

risson later commented that that would really have embarrassed the members since "one's a numbskull and the other's senile."

Early on Saturday, Raggio told Charles Ward, a New Orleans Assistant District Attorney, that he wanted to see Garrison.

The scene shifts to Raggio's luxurious suite at the fashionable Monteleone Hotel. With Raggio is the association's vice president William Cahn, who is scheduled to be presented with a plaque at the banquet that evening for "distinguished service." Garrison knocks on the door. Raggio opens it.

RAGGIO: Hello Jim. Good of you to come.

GARRISON: Hello Bill (to Raggio). Hello Bill (to Cahn).

RAGGIO: Well, Jim, we've been good friends as you know.

GARRISON: Yes. What's the problem?

RAGGIO: Well, you know the guys didn't want to come down here because they were afraid that you would get us involved in the assassination. A lot of the boys were anxious because they thought that you might mention that subject. I really had a hard time talking the boys into coming here.

GARRISON: You must have been eloquent judging by the attendance. It is the biggest convention in your history isn't it?

RAGGIO: Well, yes. But you know your talk the other day about the federal government was, to put it bluntly, somewhat ticklish.

GARRISON: The subject of federal interference in the lives of the people is an important one. It has to be discussed. The use of the federal courts to interfere with the investigation of the death of the President is a matter of some concern. Judging by the response the other day it is a matter of real interest to the delegates as well.

RAGGIO: Well, what I want to know, what I am worried about, to put it bluntly is I don't know if you plan to talk about the assassination investigation and the federal government... criticize the federal government, tonight at the banquet.

GARRISON: My God, if that is all that's on your mind I can answer that for you and put your mind at ease. I am not only going to speak about that subject but I am going to speak about it at length. I will discuss the role played by Johnson in suppressing the evidence about the death of the man he succeeded, about the role of the federal police agencies, and I will present evidence to show how the Warren Commission sought to conceal truth. Why, what would you think the delegates would like to hear me speak about — The French and Spanish Influence Upon Contemporary New Orleans Architecture?

RAGGIO: Well, Jim, as President of the association, I must tell you that I am not going to let you speak about that subject.

GARRISON: Then I will not speak at all.

RAGGIO: Fine. Then that is settled.

GARRISON: We have an understanding. I will not speak. But if I don't speak there will be no banquet.

GARRISON (turning to Ward): Charlie, tell the hotel management to lock the banquet room door. Cancel the banquet. Nobody eats.

(Garrison's next order was to the hotel kitchen. He sent the food that had been prepared for 610 district attorneys—shrimp remoulade, roast beef, etc.—to three orphanages in the poorest section of the city.)

RAGGIO: You don't have the authority to do that.

GARRISON: I just did it.

CAHN: (perhaps wondering about when he was going to receive his distinguished service award): Can't something be done?

GARRISON: Goodbye, gentlemen.

Four hours later Raggio addressed the delegates to inform them that Garrison would not speak that evening and that the banquet was off. Almost at once the lobby was filled with district attorneys checking out and muttering angrily. They had come to hear Garrison and were deeply disappointed that he had not been permitted to speak.

A few district attorneys who remained inquired of Garrison about the dance that was to have followed the banquet. "Oh, that's on," he said. "We're not angry with anyone. There need be no recriminations. The dance goes forward, as far as I'm concerned. Certainly I'll be there." Almost all of the remaining district attorneys were there too. Garrison sang a few contemporary songs, "You're My Weakness Now" and "You're the Cream in My Coffee." The band played until the early hours of the morning. Garrison explained to those who expressed surprise regarding his ability, or at least willingness, to sing that he was "really a poet who, between guerrilla forays, does district attorney work and sings."

The press ran only the Raggio version of the events, with the word "irrational" prominently featured. The Oklahoma City Times also ran the comments of Curtis P. Harris, the District Attorney of Oklahoma City, who had much to say upon his return home. He said that Garrison was "absolutely right" in calling off the banquet. He condemned the association's leadership for trying to "censor or silence Garrison" about a subject of such importance. Harris said that all of the delegates had expected Garrison to speak about his investigation and the efforts to thwart it, and that they were very interested in the subject and anxious to hear him. He said that "more than ninety percent of the delegates attending the convention supported

Garrison" and added that "the DA's were mad as hell at this interference with free speech."

A sympathetic bystander read the Oklahoma City Times and rushed into Garrison's office to suggest that he send it to the Associated Press for wider distribution. Garrison replied, "It would be more effective to take it upon the Mississippi River Bridge, make a paper airplane out of it, and float it into the river. At least one human being might see it then."

Later when Garrison was asked to comment upon the affair he said:

"With regard to any matter of

the assassination of President Kennedy, I will not submit to any censorship or any kind of limitations on my comments. There are always good excuses to avoid facing the truth, to avoid confronting the illegitimate power which now has control of this country.

"The road which has brought us to our present dilemma, in which the executive power of the government has become virtually absolute, is paved with compromises made by public officials. In the course of my efforts to call attention to the truth, and to the role of the federal government in seeking to suppress it, I will not

make any compromise of any kind."

A few days later Garrison was interviewed as he left the federal courthouse. He had never said that he wanted to tell the delegates that Johnson should be hanged. "At most, perhaps, picked up by the ears." He had not used profanity when meeting with Raggio. He has a working knowledge of almost all profane words, he said, but since the meeting was so low key there was no occasion to use them. When a reporter asked him if he thought he had the authority to cancel the banquet he replied that he had thought that he had already adequately demonstrated that.

REPORTER: What do you mean?

GARRISON: There was no banquet, was there?

REPORTER: Oh! What about the \$8.00 each DA paid for the dinner?

GARRISON: It was a wonderful contribution. Why, if they could have seen the faces of those kids when those elaborate dinners came in they would have been very pleased, I am sure.

REPORTER: Well, Raggio has said he might sue you for \$3000. What will you do then?

GARRISON: I'll send him a bill for the lesson that I gave him about the meaning of free expression. The bill will be for about \$3000.

After a few more questions Garrison turned away and left. The national attacks continued; Garrison's comments were not circulated. Later he said to me, "The press has succeeded where the medieval alchemists failed.

Those old would-be chemists sought to transmute everything into gold. The press can turn everything into shit."

The AP, having failed to publish any of Garrison's responses, did offer a happy ending to its story. It concluded:

"Cahn, who was to receive the association's distinguished service award at the banquet, was given his plaque at an impromptu ceremony in his hotel room."

## Why I am writing for the Free Press

MARK LANE

I am writing for the Los Angeles Free Press because no one else has asked me. I have asked other publications but they have declined to publish my comments from New Orleans. Not long before travelling to New Orleans I offered to write a series of articles for the San Francisco Chronicle but the editorial staff there refused to consider them even though I offered them gratis. I have written articles regarding the assassination investigation for the leading journals and newspapers in England (The Times Literary Supplement), France (Paris Match), Denmark (Ekstra Bladet) and most of the rest of Europe. Only in the United States is it very difficult to communicate.

Of course, one cannot take such rejections personally. It is, I fear, far worse than that. When I completed writing "Rush to Judgment," it was rejected by almost every leading publisher in the United States. "It will never sell" was the excuse often offered. Yet within weeks of publication it became the number one best seller in the country and when published in paperback became the number one best seller in that form as well. Most publishers would not

print it, yet well over a million people secured it.

When commercial firms, Simon and Schuster or the Chronicle, reject works for reasons other than their intrinsic worth or commercial value we discover that the American business community has moved away from capitalism. Which might not be reprehensible except that the move is toward totalitarianism. Toward a controlled press, a powerful centralized government, an obedient communications industry—in short, toward, and almost at—fascism.

Do I put down the Free Press when I say that I write for it because no one else asked me? No. I honor it. And I am honored to write for it.

In the weeks ahead I will try to keep you informed of the events of New Orleans. I moved to this lovely city when I found out that the only way to know what is taking place in the Garrison investigation is to reside here, attend the courtroom sessions, and spend hours each day with Jim Garrison and his staff. No further

any knowledge of the facts of the most important investigation in the history of our country.

comment need be made about the press than that by residing elsewhere you have been cheated of