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Setbacks Dim Flamboyant

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The flamboyant political career of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison would seem to be on the wane.

Now 52, he is hurting from back trouble along his six-foot six-inch frame, under federal indictment and awaiting trial on charges of conspiracy to commit bribery and evasion of income taxes, and, worst of all, for a politician who has weathered many controversies, the loser in a runoff primary election for a seat on the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Add to this the national embarrassment of having claimed to have solved the "assassination conspiracy" of John F. Kennedy and his continued refusal to let up on the man who was acquitted in 1969 of having masterminded the "plot," and you have all the ingredients for political obscurity.

Except, of course, Garrison operates in New Orleans, which has been characterized as more akin to the Mediterranean city-states than to other American cities; a city where power is expected to be used by the powerful in any way they see fit.

The big, handsome DA, now grown flabby and sallow, came into office in 1962 as an independent, running as a "reform" candidate, and was re-elected twice by overwhelming majorities.

It is possible that, despite his loss in the Sept. 30 runoff, Garrison could survive for a fourth term as district attorney next year—if he chooses to run and if he is not in prison.

His defeat Sept. 30 came at the hands of Civil District

Career of Jim

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Garrison

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Court Judge Walter F. Marcus Jr. by a little better than 15,000 votes among more than 192,000 cast in the four parishes (counties) that make up the Supreme Court district in which the two ran.

But Garrison needs only to convince the voters of Orleans parish that he deserves a fourth term. Despite the disadvantages Garrison took with him into the runoff (Marcus had beaten him and four other candidates badly in the August primary), Garrison collected 49,808 votes in Orleans—just over 45 per cent of the votes cast—against Marcus' 60,561.

Given a weaker opponent, and a little time for the

other troubles to dissipate, the district attorney might just pull it off.

The big hammer over Garrison's head today is his pending trial in federal court on the bribery-conspiracy charges.

He is a co-defendant with Capt. Frederick A. Soule Sr. of the New Orleans Police Department and a member of the investigative staff of Garrison's office since June 30, 1968; Sgt. Robert N. Frey, who replaced Soule in 1968 as commander of the department's vice squad and seven men identified as owners and operators of pin-ball machine companies—the kind of machines which, in the late 1950s, generally replaced slot machines around the country.

The indictment, handed down in 1971 by a federal grand jury, was accompa-