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GARRISON, FLAMBOYANT MODEL FOR JFK FILM, DEAD
(EDS: ADDS QUOTES, DETAILS, BACKGROUND, NEW THROUGHOUT)

BY JUA NYLA HUTCHESON

NEW ORLEANS, OCT 21, REUTER - JIM GARRISON, THE FLAMBOYANT FORMER NEW ORLEANS PROSECUTOR WHO MADE A PUBLIC CRUSADE OF HIS THEORY THAT PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION WAS A CONSPIRACY, DIED HERE ON WEDNESDAY, THE CORONER'S OFFICE SAID.

GARRISON, 71, DIED AT HIS HOME OF NATURAL CAUSES, DR FRANK MINYARD, THE CORONER AND A LONG-TIME FRIEND, TOLD REUTERS.

THE FORMER DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAMILY DID NOT DIVULGE THE NATURE OF GARRISON'S ILLNESS, BUT HE HAD BEEN BEDRIDDEN.

ONE OF THREE BOOKS GARRISON WROTE ABOUT THE NOVEMBER 22, 1963, ASSASSINATION BECAME THE BASIS OF OLIVER STONE'S 1991 FILM JFK, IN WHICH THE NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT ATTORNEY, PLAYED BY KEVIN COSTNER, IS PORTRAYED AS A MAN WHO WILL DO ANYTHING TO GET AT THE TRUTH ABOUT KENNEDY'S KILLING.

THE FILM HAS BEEN CRITICISED FOR CONTAINING MORE FICTION THAN FACT.

GARRISON CONDUCTED HIS OWN PROBE AFTER THE ASSASSINATION AND IS THE ONLY PERSON EVER TO BRING CHARGES IN KENNEDY'S SLAYING. THE MAN HE PUT ON TRIAL, LOCAL BUSINESSMAN CLAY SHAW, WAS ACQUITTED IN LESS THAN AN HOUR ON MARCH 1, 1969.

HE WAS A BIG MAN, BIGGER THAN LIFE, WITH THIS ENORMOUS BOOMING VOICE, JOURNALIST DAVE SNYDER, WHO COVERED THE 1969 TRIAL FOR THE NEW ORLEANS STATES-ITEM, TOLD REUTERS. HE SAID GARRISON'S REPUTATION AS A REFORMER HAD INFLATED EXPECTATIONS. WE ALL BELIEVED HE REALLY HAD SOMETHING, SNYDER SAID. BUT BEFORE THE TRIAL EVEN STARTED THERE WERE DOUBTS, LEADS THAT WENT NOWHERE, AND A LOT OF HIS KEY CHARACTERS WERE LOSERS AND WEIRDOS. HE WAS PRETTY WELL DISCREDITED.

AFTER THE TRIAL, WHICH PROBED GARRISON'S CONTENTION THAT SHAW WAS PART OF A WIDER GROUP THAT CONSPIRED TO KILL KENNEDY, GARRISON WAS SOUNDLY DEFEATED IN THE NEXT ELECTION BY HARRY CONNICK SR, FATHER OF ENTERTAINER HARRY CONNICK JR.

SIX YEARS LATER, GARRISON WAS ELECTED TO THE STATE APPELLATE COURT, FROM WHICH HE RETIRED AT AGE 70.

GARRISON WAS A DAREDEVIL ARTILLERY RECONNAISSANCE PILOT DURING WORLD WAR II. HE GRADUATED FROM TULANE LAW SCHOOL.

OVER THE YEARS MANY HAVE JOINED GARRISON IN REJECTING THE OFFICIAL REPORT ISSUED BY THE WARREN COMMISSION IN 1964, WHICH SAID THAT LEE HARVEY OSWALD, ACTING ALONE, KILLED KENNEDY. BUT FEW ACCEPTED GARRISON'S THEORIES.

HE IS SURVIVED BY HIS WIFE, THREE SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS.

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