

Lieutenant Colonel James C. Garrison (Class 18-42)

James Carothers Garrison was the District Attorney of Orleans Parish, Louisiana, from 1962 to 1973 and later a state appellate court judge. A member of the Democratic Party, he is best known for his investigations into the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the prosecution of New Orleans businessman Clay Shaw to that effect in 1969, which ended in Shaw's acquittal. He wrote three published books, one of which became a prime source for Oliver Stone's film *JFK* in 1991, in which Garrison was portrayed by Kevin Costner, while Garrison himself made a cameo appearance as Earl Warren.

He joined the National Guard on June 6, 1939 and was commissioned a second lieutenant upon graduation from the Field Artillery Officer Candidate School on June 23, 1942. Throughout most of World War II he served in various Army training camps in artillery fire direction centers at battalion level and as gunnery, survey, and FDC instructor. After completion of OCS, he graduated from Artillery Survey School and Artillery Liaison Pilot School at Fort Sill. He was a liaison pilot in combat in the European Theater of Operations in 1945 and was awarded the Air Medal for Valor. After World War II he returned to the Louisiana National Guard serving in various battalion level positions until 1963, when he was transferred to Division Artillery staff. He was promoted to LTC on May 11, 1964 and served as Executive Officer of the 39th Infantry Division Artillery until retiring in 1967 after 22 years and 7 months of service.

James C. Garrison was born on November 20, 1921 in Denison, Iowa. When he was two, his parents divorced and his mother, who raised him, became a schoolteacher. In 1928 the family moved to New Orleans, where Garrison attended elementary school and Forrier High School, from which he graduated in 1940.

In 1946 he enrolled in Tulane University Law School, and he was admitted to the Louisiana bar in 1949 and worked briefly for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In 1951 Garrison began working for the Orleans Parish district attorney's office. In 1957 he ran unsuccessfully for assessor, and in 1960 he lost a race for district judge. He was appointed assistant city attorney in 1959. In 1962, despite his underdog status, Garrison, taking full advantage of a televised debate to gain public recognition and newspaper endorsements, won the district attorney's race.

A huge man, six feet, seven inches tall and weighing close to 250 pounds, Garrison earned the "the Jolly Green Giant." He gained considerable publicity and popular support through several raids against the wide-open vice activities in the New Orleans French Quarter.

In the fall of 1966 Garrison and Senator Russell B. Long discussed the assassination of President John F. Kennedy during a plane flight to New York. Long expressed grave reservations about the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in killing Kennedy. After reading several books and articles that detailed flaws in the commission's investigation, Garrison decided to launch his own inquiry. He was certain that a conspiracy to murder the president had been hatched in New Orleans. Employing the considerable investigative and subpoena resources of the district attorney's office, he interrogated witnesses and focused his attention on several suspects. In February 1967 one of those suspects, David William Ferrie, died suddenly from natural causes. Garrison exploited the death, claiming it was a suicide.

On 1 March 1967 Garrison ordered the arrest of the New Orleans business and civic leader Clay L. Shaw for conspiracy to murder Kennedy. The arrest caused a sensation. Not only did Garrison publicly criticize the official government version of the assassination, but he also backed up his accusations with a legal prosecution. At the preliminary hearing to determine whether Shaw would be indicted under Louisiana criminal law, Garrison produced a witness, Perry Raymond Russo, who testified that he had observed Shaw, Ferrie, and Oswald discussing the assassination of the president at a party in New Orleans.

The object of substantial publicity in the press, Garrison became an international celebrity and appeared on numerous radio and television programs. Claiming that he had “solved” the mystery behind Kennedy’s assassination, he promised to reveal the truth at Shaw’s trial.

During Shaw’s trial in New Orleans, January through March 1969, Garrison produced a number of witnesses and medical experts who testified about inconsistencies in the lone assassin thesis. Though he rarely attended the trial, he assured that the famous Zapruder film of the assassination was shown many times. In addition to Russo, his witnesses against Shaw included a convicted heroin addict and a man who claimed that aliens spied on him. The jury took less than an hour to reach its verdict of not guilty. Garrison had simply failed to prove his case against Shaw. Highly critical of Garrison from the beginning, the national press and media denounced the investigation as a fraud and the prosecution of Shaw as a travesty of justice.

In 1973 Garrison lost his bid for reelection to the district attorney’s position, but in 1978 he was elected to a seat on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals of Louisiana. He wrote three books, *A Heritage of Stone* (1970), *The Star Spangled Contract* (1976), and *On the Trail of the Assassins* (1988). The last detailed his investigation of the assassination and the prosecution of Shaw. The book attracted the curiosity of movie director and producer Oliver Stone, whose 1991 film *JFK* ignited a fierce national debate. The film, in which Kevin Costner plays Garrison and Garrison appears in a cameo role as Earl Warren, portrays Garrison in a sympathetic manner and argues forcibly for an assassination conspiracy.

Garrison’s prosecution of Shaw has received condemnation, for he produced no credible evidence that implicated Shaw in a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy. Garrison’s flamboyant, publicity-seeking harangues to the press about his “solution” to the assassination have also been criticized. Yet Garrison did produce evidence of an assassination conspiracy at the Shaw trial, and his claims of a government cover-up of critical evidence in that case have been substantiated in the several million pages of documentary records released between 1993 and 1998. In its depiction of Garrison as a lone defender of the truth against the malevolent powers in the federal government, the film *JFK* rehabilitated Garrison in the public eye. Nevertheless, it received a barrage of criticism from journalists and scholars. Garrison and his investigation into the Kennedy assassination remain the subjects of fierce debate among researchers.

He died in 1992 and is interred at Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans

U.S., Select Military Registers, 1862-1985

National Guard > 1967

GARRISON, James C LtCol La 01165863 B-Iowa 20 Nov 20 AM LLB
Tulane Univ La 49 Enl 6 June 39 to 12 Jan 41 (F-13 Jan 41 to
22 June 42 2 lt FA 23 June 42 to 1 lt AUS 1 Mar 46) (ORC FA
1 lt 28 Dec 45 to 28 Feb 47) 1 lt FA 14 Nov 46 to 1 Nov 47
(NGUS FA 1 lt 2 Nov 47 to 15 Mar 48) (AUS inact status 1 lt
FA 16 Mar 48 to 27 Apr 48) (ORC FA 1 lt 28 Apr 48 to
26 Jan 51) capt Arty 19 Dec 50 (F-24 Jul 51 to 31 Oct 51) to
9 Jan 52 capt Arty 17 May 55 maj 14 Jul 59 lt col 11 May 64

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"Garrison's book presents the most powerful detailed case yet made that
President Kennedy's assassination was the product of a conspiracy, and that
the plotters and key operators came not from the Mob, but the CIA."

—NORMAN MAILER

ON THE TRAIL OF THE ASSASSINS

ONE MAN'S QUEST TO SOLVE THE
MURDER OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY



JIM GARRISON

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH FOR
ARTILLERY OCS HALL OF FAME
U.S. ARMY FIELD ARTILLERY MUSEUM
Fort Sill, Oklahoma 73503

1. NAME JAMES C. GARRISON DATE SEPTEMBER 3, 1976
ASN 0-1165863 RANK LIEUTENANT COLONEL
DOR APRIL 17, 1964
DOB NOVEMBER 20, 1920

2. ADDRESS 710 CARONDELET STREET, NEW ORLEANS, LA. 70130

3. OCS CLASS NUMBER CLASS 18

DATE GRADUATED, COMMISSIONED JUNE 23, 1942

4. PRESENT DUTY ASSIGNMENT/OCCUPATION RETIRED FROM MILITARY SERVICE -
OCCUPATION: ATTORNEY & AUTHOR

ADDRESS 710 CARONDELET STREET, NEW ORLEANS, LA. 70130

5. BRIEF RESUME OF DUTY ASSIGNMENTS:

THROUGHOUT MOST OF WW II SERVED IN VARIOUS ARMY TRAINING CAMPS
IN ARTILLERY FIRE DIRECTION CENTERS AT BATTALION LEVEL AND AS GUNNERY SURVEY
& FDC INSTRUCTOR. AFTER COMPLETION OF FT. SILL O.C.S., ALSO GRADUATED FROM ARTILLERY
OFFICERS BASIC COURSE, ARTILLERY SURVEY SCHOOL AND ARTILLERY LIAISON PILOTS SCHOOL -
ALL AT FORT SILL. IN 1944 BECAME ARTILLERY LIAISON PILOT AND SERVED IN COMBAT (E.T.O.)
AS PILOT FOR FRONT LINE OBSERVATION PLANES IN JANUARY, FEBRUARY & MARCH, 1945.
AFTER WW II, RETURNED TO L.A.N.G. SERVING IN ARTILLERY BATTALION DUTIES
UNTIL 1963 WHEN TRANSFERRED TO DIVISION ARTILLERY STAFF. IN 1964 BECAME EXECUTIVE
OFFICER FOR DIVARTY OF 39TH INF. DIV. (LA. NG). RETIRED IN 1967 AFTER 22 YRS, 7 MOS OF SERVICE.

6. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

•• THE AIR MEDAL, AWARDED FOR "VALOR" IN AIR COMBAT IN
FRANCE & GERMANY IN 1945 AS PILOT OF ARTILLERY OBSERVATION PLANE.
•• COMBAT STAB FOR NORTHEASTERN FRANCE, RHINELAND AND BAVARIAN
COMBAT ZONES •• USUAL SERVICE MEDALS, SUCH AS AMERICAN THEATRE OF
OPERATIONS, PRE-PEARL HARBOR ACTIVE DUTY, E.T.O., VICTORY (GERMAN THEATRE) MEDAL, ET CETERA.

7. GENERAL REMARKS:

•• SERVED AS DISTRICT ATTORNEY OF NEW ORLEANS, LA., FOR 12
YEARS, ONLY 3 TERM D.A. IN M.O HISTORY.
•• CONDUCTED EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION OF ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY,
ULTIMATELY DESCRIBED IN MY BOOK, "A HERITAGE OF STONE" (PUBLISHED BY G.P. PUTNAM, 200
MADISON AVE., NY, NY) NOW IN 8TH EDITION.
•• AUTHOR ALSO OF "THE STAR SPANGLED CONTRACT" (M'GRAND-HILL, N.Y., N.Y.), PUBLISHED
IN U.S. IN APRIL, 1976, AND BEING
PUBLISHED THIS FALL IN ENGLAND, FRANCE,
GERMANY, SPAIN, PORTUGAL, ITALY AND
JAPAN.

Signature

James Garrison