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Russo Testimony Links Shaw, Ferrie, Oswald

Words Contradict Earlier Interview

By GERALD MOSES
Advocate Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS—Perry Raymond Russo, a young Baton Rouge insurance salesman, testified here Tuesday he heard Lee Harvey Oswald, Clay L. Shaw and David Ferrie plotting a way to kill President Kennedy in September, 1963.

However, Russo's testimony before the special three-judge court Tuesday contradicted statements he made when he was interviewed in Baton Rouge, shortly after the death of Ferrie. Then, Russo said he did not know Lee Harvey Oswald.

Russo was questioned Tuesday by Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison about the alleged plot to assassinate President Kennedy, and Garrison, in asked, deliberate questions, had Russo tell

what he heard about the plot.

But Wednesday, attorneys for Clay L. Shaw — a respected New Orleans businessman until he was charged by Garrison with a conspiracy to murder President Kennedy — get a chance to question Russo, and Tuesday night those attorneys were rounding up copies of news reports and transcripts of recorded interviews with Russo.

Shaw's attorneys obtained a delay until Wednesday morning by asking that Russo's record

at Tulane and Loyola universities, and Russo's employment records of Equitable Life Assurance Co. be subpoenaed.

Resumes This Morning

The court hearing, presided over by Criminal Dist. Judges Bernard Bagert, Matthew Braniff and Malcolm V. O'Hara, resumes at 10 a.m. Wednesday,

with Russo scheduled to undergo cross examination then.

Testifying Tuesday, Russo said he first saw Oswald cleaning a rifle with a telescopic sight in Ferrie's apartment.

He said Oswald, who he said was introduced to him as "Leon" Oswald, "made some crack to Ferrie, and seemed disturbed that I was there."

At a second visit to Ferrie's modest apartment at 3330 Louisiana Parkway in New Orleans, Russo said he overheard Ferrie, Oswald and "Clem Bertrand" talking about killing President Kennedy.

He identified "Leon" Oswald as Lee Harvey Oswald from photographs Garrison showed him.

Identifies Shaw

Asked if Clem Bertrand was in the courtroom, Russo pointed at Shaw, seated at a table in front of the witness box. At Garrison's direction, he stepped from the box and walked behind Shaw and his attorneys, and held his hand over Shaw's silvery white hair.

Shaw did not move. A former managing director of the New Orleans International Trade Mart, he has denied any part in the alleged assassination conspiracy.

Russo said the meeting of Oswald, Ferrie and Bertrand — or Shaw — occurred following a party in mid-September, 1963, little more than two months before the assassination of President Kennedy on the streets of Dallas, Tex.

He said he remained behind with the three because he was waiting for a role.

Russo testified that Ferrie, 49, a free-lance pilot who was under investigation by Garrison at the time of his death, did most of the talking about the proposed assassination.

Ferrie, pacing the floor, said the attempt should have three gunners in order to provide "a triangulation of cross-fire," Russo testified.

He quoted Ferrie as saying that one man would have to be sacrificed as scapegoat.

Sees As Get-Away Pilot
Ferrie, Russo added, was to be the get-away pilot, flying into Mexico to refuel for a flight to Cuba.

Objections were raised by Bertrand, Russo said. He said Bertrand argued that as soon as the shots were fired "the world would know about it" and once the plane landed in Mexico there would be no way to get out.

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ENCLOSURE

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Russo testified that Shaw told the group, "These men (taking part in the assassination) ought to be in the public eye on the day of the assassination."

Garrison asked if Shaw said where he would be, and Russo said that Shaw said he would be on the West Coast on business, and that Ferrie planned to be making a speech at Southeastern Louisiana College, in Hammond.

Garrison, who delayed the noon recess until Russo had a chance to tell about the plotting, resumed questioning the young insurance man when the hearing resumed.

Russo said that "Bertrand" looked at him as the party broke up and asked, "Is he going to stay, or leave?"

Ferrie replied that Russo was a friend, and was "all right," Russo testified.

Ferrie was dressed in baggy pants and a sweat shirt, or a pullover knit shirt, Russo said.

Says Oswald "Was Dirty"

Oswald, he recalled, "was dirty," and Garrison asked him to explain. "He hadn't shaved for three or four days, and he was wearing a dirty shirt, a pullover."

Russo said "Bertrand" was "the only one dressed recently," explaining Bertrand wore a white shirt, slacks, and a deep red jacket. He had no tie.

Russo said he first saw Lee Harvey Oswald in Ferrie's apartment, and that Oswald was "wiping or cleaning a rifle, bolt action. It had a sight on it or hunting."

Garrison showed Russo a rifle and asked if it had similarities to the one Oswald held in Ferrie's apartment.

Russo said: "The difference to my mind is that this end (front) was not nearly so bubbled." He said the weapon had the same bolt action, but a thinner stock, and its telescopic sight was larger than the one on his rifle Oswald had.

Saw at Wharf

Russo said he had seen Bertrand in May 1962 when Kennedy dedicated a new wharf in New Orleans.

"I was in school," Russo said. "The President was coming

down to make a speech. At that time I saw Bertrand. While the President was speaking I was looking around. Bertrand was one of the few not looking at the President."

Police estimated 20,000 persons attended the dedication.

Russo said that after he contacted Garrison following Ferrie's death, the district attorney took him to "a house on Dauphine Street." Shaw lives at

1313 Dauphine Street. "He stuck his head out the door and I said, 'That's the man,'" Russo said, referring to Bertrand.

Russo's name does not appear in the National Archives in Washington among the hundreds of persons questioned by the Warren Commission, which concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin of Kennedy. The FBI declined comment on whether it had ever questioned Russo.

In a newspaper interview in Baton Rouge on Feb. 24 — two days after Ferrie was found dead in his apartment in New Orleans — Russo did not mention the September meeting, although he said he once heard Ferrie threaten to "get" Kennedy.

A month before the assassination, Russo said in the interview, Ferrie told him, "We will get him, and it won't be long."

He said he did not take any of Ferrie's statements seriously until he saw a picture of Ferrie in the newspaper, following his death on Feb. 22.

Other Possible Witnesses

Whether Garrison plans to rely solely upon the testimony of Russo in the preliminary hearing remains to be seen. It is known that several other persons have connected Ferrie with either Oswald or "Bertrand." More witnesses may be called after Russo ends his testimony.

These include:

—Miguel Torres, a Cuban exile who was returned from the state penitentiary at Angola for questioning by Garrison, then was placed in Charity Hospital in New Orleans.

—David Lewis, a bus station baggage clerk who lived a block

away from Oswald in New Orleans, and said he had knowledge of a possible plot to kill President Kennedy. He was questioned by Garrison, then dropped from sight.

—Dean A. Andrews, now assistant district attorney in suburban Jefferson Parish, who allegedly received telephone calls from a man who identified himself as "Clay Bertrand" the day following Kennedy's assassination, attempting to arrange legal counsel for Oswald.

—Raymond Cummings, formerly a taxicab driver in Dallas, Tex., who claims he gave Lee Harvey Oswald and David Ferrie a ride together in his cab, along with a third man he did not recall in detail. Cummings arrived in New Orleans, accompanied by his attorney, Monday for questioning by Garrison's staff.

Russo's testimony brought vehement objections by the defense that it contained hearsay. The objection was sustained by presiding Judge Bernard Bagert, with qualifications.

Asst. Dist. Atty. James Alcock argued that hearsay is admissible at a preliminary hearing — which seeks only to establish probable cause. The defense, however, said any testimony taken at the preliminary hearing could then be introduced at a subsequent trial and defense lawyers would have no grounds on which to argue against it.

Defense attorney F. Irving Dymond said the main purpose of a preliminary hearing — called by Garrison in this case — was to get hearsay testimony past the normal legal barriers against it at a court trial.

After a whispered conference, Judge Bagert said, "We sustain the objection at this time, though it is possible there may be a change later."

In several subsequent objections to alleged hearsay, Dymond was overruled. He then read into the record formal legal exceptions as the basis for a possible appeal.

The 6-foot-6 district attorney, towering over his assistants, arrived for the hearing with his face glowing with fresh sun-

burn. He sat puffing a pipe during the first stages of the hearing, handled by the assistants.

Earlier state witnesses testified about photographs taken at Ferrie's apartment following his death, and about the arrest of Oswald in New Orleans on Aug. 9, 1963.

Police Det. Frank Hayward testified he arrested Oswald and three apparent Cubans — referred to only as Cruz, Hernandez and Grande — following an altercation on a street corner.

Peter Shuster, an employe of Orleans Coroner Dr. Nicholas Chelta, identified pictures of Ferrie's apartment — pictures he had taken, and others showed to him by Shaw's attorneys.



DID RUSSO SEE THIS RIFLE?—The rifle used to assassinate Kennedy is pictured with the end of the scope circled. Perry Russo testified at a preliminary hearing in New Orleans Tuesday that a rifle seized in Clay Shaw's apartment and as evidence in the hearing was different from one he had seen

in David Ferrie's apartment. Russo said the one he saw appeared to have a more powerful scope with the front end much larger. Russo said he saw Lee Harvey Oswald working the bolt on the rifle in Ferrie's apartment.

—AP wirephoto

Were They Involved in Plot?



LINKED BY RUSSO TESTIMONY—These three men, two of whom are dead, have been linked by Perry Russo's testimony as principals in a plot to assassinate President Kennedy. From left are Lee Harvey Oswald, whom the Warren Commission said was solely responsible for the slaying; David W.

Ferrie, who was found dead in his apartment shortly after he had been implicated by Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison; and Clay Shaw, at whose preliminary hearing Tuesday Russo gave his testimony.

—AP wirephoto