JFK 'Plot' Figure in New

By GEORGE LARDNER

World Journal Tribune Special

NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 23—I may have been the last person to see David W. Ferrie alive.

While I talked to Ferrie, once interrogated as the "getaway pilot" for a presidential assassin, he said:

He was convinced there was no plot to kill President Kennedy and, that Lee Harvey Oswald was a "loner." Ferrie, one of District Attorney Jim Garrison's prime witnesses in the investigation of Kennedy's assassin, also said:

He was convinced the investigation 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 declared.

This was the substance of a four-hour interview that I had with Ferrie, ending shortly before 4 a.m. yesterday.

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At 11 a.m., just seven hours after I left Ferrie, his body was discovered with a sheet pulled up to his chest.

As if in a parting gesture, he said: "A president is no better than anyone else. If I were killed, I'd expect my death to be investigated just as thoroughly."

He then went back upstairs to his room, perhaps to prove the point.

Today New Orleans authorities are in disagree-

ment over the cause of his death. Orleans Parish Coroner, Dr. Nicholas J. Chetta, said Ferrie died of a ruptured blood vessel at the base of the brain. Garrison called it an apparent suicide.

[Another puzzling aspect of the case developed when Chetta said Ferrie's death must have occurred before 4 a.m. Tuesday, according to United Press International.

[Garrison said the time of death estimated by

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the coroner and the time of the Lardner interview created a major inconsistency and was "one of the mysteries we don't understand."

[Garrison said his investigators, who had Ferrie's apartment staked out secretly "for some time," saw the lights go out at 11 p.m., an hour before the interview.

[The investigators left when they saw the lights go off.]

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

Garrison hinted that Oswald was not the actual assassin of President Kennedy.

"I have no reason to believe that Lee Harvey Oswald killed anyone in Dallas," he said. "This is my personal feeling." He did not elaborate.

Coroner Chetta said an unsigned, undated note was found in the dining room of Ferrie's apartment. It said, in part:

"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.

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

DELAYED ARREST

"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. He said that he decided only yesterday morning to hold off Ferrie's arrest another week.

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

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

But he also described himself as moody, even, at one point as I recall it, given to manic-depressive moods.

A brown bottle of medicine, tablets apparently, was standing on the worn piano in his living room when I left. Garrison said 14 other bottles were found scattered around the

house. Ferrie was reportedly 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, 48, ruddy-faced, 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

ances after leaving the cour house—to Galveston and Hou ton "hunting geese"—but the he never set foot in Dallas.

Ferrie said he never knowledge of ever having met him. Oswawas rumored to have served Ferrie's Civil Air Patrol unit. New Orleans, but Ferrie salthey were in different units.

Ferrie also was rumored to have flown Oswald to Cuba around 1959. He scoffed at the report.

"T've never even been to



JIM GARRISON

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

Ferrie said he was sitting on a courthouse bench outside a federal district courtroom in New Orleans, "shooting the bull with a couple of federal agents," until a case he had been working on was completed at 3:20 p.m. that day.

"There wasn't even any charge against me in Texas to flee from," he said.

Ferrie said he did leave for Texas with several acquain



DAVID FERRIE

Cuba," he said. "At the time was supposed to be flying oswald to Cuba, I understand he was in the Marine Corps."

Ferrie said he considered "This pre-occupation" with the Cennedy 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 bullet, cluttered the floor.

On Tuesday, he said, he had

Bringuier, who insists that courts or Garrison's investigathe assassination was a pro- tion. Castro conspiracy, recalled Ferrie's visit with distaste.

him," Bringuier said. "He told Orleans thoroughly and was me that anyone who thinks now waiting for Garrison to there could be a Communist fall on his face. The District plot behind the Kennedy assas- Attorney said earlier in the sination should go to a psychia- week that "arrests will be trist. That's the first time any- made, convictions . . . obbody ever sent me to a psychia- tained." trist."

guier read off the questions the discovery. Ferrie had asked of him:

1. Are any Americans or any Cubans that Oswald had any association with in New vowed full speed ahead with his Orleans.

"2. If there is a conspiracy, when it started, the dates."

SHRUGS IT OFF

been at the public library readwing organization Christian only assassin. He referred to the Crusade, shrugged.

ing the Warren Report.

ter Garrison's.

Cuba Committee.

He also had been conducting

his own investigation to coun-

TALKS TO EXILE

"There was a plot," he in-On Monday, he turned up at sisted, adding that he disa restaurant near Canal Street agreed with Garrison's declato talk to Carlos Bringuier, a a foreign power was not in-Cuban exile who had scuffled volved. with Oswald three years ago on

said he did not trust the route.

He said he was sure that the FBI had investigated Os-"He asked me if I could help wald's activities in New

Ferrie's body was found by a Pulling out a paper napkin man police refused to identify. as he was sitting in his res-Garrison said the individual had taurant, the Casa Cuba, Brin- to break into the house to make

INVESTIGATION GOES ON

The district attorney also investigation of the Kennedy assassination. He said he had no intention of calling in the FBI.

Ferrie, who had in the past Bringuier, who went on the involving young boys, said he been arrested on morals charges speaking circuit after the did have until recently his own assassination with the Right-doubts that Oswald was the "myriad of paperbacks" that came out last fall, around the time that Garrison began his investigation.

RESOLVES PROBLEM

Ferrie said he was especially disturbed by the controversy In his apartment shortly be- over the autopsy report, suga New Orleans street corner fore he died, Ferrie explained gesting that there must have over Oswald's distribution of his own investigation by say-been more than one rifle aimed leaflets of the Fair Play for ing, "I'm just curious." He at Kennedy on the parade

He said he resolved the prob-|in Kennedy's clothing and in sitting in an upright position lem in his own mind only last his body on a morgue slab in a limousine. Sunday when he realized that distorted their true points of the position of bullets indicated entry and exit, since he was Washington Post-L.A. Times Service