

Oswald, Ferrie, Shaw There, Salesman Says

Witness Tells of JFK Plot Session in '63

By George Lardner Jr.

Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS, March 14 (AP)—A carefully groomed insurance salesman swore in a heavily guarded courtroom today that he heard free-lance pilot David W. Ferrie mastermind a plot to assassinate President Kennedy with Lee Harvey Oswald and bachelor-businessman Clay Shaw.

The witness, Perry Raymond Russo, 25, of Baton Rouge, dramatically pointed an accusing finger at Shaw as the only man left alive, besides Russo himself, who attended a meeting in Ferrie's apartment in the late summer of 1963.

Russo said he knew Shaw as "Clem Bertrand."

His testimony, carefully unfolded by District Attorney Jim Garrison, was often deliberately vague.

Russo is presumably the mystery witness Garrison was relying on when he had Shaw

arrested March 1 on a charge of conspiracy in the assassination.

"We've got lots more," Garrison was heard declaring during the recess in the preliminary hearing on Shaw's arrest. "This is just the beginning."

Garrison's office said Russo's statements have been checked out under sodium pentathol. He may also have been given a lie detector test or even questioned under hypnosis.

Neither the Warren Commission nor the FBI ever heard of Russo in the Commission investigation of the President's assassination, which brought the conclusion that Oswald acted alone. Garrison offered no explanation why Russo has not come forward before.

Russo was a student at Tulane University in New Orleans for unexplained periods and transferred to Loyola University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science degree in 1964. He said he

first met Ferrie about seven years ago at a Civil Air Patrol meeting.

Talking too fast at times for either prosecuting or defense attorneys to keep up, Russo said that in "mid-September," 1963, he wandered into a party at Ferrie's flat on Louisiana Avenue Parkway that wound up with conspiratorial talk of how to kill the late President.

Russo said Oswald was introduced to him as "Leon Oswald" and Shaw as "Bertrand." He identified "Leon Oswald" as Lee Harvey Oswald through photographs.

"People were drinking and talking," Russo said. "There were maybe eight to ten there . . . It dwindled down to three." Russo said he stuck around as a fourth because he was waiting for a ride home.

"Dave Ferrie took the initiative in the conversation," Russo said. "He paced back and forth . . . he talked to Mr. Bertrand and Mr. Oswald. He said an assassination attempt would have to use diversionary tactics . . . One or two (men) would shoot diversionary shots, a third would be intended as a direct hit."

Russo quoted Ferrie as saying that one of the gunmen—whether there were to be two or three—"had to be a scapegoat." He said "Ferrie talked incessantly about the availability of exit—you had to get out. This man to be sacrificed would give just enough time for these two or one (other gunmen) to escape."

Russo testified that Ferrie, a pilot who died of a cerebral hemorrhage last month, suggested a flight to Brazil with a refueling stop in Mexico or a direct but more risky flight to refuge in Cuba. The witness said that Bertrand disagreed at this point, declaring that news of the assassination would spread so fast to permit any escape after a stop in Mexico.

At this point, Russo asserted, "Oswald jumped in. He said (to Bertrand): 'Shut up and leave him alone. He's the pilot. He knows what he's talking about.'"



LEE HARVEY OSWALD

DAVID W. FERRIE

named in New Orleans plot

Assassination of President John F. Kennedy

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- Times Herald _____
- The Washington Daily News _____
- The Evening Star (Washington) _____
- The Sunday Star (Washington) _____
- Daily News (New York) _____
- Sunday News (New York) _____
- New York Post _____
- The New York Times _____
- World Journal Tribune (New York) _____
- The Sun (Baltimore) _____
- The Worker _____
- The New Leader _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The National Observer _____
- People's World _____

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"Bertrand said that as far as he's concerned, he's a 'washed-up pilot.'"

Except for the one outburst, Russo said, Oswald remained "detached" during the conversation. The witness said Bertrand's objection, however, prompted Ferrie to come up with an alternate plan. Russo said Ferrie suggested that the three—Ferrie, Oswald and Bertrand (Shaw)—"should be in the public eye, around where a lot of people could see them, on the day of the assassination."

The testimony fit in neatly with the conspiracy theory that Garrison had been developing. He claims that Oswald was actually a "decoy and fall guy," and Garrison is now understood to be hunting the one or two gunmen who he claims really killed the President.

Russo swore that he had seen Oswald at Ferrie's apartment on Louisiana Avenue Parkway several other times, including once "near the end" of September and on another occasion when he swore he found Oswald on the couch "either polishing or cleaning or wiping a rifle."

Garrison, appearing in court for only the third time in his career as District Attorney, produced a rifle, "similar," his aides later said, to the Mannlicher-Carcano Oswald got by

mail order and allegedly used to kill the President. They added that the rifle was found in Ferrie's apartment.

Russo testified that it was not quite like the rifle he saw Oswald cleaning. The net effect of this courtroom episode thus was apparently to suggest, without saying so, that the gun Oswald was cleaning in Ferrie's flat was the Mannlicher.

A "Clay Bertrand" was mentioned to the Warren Commission as a mystery man with a fondness for "gay kids" who supposedly sought legal help for Oswald. The FBI never found "Bertrand."

The semi-alias of "Leon Oswald" also was mentioned in the Warren report. Mrs. Sylvia Odio, daughter of a prominent Cuban family, told the Commission that three men knocked at her Dallas apartment several days after Oswald's departure from New Orleans.

One, she testified, was introduced as "Leon Oswald." His companions, she said, described him as feeling that "President Kennedy should have been assassinated after the Bay of Pigs . . ."

The Warren Commission noted that Oswald was on his way to Mexico City and could not have been one of the men who visited Mrs. Odio.

[The Associated Press reported that Russo told a television interviewer he had never heard of Oswald until he was linked with the presidential assassination.]

[WDSU-TV of New Orleans broadcast an interview tonight it made with Russo shortly after the death of Ferrie two weeks ago.]

["I never heard of Oswald until . . . the assassination," Russo said in the interview. He said Ferrie never mentioned Oswald's name.]



CHARGES CONSPIRACY—Perry R. Russo, left, testified in New Orleans that he heard Clay L. Shaw, at right,

Associated Press
leaving courtroom, conspire with Lee Harvey Oswald and David W. Ferrie to assassinate President Kennedy.