

ART BUCHWALD

The New Orleans Whodunit

THE NEW ORLEANS TV drama titled "Mr. District Attorney" has been playing nightly on all the news shows.

The district attorney of New Orleans, Jim Garrison, keeps holding news conferences announcing that he has solved the Kennedy assassination. Since Mr. Garrison has produced no evidence or information to back up his news conferences, many publicity hungry district attorneys have been angered by all the space Mr. Garrison is getting.

I just received a call the other day from the district attorney of Total Swamp, La., who told me that he had startling information concerning "another crime of the century" and I immediately flew out to see him.

"What is your startling information?" I asked.

"I can't reveal it at this time, but I believe everyone is going to be terribly surprised when I do."

"Well, can you tell me what kind of crime it was?"

"I'd rather not say until I've made my arrests. If I talked about it the people involved might get away."

"Can't you give me some clue?"

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"ALL I CAN TELL you is that I have a witness who will reveal all the details in due time."

"Where is this witness?" I asked.

"He's dead. The coroner said he died of natural causes, but I insist it was a suicide."

"But what good is the witness if he's dead?"

"Ah, that's just the point. Why is my witness dead?"

"I don't follow you."

"Why did my witness die just at the time I was going to pick him up for questioning?"

"I really don't know."

"Wouldn't you say it strengthens my case?"

"It might if I knew what your case was," I said. "Have you told the FBI what you know?"

"Why should I tell the FBI? They'll only take the glory away from me. I'm trying to make a name for myself, boy."

"I can see that. Let me ask you this: Why do you claim to know something nobody else knows about this startling crime?"

"Because I've solved the case. It's that simple."

"But if you solved the case, why don't you make the arrests?"

"I don't have the evidence. How can I make arrests if I don't have any evidence?"

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"IT BEATS ME, and probably the Supreme Court, too."

"But I'm not defeated. The fact I don't have any evidence makes me even more certain I've solved the crime."

"How do you figure that?"

"If you have evidence some smart wise guy lawyer can disprove it. But if you don't have any evidence they can't lay a glove on you."

"Don't you think it's premature to make these startling revelations?"

"I should say not. Some of the leading businessmen in this town are giving me money to continue my investigation. It isn't going to be easy because I may have to go out on a lecture tour. Did you want to take my picture?"

"I'd like to very much. Are you wearing TV makeup?"

"Of course. You never can tell when CBS, ABC or NBC are going to show up," he replied.

"What you've told me is dynamite. I only hope you're as successful in prosecuting the case as you've been in solving it."

"I probably said too much already, but all I'm trying to do is serve justice in the best possible way I can."