

Son Jour Tuesday
Feb 23 1967

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Fair

Fair weather except for high cloudiness is forecast through Friday by the U.S. Weather Bureau. High Wednesday was 65, low 35; last year's range was 68-49. Details on Page 51.

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Death



DAVID W. FERRIE
'... Historic individual'

Quizzed Pilot A Suicide?

New Orleans Probe Set Back

By **GEORGE LARDNER**
The Washington Post

NEW ORLEANS—A commercial pilot who figured in Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigation of President Kennedy's assassination was found dead in his bed Wednesday.

The body of David William Ferrie, once interrogated as an alleged "get-away pilot" for a presidential assassin, was discovered at 11 a.m. with a sheet pulled up to his chest.

New Orleans authorities are in disagreement over the cause of death, although a note was found that said:

"To leave this life is, for me, a sweet prospect. I find nothing in it that is desirable and on the other hand everything that is loathsome."

Orleans Parish Coroner Dr. Nicholas Chetta said Ferrie died of a ruptured blood vessel at the base of the brain. Garrison called it an apparent suicide.

I may have been the last

person to see him alive, during a four-hour conversation that ended shortly before 4 a.m. Wednesday.

Garrison declared that his investigators had intended to arrest Ferrie next week, asserting that Kennedy's death in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, was the product of a plot hatched in New Orleans.

Garrison called Ferrie "one of history's most important individuals."

"Evidence developed by our office had long since confirmed that he was involved in events culminating in the assassination of President Kennedy," the district attorney said.

"Apparently we waited too long to arrest him," Garrison

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said. He refused to spell out the charges that might have been lodged against the pilot.

Ferrie, a part-time private investigator, told me he felt convinced there was no plot to kill the President, that accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was a "loner."

A loner himself, Ferrie seemed in good spirits, not like a man about to kill himself.

"Kennedy is dead," he said. "Let's get on with living."

A brown bottle of medicine, tablets apparently, was standing on the worn-down piano in his living room when I left. Garrison said 14 other bottles were found scattered around the house. Ferrie reportedly was suffering from emphysema.

It was Ferrie who forced Garrison to acknowledge Saturday that he was conducting a full-scale investigation of what Garrison called a conspiracy resulting in the Kennedy assassination.

Ferrie told me he was convinced it would turn out to be a "witch hunt."

"This is not a city prone to knowing what it's doing before it arrests people," he said.

Ferrie, a tuddy-faced man in his late 40s with what appeared to be a deep red wig glued on his head and apparently false eyebrows, said: "I was the first one they questioned."

He had been summoned by Garrison's men last November on broadly the same grounds for which he had been picked up within 72 hours after Kennedy's assassination.

At that time he had been arrested as a "fugitive from

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Texas" and questioned about reports that he might have been in Dallas that sunny afternoon, waiting at Love Field with a plane to fly Oswald to safety.

Ferrie said he did go to Texas that day, but not to Dallas, that he never knew Oswald and had no recollection of ever having met him.

Oswald was rumored to have served in Ferrie's Civil Air Patrol unit in New Orleans, but Ferrie said they were in different units.

Ferrie also denied flying Oswald to Cuba around 1959, and said he considered "this preoccupation" with the Kennedy assassination "ghoulish." But his rooms showed that it occupied him day and night.

Copies of magazine articles on the president's death, books attacking the Warren Commission, even his own mathematical calculations of the path of the assassin's bullets, cluttered the floor.

On Tuesday, he said, he had been at the public library reading the Warren Report.

He had also been conducting his own investigation to counter Garrison's.

On Monday, he talked to Carlos Bringuier, a Cuban exile who had scuffled with Oswald three years ago on a New Orleans street corner over Oswald's distribution of leaflets of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

Bringuier, who insists that the assassination was a pro-Castro conspiracy, recalled Ferrie's visit with distaste.

"He asked me if I could help him," Bringuier said.

"He told me that anyone who thinks there could be a Communist plot behind the Kennedy assassination should go to a psychiatrist.

"There was a plot," Bringuier insisted, adding that he disagreed with Garrison's declaration earlier in the week that a foreign power was not involved.

In his apartment shortly before he died, Ferrie explained his own investigation by saying, "I'm just curious." He said he did not trust the courts or Garrison's investigation.

Ferrie said he was especially worried that what he was saying might trigger a "premature arrest by Garrison's men," the district attorney "knows he's got a tiger by the tail," Ferrie said, referring to himself.

Ferrie said he was fluent in several languages and trained in psychology and medicine. He showed the assimilation of

many of the 3,000 books he had scattered through his rooms.

Garrison said that his men had been keeping "a continuous stakeout" around Ferrie's apartment at 3330 Louisiana Parkway "for a long period."

In response to questions, Garrison told reporters that the stakeout was not a round-the-clock surveillance, however. He said his men waited until "approximately 11 last night when he turned out all the lights."

The lights were on again, however, when I arrived around midnight. I could see Ferrie standing on the second floor porch as my cab pulled up.

Garrison said the stakeout as well as information gathered elsewhere "had caused us to become increasingly concerned, as our investigation progressed, about the possibility of his killing himself."

The district attorney also vowed full speed ahead with his investigation of the Kennedy assassination. He said he had no intention of calling in the FBI. "What would be the purpose in seeking federal aid—to try and delay our progress three more years?"

"We've been able to make more progress in three months with a handful of men than they've been able to do in three years with 5,000 men," he said.