

THREE SIDELIGHTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

Since the first news story of District Attorney James Garrison's investigation into the assassination of John F. Kennedy, there have been thousands of words written and spoken by every communications medium the world over. Most of these words have been devoted to straight news reports, speculation, or conjecture.

At NEW ORLEANS MAGAZINE, we felt that in all these words, significant aspects of the story went without coverage. For instance, no matter what the outcome of the investigation, which at this writing cannot even be predicted—three stories stand out: One concerns the very beginning of the investigation. On page 8, you will read an exclusive article prepared from interviews with Senator Russell Long and Mr. Joseph Rault, Jr., prominent businessman and long-time friend of Garrison. Both men participated in the conversation which first inspired Garrison to dig deeper into circumstances surrounding the assassination.

Another story is that of Mrs. Garrison, trying to maintain a normal home life for herself and five children while her husband stood in the center of international controversy. Page 10.

The third concerns the press itself. Daily, we watched forty or more representatives of the world press lounge in the hall outside Garrison's office, waiting for something—anything—to happen. Because the press exerts so much influence on public opinion, it automatically becomes a part of any story it pursues—particularly one in which the answers are

Now turn the page for three investigation stories you have not read before.

Editor's Note: This article was prepared from exclusive interviews with U.S. Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana, Senate Majority Whip; and Mr. Joseph M. Rault, Jr., president of Rault Petroleum Corporation of New Orleans. Both Senator Long and Mr. Rault are close friends of District Attorney Jim Garrison, and participated in conversations which ultimately led to Mr. Garrison's investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. This article is copyrighted ©1967 by Flambeaux Publishing Company, and may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the express written permission of Flambeaux Publishing Company.

The Garrison Investigation: How and why it began

In November, 1966, three friends sat squeezed into tourist class seats of an Eastern Airlines jet six miles above the earth. The three—a U. S. senator, a district attorney, and a prominent businessman—managed some degree of comfort in the cramped area next to the galley, as they tried to talk above the whistling engines and the occasional rattling of trays. The district attorney was more uncomfortable than the others, but he didn't mind—because 6-foot, 6-inch Big Jim Garrison was absorbed in the conversation. He could not know it then, but this conversation was to put him on the front pages of the world and was to result in perhaps the decade's most historically significant criminal investigation.

His companions were Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana and Joseph M. Rault, Jr., president of Rault Petroleum Corporation in New Orleans. The three were bound for an American Petroleum Institute convention in New York, where Mr. Rault and Henry Zac Carter, Sr., president of Avondale Shipyard, Inc., of New Orleans, were to host a luncheon in the senator's honor.

But the conversation had nothing to do with oil or conventions or luncheons. The subject was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and more specifically, *The Warren Commission Report*.

It was only a week or so earlier that Senator Long was in New Orleans with Governor McKeithen and was interviewed by a television newsman. At this time, Senator Long said he doubted the findings of the Warren Commission.

It was about these doubts that Garrison questioned the senator on the flight to New York. When Garrison broached the subject, the mood became very serious. As ideas were exchanged among the three, considerable doubts were thrown on *The Warren Commission Report*, and several other theories were advanced.

Perhaps Senator Long's theory was the most dramatic of those put forward. He said there were areas which *The Warren Commission Report* did not adequately cover or did not cover at all. He added that there was a doubt in his mind that the theory set forth in the report—that a lone gunman participated.

"It just doesn't make sense," he said. "The first shot should be a rifleman's best shot. In this case it wasn't. I believe three shots were fired. The first was mediocre, the second was no good at all, and the third was perfect.

"The third shot would do credit to an expert rifleman, and Oswald was not that good a rifleman. Furthermore, there was hardly enough time for a man to get off two shots from a bolt-action rifle, much less three."

"What's a possible answer then?" asked Garrison.

"If more than one man were to be involved," Senator Long continued, "then the assassins would need a fall guy. They knew that when Oswald fired a shot or shots from the school book depository window, everyone—secret service men, the crowds, the police—would look in that direction. I think the assassins knew people would look at Oswald's gun while another man fired the fatal shot. In other words, Oswald was a decoy."

"Did Oswald hit anyone?"

"Remember that Oswald said over and over he did not kill John Kennedy? Despite many hours of rigorous interrogation, more than most criminals could withstand, he insisted to the end that he killed no one. I think he knew someone else did."

Recalling the plane trip several months later, Rault said. "We all expressed our own opinions, which I believe are also shared by millions of other Americans, that it would be almost preposterous to believe that one man, an individual such as Oswald, could have been the only one involved in this thing."

The question then, as now, was "who else was involved and why?" Garrison asked it somewhat that way, and somewhat rhetorically.

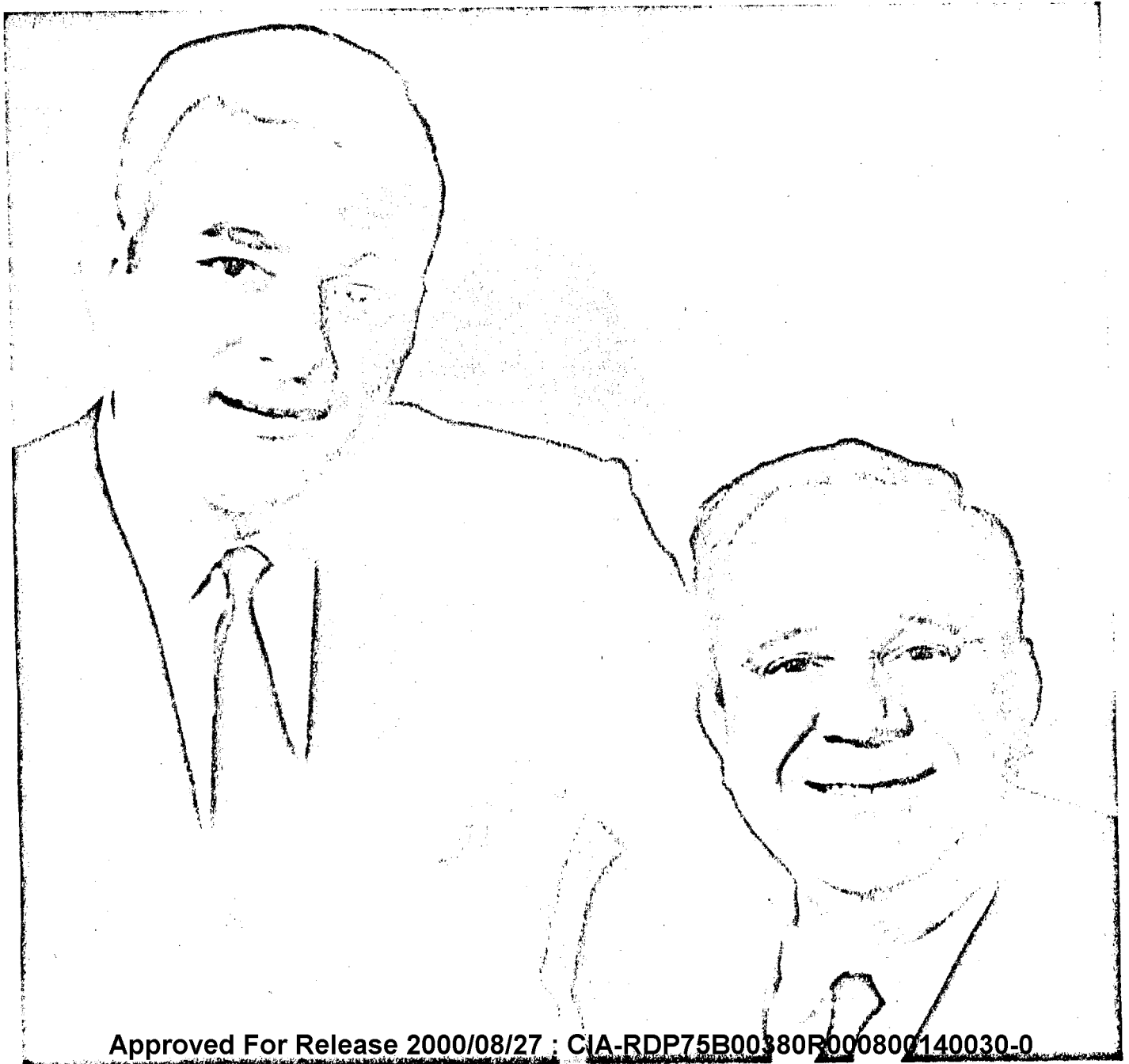
The senator speculated, "I think if I were investigating I'd find the hundred best riflemen in the world and find the ones who were in Dallas that day. Then I think I'd be on the right track."

"But what about a motive?"

"Forget the motive. Find the man!"

Garrison then related to Senator Long that in 1963, he had been asked and subsequently released "a very / continued on page 50

By James A. Autry



THE GARRISON INVESTIGATION / continued from page 8

unusual type of person who made a very curious trip at a very curious time about the date of the assassination." Garrison became more serious and mused that he might want to now go back into some of those events.

(Editor's note: This appears to be a reference to Ferrie, the airplane pilot who died under suspicious circumstances at a crucial point after Garrison's probe was made public just a few weeks ago.)

As the conversation paused, a stewardess offered cocktails, and Garrison and Rault accepted. The senator preferred wine, but it wasn't available, so he settled for a glass of water. They sat quietly. Both Garrison and Rault felt that the senator's theories were quite parallel, if not exactly the same, as their own.

"We had discussed the subject soberly, fully, intelligently, and at length, and I think we all felt then that if three capable people—in this case a U. S. senator, a district attorney, and a businessman — could have this much doubt about the conclusions of The Warren Report, then the Report itself must be inadequate," Rault said later.

Throughout the convention in New York, the assassination and *The Warren Report* were the principal topics of conversation among the three. It was at this time that several national magazines carried feature stories on the assassination, and several newspapers and syndicates printed their own versions.

In fact, during that convention week, *The New York Times* printed a confusing photograph supposedly taken at the time President Kennedy was shot. To some people, it looked like a man with a rifle on top of a station wagon. The experts, though, according to Senator Long's recollection of the accompanying news story, said what appeared to be a "man with a rifle" could just as well have been a white-faced steer in the background behind the station wagon.

After the picture appeared, Garrison brought up the question of simple probabilities: "Is it more likely that, at the time the President was shot, there was an armed man lying on top of a station wagon or that there was a white-faced steer in downtown Dallas?"

"During our New York convention stay, the topic of the day was the assassination and The Warren Commission Report," said Rault. "Consistent with the other things we were doing, this was the subject of our discussions throughout the trip. If we had a drink, a highball or a meal, whenever we had the chance to get together."

It was during this week that Garrison indicated to Senator Long and Rault that he intended to open an investigation on his own. But he did not specify any information beyond that.

At the end of the conversation, Senator Long and Rault left for other business in Atlantic City and Miami. Garrison returned to New Orleans.

"Shortly after that trip, Jim was hard to find," said Rault. "We couldn't find him even for lunch. Jim claimed he was deeply involved in office administrative problems connected with his work that would not free him. Of course we now know what he was doing."

Garrison was still using his "office administrative problems" as an excuse even in late January when he could not show up for the Washington Mardi Gras Ball at which he was to be especially selected and honored from among the more than 2,500 celebrities. He and Mrs. Garrison were supposed to go as guests of Senator and Mrs. Long and Mr. and Mrs. Rault. But Mr. Garrison pleaded that he couldn't make it; he was too busy with his office.

In retrospect, many New Orleanians and several newsmen felt that Rault was involved in the investigation all the way.

"I was not," he said. "I am not a criminal lawyer and am not a member of Garrison's staff. It would have been improper for me to be involved. Jim did not even discuss the investigation probe with me."

Rault says that it was only after the local press broke the investigation story in mid-February that he had any direct knowledge of the probe.

Three days after that, Rault went to the financial aid of Garrison. He explained why:

"After the press released information about Mr. Garrison's then incomplete investigation and made such a point of scrutinizing the expenditure of the public funds that had been used, it became very obvious to me and a number of other businessmen that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for him to continue his investigation in a goldfish bowl.

"I read in the newspapers over the weekend that he might have to resort to his own private funds, or even a bank loan, so I called him and offered help."

The offer was accepted, and Rault, along with Willard Robertson and Cecil Shilstone, organized their now-famous "Truth and Consequences" group. They invited over fifty of the top businessmen in the community to a private luncheon and explained the problem. They then suggested that these businessmen con-

tribute \$100 a month for a minimum of three months.

"The response was overwhelming. On short notice citizens from all ranks, walks, and quarters . . ." joined Rault, Robertson, and Shilstone. They included the distinguished attorney Col. Eberhard Deutsch, real estate executive Harold E. Cook, aviation board member and attorney John Mmahat, homestead president and attorney Edmond G. Miranne, bank president Lawrence Merrigan, and many others.

"All of us simply believed in Jim's sincerity and ability. We wanted to express our confidence and our belief in his integrity and in the integrity of his office. As members of the community that put him in that office, we wanted to offer our help in a non-political, non-partisan manner so that he could continue and complete his investigation unhampered," Rault stated. "We had no idea what his evidence was. We, of course, did not know who was involved and in fact were quite surprised to learn some of the names and identities that were made public. It was our understanding with Jim that his office was running his investigation and that we had nothing to do with it and shared no special knowledge in it, except to make funds available. It was a civic effort all the way."



Pictured here are Cecil Shilstone (left) and Willard Robertson, two New Orleans businessmen who, with Joseph Rault, formed "Truth and Consequences."

Rault has been supporting Garrison throughout a friendship spanning eighteen years since they were contemporaries at Tulane Law School. Rault, also a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a lawyer and engineer.

"No matter what the outcome of this investigation," Rault has said many times, "I have confidence in Jim and I know that he is pursuing this thing in the interest of truth and justice and not as a big publicity move. If anything, the publicity, particularly in anticipation of everything he does, may have hurt his investigation."

Senator Long is also strong in his support of Garrison and the probe. "Jim is

pursuing the theory he and I discussed and he is filling in the gaps. And he is doing it against tremendous odds. Several powerful elements of the press, and even some people in government have tried to discredit him.

"They should stop trying to discredit him. As a matter of fact, the federal government probably does not have jurisdiction in the case, because the assassination of a President was not made a federal offense until after Mr. Kennedy's death."

At this writing, Clay Shaw's preliminary hearing has just ended, and Mr. Shaw is awaiting trial. A very significant act of the three-judge panel—perhaps as historically significant as the hearing itself—was to disallow The Warren Commission Report as evidence! Also as we go to press, Jefferson Parish attorney Dean Andrews has been indicted for perjury by the Orleans Parish Grand Jury, and Mr. Garrison has promised other public developments.

NEW ORLEANS MAGAZINE asked Senator Long to venture an opinion on the outcome of Garrison's full investigation.

He said, "Jim is a great district attorney, but his staff is, of course, limited. I think he has some good evidence. I doubt that he has enough evidence at this time to convict anyone of murder.

To do so would require him to prove and establish beyond a reasonable doubt certain facts, whereas his evidence as of this date would appear to be purely circumstantial; and he might not be able to obtain other information that could be in existence somewhere.

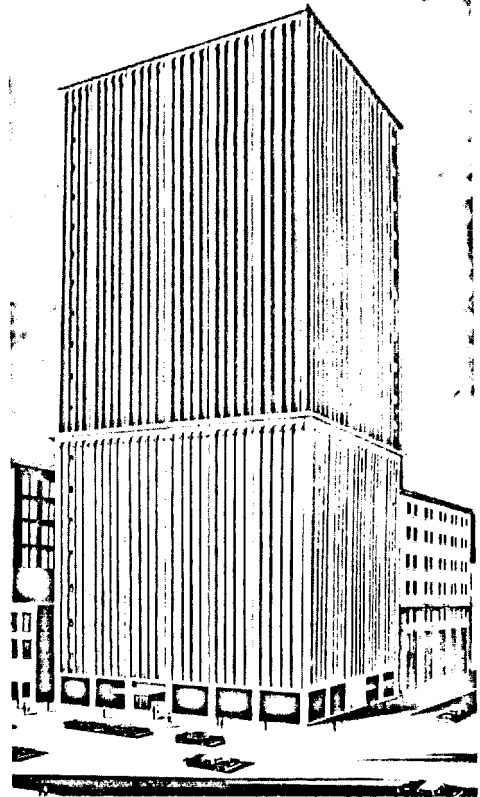
"On the other hand, it is my guess that Jim Garrison will produce enough evidence to overcome *The Warren Report*, and this should encourage the F.B.I., with its thousands of agents, to reenter the case. When they do, I believe that the additional evidence uncovered by the F.B.I. will make it possible to solve the case and perhaps convict guilty people who have escaped up to this point."

The senator then added, parenthetically, "I know one thing: Jim Garrison has caused almost everyone in this country to stop and think. For instance, the other night, I asked the ticket agent at the Baltimore Friendship Airport:

"How many Americans today believe that Oswald acted alone?"

"About one-third as many as thought so a month ago," he quickly replied." ✦

What's New on Poydras Street?



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