

The Baffling Aspects of 'Plot' Death

Times-Post Service

New Orleans

The death of a sometime airline pilot involved in the district attorney's investigation of President Kennedy's assassination remained as mysterious yesterday as the inquiry itself.

Whether David W. Ferrie died by suicide or natural cause, his death stands out as a macabre note in an already bizarre situation.

The investigation has produced promises of arrests and convictions from District Attorney Jim Garrison, but so far little in concrete results. Garrison blames the local press for tipping his hand. The FBI clearly expects him to fall on his face.

'SUICIDE'

Yesterday, Garrison mysteriously announced to newsmen that "for reasons I can't go into, there is no question" that Ferrie's death was a suicide.

And in another part of the Criminal Court Building, Orleans parish coroner Nicholas Chetta virtually ruled out the possibility of murder.

The coroner said he could still establish no more than that Ferrie, whom Garrison said he planned to arrest next week, died of a cerebral hemorrhage — a ruptured blood vessel at the base of the brain.

CONFLICT

While the district attorney blamed the death on "something taken internally," the coroner said that no drugs could have caused the hemorrhage, except perhaps by causing a violent retching reaction that might have ruptured the blood vessel.

In still another odd development, a self-described private eye sud-

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denly walked into Garrison's office after having reportedly left his home in fear. He was David F. Lewis, 26, who has been linked to Garrison's investigation. He was said to have asked Garrison whether "I should leave town."

Lewis, a freight agent, claimed to have met Lee Harvey Oswald in New Orleans four times and claims to know the names of four or five persons involved in the alleged plot to kill President Kennedy.

DISAPPEARANCE

But he told reporters yesterday that Ferrie was not one of these persons. He was immediately whisked off into an elevator by an employee of Garrison's office before he could say another word.

The elevator doors closing upon him seemed to ring down the curtain on yesterday's events in the baffling investigation.

Garrison ordered his inquiry last fall, a few weeks after his public image as "the Perry Mason of New Orleans" went into decline.

In a move sharply criticized by the Metropolitan Crime Commission, Garrison won a pardon for a Bourbon Street stripper, Linda Brigitte, whom he described as "an unjustly convicted mother of small children. . . ."

VOW

It is impossible to discern what evidence Garrison has at hand in his investigation of the Kennedy assassination. He has vowed to prosecute both "conspirators" and "accessories after the fact" who failed to volunteer important information.

But sources close to the investigation seem to feel that Garrison is likely to come up at most with charges against perhaps four or five individuals, presumably Cuban, who might have heard Oswald threaten to assassinate the President.

Said an official of the Dade County (Miami) State Attorney's office where Garrison's men have gone on various forays: "My theory on this is that what they have is a bunch of guys who are sitting around in New Orleans talking and one turns state's evidence, they'll probably convict them, too. After all, this was a President."

TALK

The talk of a presidential assassination was apparently topic A in extremist circles

in the days before Mr. Kennedy was shot Nov. 22, 1963.

For example, in Miami, which Mr. Kennedy visited before he went to Dallas, investigators working on a local bombing picked up a tape



AP Wirephoto

DAVID F. LEWIS
'In fear of his life'

recorded conversation from "a Ku Klux Klan type" about the possibility of going to a high building with a rifle along the route of some presidential motorcade.

"We probably could have woven something like this (Garrison's investigation) out of the same thing we had," the Miami official said.

UNCLEAR

Ferrie's role in the investigation here remains unclear. He said before he died that he had never met Oswald. And Garrison has refused to specify what he planned to arrest the former airline pilot for.

Ferrie told a reporter that he had never been to Cuba. But he had been arrested in 1961 on a morals charge involving juveniles and one of the officers in this arrest said one of the juveniles told of flying to Cuba with Ferrie on different occasions.

In an interview before he died, Ferrie said at one point that he believed people who are murdered "usually bring it on themselves." But he died without giving any hint that he might have been involved in the death of a President.