
Obituary

Jim Garrison remembered

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Jim Garrison (1922-92) was a larger-than-life figure in many ways. Standing six and a half feet tall, with a booming voice, Judge Garrison carried himself with the strength of conviction of a man placed on earth to carry out a mission of great importance to humanity. His death on Oct. 21, after a prolonged illness, is a great loss.

I had the opportunity, along with a colleague, to spend several days with him in 1982 and again in 1984 in his hometown of New Orleans. It was a memorable experience. At the time of those sessions, he was an elected judge of the Louisiana State Court of Appeals. But his passion remained the unsolved mystery of the century.

Twenty years after the tragic assassination of President John Kennedy in Dallas, Texas on Nov. 22, 1963, Jim Garrison was still hot on the trail of the assassins, more convinced than ever that his prosecution of local "businessman" Clay Shaw was absolutely just. His 1988 book, *On the Trail of the Assassins*, is mandatory reading for anyone committed to learning the truth about the Kennedy assassination or even just learning by example how to do serious analytical-investigative thinking. Garrison's method was reminiscent of the great American writer Edgar Allan Poe.

Garrison's continued research on the Kennedy assassination reinforced his belief that Permindex, the Anglo-American-Israeli intelligence front with which Clay Shaw was associated, was key to the murder in Dallas, as well as the attempts to eliminate France's President Charles de Gaulle.

I could not have agreed with him more. Our own investigation of the JFK assassination, summarized in a long chapter in the book *Dope, Inc.*, confirmed that Garrison had identified the crucial thread leading to the hierarchy of evil that had carried out the Kennedy murder, the ruthless and often bloody coverup of the crime, and the consequent destruction of the American political institutions that Kennedy had attempted to revive.

Garrison's closing arguments in the Clay Shaw trial, which were faithfully captured in the closing scenes of Oliver Stone's epic motion picture "JFK," should be studied by all who aspire to a greater understanding of the evil that has engulfed the institutions of our once-great nation. Those eloquent words also offer a portrait of an impassioned American

patriot, who understood that the country would not survive if he joined the ranks of the "sunshine soldiers" who accepted the pronouncements of the Warren Commission as fact in the face of compelling evidence that they were a fraud.

Suppressed evidence

I have subsequently learned through discussions with several serious students of the Kennedy assassination that crucial pieces of evidence of Clay Shaw's links to David Ferrie were kept out of then-District Attorney Jim Garrison's hands at the time of the 1969 Shaw trial. One particularly critical photograph of Clay Shaw in the company of David Ferrie, the CIA contract agent-pilot who was linked to Lee Harvey Oswald and was suspected of being part of the escape plan for the actual assassins, was, ironically, in the possession of a New Orleans reporter who was sitting in the courtroom throughout the Shaw trial. Reportedly, the newsman assumed that Garrison had the photo in his files and, thus, never approached the DA with the critical piece of evidence. But for that oversight, the jurors—who believed that Garrison was right about the conspiracy behind the JFK assassination—might have found Clay Shaw guilty of conspiracy to kill the President, and overturned history. Despite the acquittal of Shaw on the basis of the defendant's flagrant perjury under oath and the suppression of crucial evidence at trial, Jim Garrison never doubted the truth of his charges and never succumbed to the pressures to admit defeat.

In 1970, the CIA formally admitted that Clay Shaw had been an agency asset at the time of the Kennedy assassination. In 1973, Lyndon Johnson admitted to a longtime friend interviewing him for *Atlantic Monthly* magazine that he believed JFK had been killed by a "goddam Murder, Inc." operating in the Caribbean. Within days of Clay Shaw's death in the mid-1970s, Judge Haggarty, who presided over the Shaw trial, told reporters that he believed that Shaw was guilty as charged and was surprised at the jury's verdict.

Garrison's commitment to the truth gave him the strength to endure the media character assassinations and the several efforts at criminal frameup that were thrown at him as the result of his efforts to prosecute the real assassins of JFK.

It was on the basis of those personal battles that Jim Garrison was also able to see through the media smokescreen and join in the ranks of those who publicly protested the U.S. government's efforts to railroad Lyndon LaRouche. In 1987, Garrison was glad to sign a public call for justice in the LaRouche case in Boston. Ironically, one of the government's bought-and-paid-for accusers against LaRouche, Gordon Novel, had been an asset of the CIA in the mid-1960s' campaign to tar and feather Garrison via the same NBC network that had led the campaign against Garrison.

Fletcher Prouty, the retired Air Force colonel who worked closely with Jim Garrison and filmmaker Oliver Stone in the recent "JFK" project, summed up Garrison's life: "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."