

ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY
NOVEMBER 22, 1963
DALLAS, TEXAS

- Tolson _____
- DeLoach _____
- Mohr _____
- Bishop _____
- Casper _____
- Callahan _____
- Conrad _____
- Felt _____
- Gale _____
- Rosen _____
- Sullivan _____
- Tavel _____
- Trotter _____
- Tele. Room _____
- Holmes _____
- Gandy _____

Taylor
5-1-69

Russo Sane in 1963, Shaw Trial Told

NEW ORLEANS (UPI) — The prosecution read to the Clay L. Shaw jury today the opinion of a former coroner, now dead, that star witness Perry Raymond Russo was legally sane in September 1963, when he allegedly witnessed a plot to kill President John F. Kennedy.

District Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. permitted the reading of testimony by Dr. Nicholas J. Chetta, who died since he testified in a preliminary hearing in March 1967. The testimony was read over vigorous objections by the defense that a 2-year-old medical opinion does not apply today.

Russo, the state's top witness, testified Monday that he attended a meeting in which plans for killing Kennedy were discussed. But yesterday, under cross-examination, he said the talks could have been "a bull session" and that he never heard Shaw agree to any killing.

Shaw is charged with conspiring with Lee Harvey Oswald and David W. Ferrie, 40, a flying instructor, to assassinate Kennedy.

Asst. Dist. Atty. James L. Alcock told the court the state was not submitting Chetta's 1967 testimony to buttress Russo's credibility, but to rebut defense

efforts to question Russo's stability.

The defense yesterday brought out Russo had been under psychiatric treatment in the late 1950s and psychiatric consultation by telephone as late as 1965.

Chetta's testimony said that as of 1967 Russo filled all requirements of legal sanity. In an answer to a hypothetical question, the doctor said in his opinion Russo was also sane in 1963.

In a two-day cross-examination, Russo said he did not know whether to take the conversation in 1963 as a real plot or as "shooting the breeze," that he did not think it was serious enough to report to police, and that he had never referred to the participants as "conspirators."

"You say you sat in on a conspiracy meeting, in which Oswald participated, and then saw his picture on television after the assassination and didn't say anything about it?" asked defense attorney F. Irvin Dymond.

"No," said Russo, "I never said anything about a conspiracy. I didn't sit in on any conspiracy."

He had testified for the state that he was present part of the time during a session in Ferrie's apartment here in which the

three men discussed ways of killing Kennedy and setting up alibis.

Most of the talk was done, he said, by Ferrie, who said "we'll kill him." He said Ferrie also talked of killing Fidel Castro.

But when asked by Dymond, he said he never heard Shaw or Oswald agree to kill Kennedy. He said the three seemed to agree "where certain things were concerned" but "they never all three said they would do it and would do it this (certain) way."

He told Dymond he had never used the word "conspirator" about Shaw or the others.

Dymond asked him about a conversation he had with Edward O'Donnel, a police lie detector man, in June 1967, while not under test. Shaw had been arrested the previous March, and Russo had testified in a hearing about the murder talk.

Russo told Dymond he had stated to O'Donnel he was under heavy pressures from reporters and authorities about his tale.

Dymond asked whether he had replied, when O'Donnel asked if Shaw had been at the plotting party: "Do you want the truth? . . . I don't know if he was or not."

Russo, who now says he is

- The Washington Post _____
- Times Herald _____
- The Washington Daily News _____
- The Evening Star (Washington) 110
- The Sunday Star (Washington) _____
- Daily News (New York) _____
- Sunday News (New York) _____
- New York Post _____
- The New York Times _____
- The Sun (Baltimore) _____
- The Daily World _____
- The New Leader _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The National Observer _____
- People's World _____
- Examiner (Washington) _____

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"100 percent sure" Shaw is the man introduced to him as "Clem Bertrand" at the party, said the explanation for the answer was "the pressures at the time, with all those people threatening me."

"Did you tell O'Donnel that if you had to give a yes or no answer you'd have to say Shaw was not there?" Dymond sked.

"In essence," replied Russo. "But it was this pressure again."

"Is it not the fact that he asked you whether the conversation at Ferrie's apartment sounded like a legitimate plot to assassinate Kennedy, and you state it did not?"

"Yes—with an explanation: O'Donnel and I talked a great deal about Ferrie being prone toward the fantastic, the spectacular."

"Did you," asked Dymond, "volunteer to him the information that it appeared to you 'like another bull session, like they always have.'"

"That's acceptable," replied Russo. "I used the words 'shooting the breeze.' I don't use 'bull session.' But again it's with the same explanation—you didn't know Ferrie and some of the things he would claim. The same as I told you yesterday, he was a paradox as a man."