

REPORT TO READERS: DEATH AND INTRIGUE
IN NEW ORLEANS

In response to a reporter's comment that a statement of his was "bizarre," Mark Lane once said that the most bizarre thing about the assassination of President Kennedy was the assassination itself. In this context, the events in New Orleans in the last weeks, as they concern the assassinations of Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald, fall into place. And when they are examined, they are found to be not bizarre, but ominous - both because of their content and implications and because of the efforts of the press, federal investigatory agencies and the Warren Commission counsel to deride and denigrate them. What emerges from the confusing newspaper stories are the following facts:

- Another mysterious death has been added to the long list of mysterious deaths of persons involved in one way or another in the assassination inquiry.

- There is considerable evidence of the complicity of exiled anti-Castro Cubans in the murky details of the events surrounding the assassination.

- The newspapers of New Orleans acted in a most irresponsible fashion to hamper the investigation of District Attorney Jim Garrison.

- The government of the United States has barred access to valuable information on a possible New Orleans link to the assassination by classifying as secret facts gathered during the investigation.

- There is an unyielding determination by those who compiled the Warren Commission Report to defend at all costs the single-murderer theory and to cast doubt on the reliability of anyone who seeks to prove that the murder^{er} or murderers may still be among us.

Garrison since December has been pursuing leads to support his theory that there was a conspiracy involving several persons responsible for the assas-

sination of Kennedy. He was proceeding quietly until the New Orleans States-Item (followed by the Times-Picayune) ran a copyright story Feb. 17 disclosing the secret investigation. Immediately scores of newspapermen descended on New Orleans and Garrison was forced to drop hints as to what was in the works. He predicted arrests and convictions, charged obstruction and non-cooperation by the federal government and stated without qualification that he did not believe that Oswald had "killed anybody" on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas.

Among the persons under surveillance in New Orleans was a weird figure named David W. Ferrie, about 45, an adventurer and air pilot who (supposedly to conceal disfigurement as the result of an explosion) wore a red wig glued to his bald head, mascara eyebrows and false eyelashes. He also had an arrest for allegedly molesting young boys and was widely re-

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ported to be constantly in the company of known Latin homosexuals.

Ferrie had been questioned by the District Attorney's office a few days after the assassination, on his circuitous route back to New Orleans from a most unusual "goose hunting" trip to Texas with two other men undertaken the day Kennedy was murdered. Ferrie had been given a "clean bill" by the FBI, but there are 56 pages of testimony about him in the mass of material produced by the Warren inquiry, 40 of which are barred to the public in the National Archives in Washington.

FERRIE WAS KNOWN to be a rabid anti-Castroite and to have said that Kennedy "ought to be shot" for bungling the Bay of Pigs operation in 1961. He is known to have been associated with important Cubans in the exile movement in New Orleans, among them one man in particular who moved from New Orleans to Dallas before the assassination, and who has been frequently mentioned in connection with the assassination. At various times Ferrie said he had been involved in the Bay of Pigs fiasco and was reported by New Orleans witnesses to have flown several times to Cuba; but he told a Washington Post reporter that he had never been in Cuba.

There are discrepancies in the motel registration forms of Ferrie and his companions in Galveston and Houston on the "goose-hunting" expedition which - if the group did leave New Orleans Nov. 22 - took them a good 1,000 miles on a week-end, leaving precious little time for the geese.



DAVID FERRIE
Was he a suicide?

There are witnesses who said that Oswald had served under Ferrie in a civil air patrol unit in New Orleans (where Oswald had lived for six months prior to the assassination). Ferrie said he had never met Oswald, did not know who he was; then said Oswald had served in the air patrol, but in another unit. (There were also conflicting police reports that Ferrie and Oswald had been picked up together in 1963.)

ON THE MORNING OF FEB. 23, about 11 o'clock, Ferrie was found dead in his bed. Even in death the contradictions followed. Garrison said that Ferrie had killed himself. The coroner, after reading a paragraph from a letter left by Ferrie which sounded much like a suicide note (he refused to read more than one sentence), said that Ferrie had died of a ruptured blood vessel in his brain—a natural cause. The coroner put the time of death sometime the previous night. When a Washington Post reporter disclosed that he had been with Ferrie from 11 o'clock the previous night to 4 a.m. Feb. 23, the coroner decided that the death could have been after 4 a.m. In any case, he said, it was of no consequence.

In his bachelor room, cluttered beyond belief, were scores of books, articles, charts and diagrams concerning the assassination of Kennedy.

Garrison said that the newspaper disclosures and the death of Ferrie had set back his investigation considerably. His comments released another barrage of derisive press comment. But whatever else it accomplished, Ferrie's departure added another name to the growing list of unexplained deaths of persons involved in the assassination investigation. Here is an incomplete list:

James F. Koethe, a staff writer for the Dallas Times Herald, who had visited Jack Ruby's apartment soon after he had killed Oswald—found dead in his apartment the victim of a karate attack. Killer never found.

Bill Hunter, former resident of Dallas, a prize-winning reporter for the Long Beach (Calif.) Independent Press Telegram—shot to death in a police station in California. Killer was a local officer. Hunter was with Koethe at the Ruby apartment.

Tom Howard, an attorney for Ruby who accompanied the two reporters to the apartment—dead of a heart attack in Dallas.

Dorothy Kilgallen, a Hearst reporter who broke the Ruby testimony before the Warren Commission and who was critical of the handling of Ruby and other aspects of the investigation—found dead in her bed in New York.

Thomas Henry Killam, husband of a stripper in Ruby's night club, who left Dallas after the murders for Florida. Constantly hounded by "agents," he was found dead—his throat slashed—behind a broken plate-glass window in Pensacola. The verdict—suicide. His brother said: "Did you ever hear of a man committing suicide by jumping through a plate-glass window?" Two days earlier, Killam had told the same brother: "I'm a dead man. I've run as far as I'm going to run."

Jack Ruby himself, dead of a remarkably quickly discovered cancer after he had lain neglected for weeks in his jail cell—just weeks before he was to have faced a new trial and questioning by a new group of attorneys determined to unearth any facts that would throw new light on the assassination of Kennedy and Oswald.

Also dead: A witness shot through the head and another who was reported to have hanged herself in a Dallas jail cell. There are others whose deaths may or not be suspicious, and still others who were threatened after Nov. 22.

FROM ROME, THE GUARDIAN'S correspondent Phyllis Rosner reported on a press conference with Mark Lane, author of the best-selling *Rush to Judgment* (just published in Italy). Lane told the reporters:

"I hope Garrison is strong because there are powerful and ruthless forces in the U.S. who seek to prevent a full exploration of the facts . . . What impressed me is that Garrison has initiated his investigations on the basis of his studies of

the Warren Report and the investigations seem to flow from evidence in this Report. If the matter is reopened it will be reopened in New Orleans. If Garrison indicts people for complicity in the assassination, it seems unlikely to me that President Johnson could hold off the appointment of a new commission of inquiry until after the 1968 elections."

Lane said he was prepared to go to New Orleans and put in Garrison's hands all the information he had. He supported Garrison's refusal to present his evidence to the Commission: "He is quite justified in not wishing to share the evidence with those who have falsified the facts." Asked about the role of Robert Kennedy in the inquiry, Lane said:

"He is in a delicate political position. If he were to say that the Report (which he says he has not read) were false, it would split the Democratic Party. Robert Kennedy believes that to become President is the most important thing. I think it is more important to find out the truth about the death of his brother."

Lane said he believed that the Warren Commission Report was false, "which is worse than no report at all." To all other questions, he said, another must be added: "Why did the Warren Commission issue a false report?"

AROUND THE WORLD, every piece of new information is front-page news because most persons abroad have rejected the Report. In the U.S., more and more persons evidence skepticism about the official findings. The press cannot ignore the new revelations but devotes much of its space to interviews with counsel and friends of the Commission seeking to tear down any new evidence. The Washington Post, whose reporter on the scene was the last man known to see David Ferrie alive, has printed columns of news on New Orleans—a large part of them unabashed sniping and ridicule of District Attorney Garrison.

But the troubled ones continue to search, determined that one day the truth will be revealed.

—THE GUARDIAN