

BOB CONSIDINE

Garrison's Inconsistencies Leave Writer Wondering

NEW ORLEANS — Will the real Jim Garrison stand up?

Almost every time the district attorney opens his mouth about the conspiracy he says took place here and culminated in the gunning down of John F. Kennedy he gives the incredible charge a different interpretation.

From last June until October he said that Lee Harvey Oswald was an agent for the Central Intelligence Agency, but never for the FBI.

Last December Garrison said Oswald tipped off the FBI in advance of the assassination.

As time moves on, long past the assorted dates on which he promised to deliver the real murder ring, the Warren Commission has changed from "innocent dupes" of the CIA to a panel that "perpetrated fraud." As for Garrison's hazy estimates about the number of gunmen involved in the tragedy at Dallas, the wonder is that only one person — the President of the United States — was killed that day in what Garrison would have one believe was massive gun play.

Garrison's assassins range in number from 7 to 15. They pumped away at the President from "the grassy knoll," behind "the picket fence," and recently he proposed that somebody might have been shooting from "the sewer."

There was a period in Garrison's strange case when he put the onus on "anti-Castro Cubans," meaning, presumably, Cubans in exile who were embittered by President Kennedy's refusal to back up the Bay of Pigs assault force with U.S. air support.

Now the culprits are not only anti-Castro Cubans, but "neo-Nazis and some Texas millionaires." And there are dark hints about the tracks of others involved, even leading to the door of the White House. The archivists in Washington are pictured as evil chaps harboring all kinds of information that would support the Garrison thesis.

So much for the implausible side of the case.

The blunt fact is that Clay

Shaw, Garrison's first named suspect, goes on trial for conspiracy Feb. 15 in criminal court before Judge Edward Haggerty and a jury of his peers. Shaw was indicated months ago on the charges leveled by Garrison. He has pleaded innocence.

He could get from two to five years if convicted of arranging the death of the leader of the Free World!

Garrison has issued subpoenas to the widow (since remarried) of Oswald, to one Edward Eugene Bradley, a hawker for an itinerant Right Wing preacher, and is said to be considering trying to bring Jacqueline Kennedy to Judge Haggerty's little courtroom.

Friends of Garrison — and he has many in the state — still assume "he must have something." They cannot conceive of his going so far out on a limb as to have it break and plunge him into scornful political limbo. They say he's much too ambitious a man to go off on any fool's chase.

They recall his clean-up, relatively speaking, of the Bourbon Street brothels and dives — even though, as they admit, he had been a "real swinger" himself in his pre-district attorney days. They remember how he went all the way to the Supreme Court to win a reversal in a case of slander brought against him by a group of the more important judges of New Orleans. They remember when he was hailed as the first "new face" in the DA's office since Huey Long first ruled the land.

Perhaps significantly, the influential New Orleans Times-Picayune has played the Garrison charges "straight," and seldom if ever attempted to knock them down editorially.

Garrison's detractors point out that several of those he has indicated are well-known homosexuals who may not wish to fight the conspiracy charges too vigorously. Garrison's supporters simultaneously point out that most of those the district attorney has referred to were questioned by the FBI soon after the assassination. The FBI took 25,000 depositions, and supports the findings of the Warren Commission.

Garrison's unofficial staff has been joined by dozens of volunteers who feel they can cast new light on the murder. They include Mark Lane, the well-known master of the half-truth, and Mort Sahl, whose qualifications as criminologist have been magnificently concealed through a thousand and one nightclub nights.