

Fear Halts Talkers in JFK Plot

By The Associated Press and United Press International

NEW ORLEANS — David W. Ferrie's death created fear today among some people who claimed to have information relating Ferrie to Lee Oswald and the assassination of President Kennedy.

Ferrie, labeled by District Attorney Jim Garrison as a prime informant in his investigation of the assassination, was found dead in bed yesterday.

A preliminary autopsy report attributed death to a brain hemorrhage. A coroner's report today ruled out murder, leaving suicide, natural causes or accidental death as possibilities.

A woman who was about to give the Associated Press details she said related to Oswald's activities in New Orleans was frightened into silence. She warily greeted a reporter at her home.

"You see that," she said, pointing to a snub-nosed .38 calibre revolver on a nearby chair. "I don't say anything might happen to me. But I just won't talk to you. I have nothing more to say."

Another person on the periphery of the case, David Lewis, a bus station baggage clerk, dropped out of sight briefly last night.

Lewis, 26, met newsmen briefly, to say Ferrie was not one of the possible members of the plot.

Lewis said previously he had given Garrison four or five names of persons involved in the conspiracy, and as a result feared for his life.

He dropped out of sight with his wife and four children Wednesday night, but reappeared at the District Attorney's office late Thursday morning.

He refused to say anything other than that Ferrie was not one of the group he knew.



DAVID LEWIS
Fears for his life
—AP Photo



JIM GARRISON
"I'm still optimistic"



DAVID W. FERRIE
Secrets in grave?

Ferrie was mentioned in the Warren Report and questioned by Garrison in his new investigation of the assassination. Garrison called his death "apparent suicide."

Earlier today Garrison hinted Ferrie carried to his grave some secrets about Kennedy's assassination.

At the same time there was still official confusion over the time of Ferrie's death and the cause.

Although Garrison termed the death an "apparent suicide," Coroner Nicholas Chedda initially said cause of death was a massive cerebral hemorrhage when a blood vessel burst at the base of the brain. Later he said he wasn't sure, that Ferrie could have killed himself. In any event, time of death was set as late Tuesday night.

On the other hand, Washington Post Reporter George Lardner Jr., said he interviewed Ferrie from midnight until 4 a.m. Wednesday.

Just what meaning the time element of death could have has not been brought out.

Chetta said he ruled out murder because there was no evidence of tissue damage which would have resulted if the brain hemorrhage that caused death had been due to a blow.

The coroner's toxicological report, which could shed more light on the cause of death, will take a week to complete.

Washington sources, meanwhile, commenting further on the Warren Commission investigation of Ferrie, said he had absolutely no connection with the Kennedy assassination.

Both the Justice Department and the FBI had a firm "no comment" when asked about Ferrie's death and of the New Orleans investigation.

Commenting on the possibility that Ferrie was the possible getaway pilot for Lee Harvey Oswald, the Washington sources said Ferrie and his plane were in New Orleans at the time Kennedy was fatally shot. Furthermore, the inquiry established that the pilot had no associations with Oswald, the sources said.

Lardner in his Post interview stated that Ferrie had told him that he (Ferrie) believed that Oswald had acted alone in the assassination.

In his copyrighted story Lardner wrote that Ferrie had stressed that Oswald was a "loner."

A spokesman for the National Archives — where the report and papers of the Warren Commission are kept — said there were portions of the Ferrie phase of the investigation that were still classified "secret." This material was said to deal with aspects of Ferrie's life that could have damaged his reputation had they been made public.

District Attorney Garrison in his comments said:

"We felt that Ferrie was ready to talk candidly, to contribute to this important investigation. Now he's gone and it will be much harder to make the connections between certain people. But I'm sure we'll make them anyway."

Garrison said his office had planned to take Ferrie into custody early next week. Because Ferrie had expressed fears for his life, Garrison said he provided him a temporary hideout at a motor hotel here.

Ferrie was brought into the assassination probe within 72 hours after Kennedy was slain Nov. 22, 1963.

A New Orleans florist, Edward Voebel, had seen Lee Harvey Oswald's picture on television and reported he and Oswald had served in a Civil Air Patrol squadron under Ferrie. When authorities sought to question Ferrie, they found he had gone to Texas.

Ferrie said he and two friends took a short vacation trip to Texas the day of the assassination "on the spur of the moment." He said they visited Houston, Galveston and Alexandria, La. They did not go to Dallas, he said.