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The Kennedy Assassination— Evaluating Garrison's Probe

BY HENRY J. TAYLOR

NEW ORLEANS—District Attorney Jim Garrison, widely buffeted by the press as a buffoon who has no case, is no buffoon to this writer. And the case he laid out to me contains several impressive features—provided you have studied the Warren Commission Report.

That's the first rub. The report's 26 volumes of hearings include 3,154 exhibits, the testimony of 552 witnesses, and transcriptions, reports or affidavits covering 26,550—yes, 26,550—interviews by FBI, Secret

Some of these pieces came from a miserable collection of hoodlums whom Garrison calls "terrible witnesses I am confronted with." But other pieces that appear to contradict the commission's judgment stand on their own merits. And several of them put the fat in the fire.

All available evidence caused the commission to conclude that Oswald did not know Jack Ruby, who killed

him, and arrested New Orleans businessman Clay L. Shaw contends that he knew neither Oswald nor Ruby.

Garrison turned to Volume XVI, Page 58, of the commission's report. Oswald kept a diary. It is filled with cryptic figures and notations, including references to guns and microdots, the method of microscopic photographic reproduction. Page 58 shows a note Oswald made: "P.O. Box 19106," the published report of which brought me back here to New Orleans. For Clay Shaw's notebook, seized when his home was searched on the day (March 1) Garrison arrested Shaw, contains the identical note.

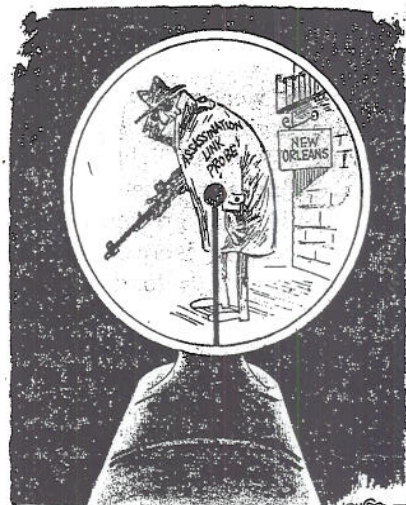
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Garrison demonstrated for me the simple code that translates "P.O. Box 19106" into Whitehall 1-5601. Garrison found that Ruby had an unpublished telephone number in Dallas in 1963. And that number was Whitehall 1-5601.

This development would connect Oswald with both Shaw and Ruby.

Moreover, by the same simple code, Oswald consistently employs 4900 and 1300 as routine masking numbers. Garrison pointed out to me that Oswald lived here on Magazine Street's 4900 block; Shaw lives on Dauphine Street's 1300 block. Shaw's defense attorneys scoff at the code. But Garrison demonstrated it practically at random from Oswald's diary.

The man Garrison now wants most to find is a Latin, likewise revealed, whom Garrison has tracked back to the Bay of Pigs debacle.



Zeroing In On Something?
Cartoon by Grant

Service and other investigative agencies. The report has 17,815 pages, totals 10.4 million words and weighs 65 pounds. But it's impossible to evaluate Garrison's points unless you've done this homework.

To comprehend his claims at all you have to rethink the whole case.

Consider the commission as serving chiefly as a jury. As a jury it reached a decision on the evidence obtained by the investigative agencies. The depth and scope of the work these agencies did is astounding, although little appreciated. But the conclusions are those of the commission, subject to the same arguments you might apply if you disagreed with a jury's finding.

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In the commission's judgment Lee Harvey Oswald, a pro-Communist, killed President Kennedy, acted alone in doing so, and there was no conspiracy. Garrison begins with a totally different approach.

"I was forced to," he told me, "as various pieces of evidence began coming in here in New Orleans."

In fact, Garrison traces his whole case back to the Bay of Pigs. "You have to start there or you get no place in the New Orleans evidence," he said.

Although I must oversimplify it herein, this will be his contention to the court:

That Cuban anti-Castro refugees, bitterly disillusioned by the Bay of Pigs debacle, including some employed in it by our Central Intelligence Agency, took out their anger on President Kennedy—especially after his emotionally stirring promise to the freedom fighters in Miami "to return their flag to you in a free Cuba" proved not to be the U.S. plan at all.

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That Oswald was produced as a "billboard character" who flaunted his pro-Communist fervor and thus increased the possibility that the wrath of America might precipitate real action for our freedom of Cuba.

That the conspirators were playing a double game: Retribution against President Kennedy and crystallization of the hatred of Castro.

Garrison can well be wrong, but certain parts of his New Orleans evidence will require a great deal of explaining sooner or later.