

Only Shaw's Eyes Betray Emotion

# Heat Hones Tensions

By ROSEMARY JAMES

It was hot.

Even before the hearing got under way, you knew it was going to be hot.

You could conjure up an image of what it was going to be like inside Section H of Criminal District Court before you ever gained entrance . . . Like the inside of a sardine can—a tight squeeze and sticky.

**IT WAS HOT** in the halls. It was hot on the steps outside. And it was going to get hotter.

The heat was on in more ways than one yesterday at the preliminary hearing for Clay L. Shaw, the respected, retired New Orleans businessman accused of conspiring to murder President John F. Kennedy.

The perspiration dampening brows shirts and dresses was a result of more than just a hot March day and little or no air-conditioning.

**THE TENSION** that makes you sweat was there; you felt it yourself and saw it at work on others.

Outside, on the wide steps leading to the courthouse entrance, a throng of cameramen, their coats already off, mopped their faces with wilted linen, smoked, cracked jokes and complained about the weather, all the time their eyes en garde searching for a subject to rush with their cameras.

Occasionally, a television interview or a still photograph of a minor figure in the proceeding would be set up against a backdrop of newsmen and the columned entrance, the only saving grace of the dingy old stone building.

**DOTTED AMONG** the clusters of working press were spectators who obviously had no hope of getting inside the

courtroom . . . several women in slacks and shorts . . . a woman with her hair screwed up tight in curlers . . . a woman in a house dress carrying a tiny baby . . . a middle-aged man with a Brownie taking a picture of his wife, who had an airline zipper bag slung over her shoulder . . . several excited, giggling teenagers . . . courthouse regulars

taking in the spectacle and generally chewing the fat . . . laborers in work clothes playing hooky.

Later, a hawker with multi-colored, bunny-shaped balloons showed up, newsmen rested sprawling on the grass or sitting on the steps, courthouse employes brought out their brown bags for lunch.

The heat, the picnickers, the Duke's mixture of people, the excitement . . . It could have been the scene of a summer political rally in any Southern town . . . Except for the waiting, the anticipation, the big question mark hanging there.

**INSIDE, REPORTERS** ambled down the marble hall, past the coffee stand, up the stairs and past the newly installed telephones, past the newly installed big brass letters spelling JIM GARRISON, down the hall past Section H and down the stairs again, stopping here and there to interview another reporter or just to chat.

Spectators with assured passes to the courtroom exuded delight over their good fortune, while those with sort of tentative passes just waited and those with no passes at all complained about the size of the courtroom.

The cameramen saw him first. They saw Clay Shaw and his attorneys coming and they began to move while Shaw was still walking through the Tulane ave. traffic.

**BY THE TIME** Shaw reached the curb, he and his attorneys were at the center of a churning mob of newsmen.

## at 'Plot' Hear

Deputies accompanying him had to shout repeatedly, "Move Back, Move Back!"

Shaw, with not a comment, with not a smile, moved up the stairs through a human corridor. At the entrance, cameramen fell back. No cameras were allowed in the building. Shaw and his attorneys were ushered into an elevator for the short ride to the second floor while reporters raced up the stairs in time to catch him entering the courtroom.

He carried a large book under his arm and casually puffed on a cigarette.

**THE COOL** dignity of this man, whose physical appearance can only be described as startlingly attractive, re-

mained intact. Only his eyes betrayed any sign of emotion. They revealed pain.

By the time Shaw entered the courtroom, most of the lucky reporters and spectators were in their assigned seats.

The second grand entrance of the day was made moments later by District Attorney Jim Garrison, who startled the world when he said that he solved the Kennedy assassination.

**HE DISARMED** the crowd of reporters yesterday with his deep-red, sensitive-looking sunburn and peeling nose. Garrison said he had been questioning a witness out in the sun and got so interested he forgot about the time.

Garrison appeared confident, if not jolly, and the giant strode through the crowd with his size 14 feet pacing off the steps at an easy gait.

Inside the courtroom it seemed cool at first. It seemed cool until you sat down and sat there for a

while, arm to arm, nine bodies to a short bench. Then, it got stuffy and, then it got oppressive.

**AT ONE POINT** during the morning, Judge Bernard J. Bagert asked if the air conditioning was working.

The question of comfort was more on the mind during the earlier part of yesterday's session, however. After a brief recess, the moment came.

The identity of Garrison's mystery informant was revealed. Perry Raymond Russo, an insurance salesman from Baton Rouge. He began his testimony and the pace of the pencils and pens picked up, racing for every word.

**HE KNEW** David Ferrié, Leon Oswald and Clem Bertrand, he said. At a party he said he heard them plot to kill the President.

When he identified Clay Shaw as the man he knew as Clem Bertrand, he was calm. Garrison was calm. Shaw was calm, his eyes glued on his accuser.

A woman began to get pale. She was about to faint. She was grabbed by strong arms and rushed out of the courtroom, where she collapsed, choking. Coroner Dr. Nicholas P. Chetta administered smelling salts.

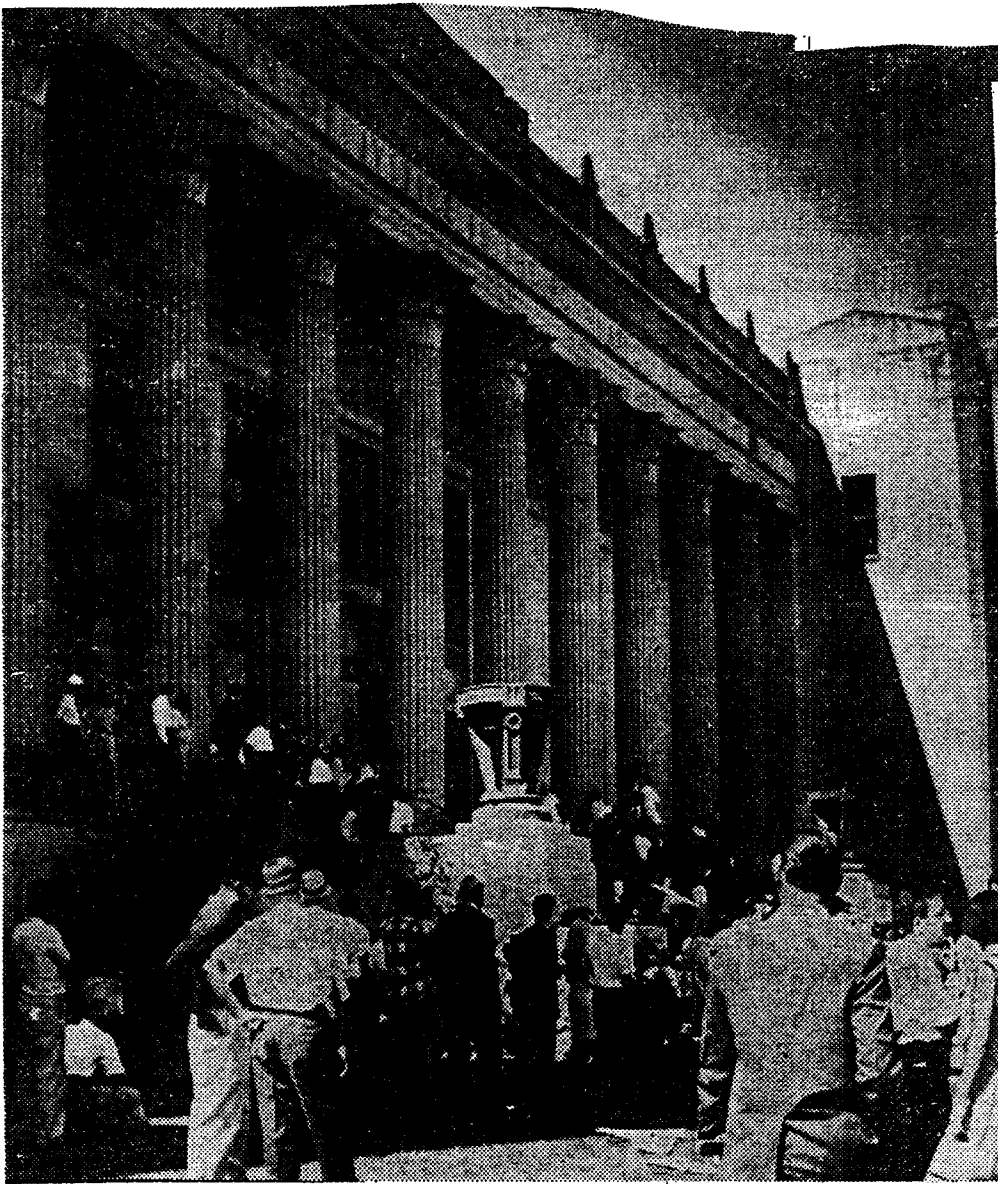
**INSIDE THE** pencils scratched frantically as Russo told his story. Shaw kept his eyes on Russo and he smoked. Russo remained calm, but

he talked fast and it was hard to understand him at times.

And Garrison continued his questions and his words were clearly heard.

**THE QUESTIONS** were interrupted by long legal debates over hearsay.

And then it was time for



**NEWSMEN, CURIOUS SPECTATORS CROWD STEPS OF CRIMIN**

jabbered to other reporters and spectators.

Those who had been inside rehased among themselves or related to those less fortunate.

TV newsmen wiped their faces and combed their hair and spruced up a bit for their audiences.

FOR A MOMENT the tension seemed to disappear.

Something had happened, after all.

As the time neared for the afternoon session, though, you could hear, from group to group, the questions beginning again.

"WILL HE stand up as a witness?"

"Can the defense find a flaw?"

"Why did he wait so long to tell his story?"

In the afternoon, Russo took the stand again. He answered

the questions easily again and he talked too fast again and had to be stopped and slowed down so that everyone present could hear him report his story again.

GARRISON WAS still calm and his voice was still the

most clearly understood of the lot.

Defense attorney F. Irvin Dymond touched off a moment of humorous relief with his handling of an exhibit, a rifle. Judge Bagert ques-

tioned, "Have you verified that thing is unlcaded, Mr. Dymond?"

Clay Shaw continued to stare at the witness and he continued to smoke.

And it continued to be hot.

# 'Perry's Telling the Truth,' Older Russo Brother Says

By BILL LYNCH  
(States-Item Bureau)

BATON ROUGE—"I do believe he is telling the truth," the brother of Perry Raymond Russo said here today.

Edwin Russo, 28, engineering instructor at Louisiana State University, was commenting on the sudden burst of spotlight on his younger brother, who yesterday was unfolded as District Attorney Jim Garrison's star witness in the New Orleans Kennedy assassination probe.

RUSSO said he was at a meeting of David Ferrie, Lee Harvey Oswald and Clay Shaw when they plotted the murder of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

In Baton Rouge earlier, Perry Russo had stated flatly he had never met Oswald.

He had been vague and general about his association with Ferrie.

NOTING the contradiction, his brother Edwin said, "It is hard to believe because there are apparent contradictions. But I believe he is telling the truth."

Edwin said he had never been close to his brother because of the three-year age gap.

But he described him as an intelligent person even though he made slightly better than C average grades in Our Lady Star of Sea elementary school, Colton Junior High and McDonogh High School. Edwin said Perry entered Tulane in 1959 and finished at Loyola in 1964 with a degree in political science. He said that his father, a Catholic, wanted his son to change to Loyola.

"HE DID pay the bills," Edwin said of his father.

Young Russo was born in New Orleans May 14, 1941,

really connected with any religion," Edwin said of his brother.

HIS FATHER, Francis, lives at 4607 Elysian Fields. He is a machinist at Champion Piston Rings Service. Perry's mother died in 1963. He also had a sister, who died at 12 in 1947 of polio.

Edwin lived at home until 1961 when he left to get married. He is now the father of three children.

Perry left home in 1966 and moved to Baton Rouge last September to take a job as a salesman for the Equitable Life Assurance Society. Prior to that time, he was employed in a financial division of General Electric Co. Edwin said Perry was an "extremely" popular person in school and always had friends.

"HE WAS definitely one of the gang," Edwin said. "He was active in affairs in the schools. He ran for vice-president in high school, and he got 400 votes, and the next man got 70 votes."

Edwin said Perry has studied some law and insurance courses at LSU.

He said his younger brother had never mentioned anything to him about the alleged plot, but added he had not seen him to talk for any length in quite a while.

"It was before Christmas," he said pointing to an unopened package lying on a table in their living room. "That's his Christmas present waiting there for him."

PERRY lives in a one-story frame duplex on a twisting, busy street crowded with college students.

With him lives a 20-year-old LSU student, Steve Derby, who has made the baseball team but whose association with Russo is somewhat vague.

Derby, interviewed between innings on the LSU baseball field, first described himself as Russo's stepbrother and then amended it to say he was a cousin. **NEXT**

"WE JUST call ourselves brtothers," he said. However, Edwin Russo said his brother and Derby are not related at all. Just friends. Derby said he has known Russo for the past five years and about

four years ago saved Russo's live while swimming in Lake Pontchartrain.

He said Russo has talked to him some about the investigation in New Orleans. "They gave him truth serum and hypnotized him," he said. "It was like always being asleep and waking him up all the time and asking him questions," he said Russo told him.

Derby said Russo had a number of girl friends in New Orleans, but few in Baton Rouge. "A couple of them flunked out," he added.

A NEIGHBOR, Mrs. Elinore Durand, who lives in the other side of the duplex, said both young men appeared to be nice persons. She said they frequently had parties on Friday nights that lasted until 2 a. m. or so, but they were not rowdy.

She said the parties were mixed and they would play records and dance. "The walls are very thin here," she said.

Perry Russo occasionally would use her phone, she said, since he didn't have one. "I would say he is not much of a big talker," she concluded.

**THE MAN** for whom Perry Russo works in Baton Rouge, Taylor Bernard, district manager of the insurance company, said his firm had run a routine investigation on Russo before employing him.

He described Russo as one of his better salesmen among

his new employes.

"He has a willingness to work, to plan, to schedule his time," he said. "He has done a good job here."

Bernard said he would have no qualms about his coming back to work.

"I think he is a reliable person," he said. **END**