because it's before a court. A man's been charged. And the trial's going to be held. And we — the judge has ordered people not to go around and try to investigate witnesses, and things like that."

NBC, on the other hand, has just completed in- vestigating witnesses and "things like that."

Midgley added: "The story is changing . . . Whatever information he (Garrison) has, that's available to us as a public medium of information, we will put in our broadcast, up to air."

Could it be that Garrison will get equal time on NBC, and double time on CBS? Stand by for reper- cussions.