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JFK Plot Prober Returns

NEW ORLEANS (UPI)

— A former investigator who claimed to know four conspirators in a 1963 plot to assassinate President Kennedy dropped out of sight early today, but later showed up at Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's office.

David Lewis, 26, met newsmen briefly, to say David W. Ferrie, 49, an eerie-looking former Eastern Airlines pilot found dead in his apartment Wednesday, was not one of the "possible members of the plot."

Lewis said previously he had



DAVID LEWIS
Appears at D.A.'s
Office

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 this morning.

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

Ferrie was mentioned in the Warren report and questioned

by Garrison in his new investigation of the assassination. Garrison called his death apparent suicide.

George Lardner Jr., a Washington Post reporter who may have been the last man to see Ferrie alive, said in a copyrighted story that Ferrie told him he was convinced Lee Harvey Oswald killed the President Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, and acted alone.

Lardner told UPI in New Orleans he thought there was no mystery about an apparent discrepancy in the time of Ferrie's death. Lardner said Ferrie was alive when the reporter left his apartment at 4 a.m. Monday.

Coroner Nicholas J. Chetta had put the time of death at Tuesday night, and Garrison called the differing times "one of the mysteries we don't understand."

In Washington, Rep. Gerald Ford, R-Mich., a member of the Warren Commission, said: "The Warren Commission — through its staff of investigators — thoroughly checked out all persons whose names have been mentioned in recent news stories, including Mr. Ferrie's."

Ford did not say what the (Please See Page 10, Column 4)

findings were. But in an implied criticism of Garrison's current handling of the case, he said: "Because the national interest is involved, it would seem appropriate and necessary that there now be the highest degree of co-operation between local and federal authorities."

"Ferrie was certainly living when I said good-bye to him Wednesday shortly before 4 a.m., Lardner said. "I can see nothing inconsistent about that."

Ferrie told Lardner that he never knew Oswald and never met him as far as he remembered.

Chetta said Ferrie's death had to occur before 4 a.m. but Lardner insisted he had visited with Ferrie until that hour.

Garrison said his investigators, who had Ferrie's apartment staked out secretly "for some time," saw the lights go out at 11 p.m., an hour before Lardner said he arrived for his midnight interview.

The investigators left when they saw the lights go off.

Chetta said death resulted from a blood vessel rupture at the base of the brain. Garrison called it suicide.

A bottle of pills was found alongside Ferrie's body along with an unsigned note calling the world a "loathsome" place that would be sweet for him to leave.

The coroner's office, however, declined to be specific on what might cause the vessel to rupture pending the outcome of tests. Such tests sometimes take up to a week to complete.

Ferrie, a former Eastern Airlines pilot, was found dead in the bedroom of his apartment in an upper middle class neighborhood.

Garrison described the dead man as "one of history's most important individuals" and said he was "involved in events culminating in the assassination of President Kennedy."

Garrison, at a hurried news conference, announced dramatically he now was not even accepting the theory that Lee

Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy in 1963.

"I have no reason to believe at this time that Lee Harvey Oswald killed anybody in Dallas on Nov. 22," Garrison said.

The Warren Commission headed by U.S. Chief Justice Earl Warren concluded Oswald was the assassin and acted alone.

Garrison disagreed last weekend in announcing his office had been investigating for three months a conspiracy to kill Kennedy hatched in New Orleans.

Ferrie's name was mentioned in the Warren Commission Report and he was questioned here shortly after the assassination. He came under investigation again in Garrison's new probe.

Ferrie said in a copyrighted interview Saturday with the New Orleans States-Item he was afraid he was suspected of being a "getaway pilot in an elaborate plot" to kill Kennedy.