

Got Psychiatric Care, Russo Tells Hearing

3/15/67

Perry R. Russo, District Attorney Jim Garrison's mystery informant who yesterday named Clay L. Shaw as one of the men who allegedly conspired in New Orleans to kill President John F. Kennedy, returned to the witness stand today for cross-examination by defense attorneys for Shaw.

Defense Attorney F. Irvin Dymond handled the questioning of the 25-year-old Baton Rouge insurance salesman. He began:

"DO YOU BELIEVE IN God?"

Russo answered quickly with a question of his own, "How do you define God?"

Dymond asked, "How do YOU define God, you're on the witness stand?"

"God is everything," said Russo, "the Entity of the Universe, me, you, everything."

DYMOND SAID, "YOU TOOK AN oath to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and how do you define truth?"

"I think I would be telling the truth to the best as I knew it under penalty of the law."

"Under penalty of God?" Dymond asked.

"God is everything," said Russo. "He is you, me, everything. I consider my oath a promise to God; to myself, to everyone in this room."

RUSSO SAID HE HAD read and discussed God with Loyola professors. "I don't consider my conceptions of God more peculiar than anyone else's."

Dymond: "Do you go to church, Mr. Russo?"

Answer: "When I need to talk out something, I talk to ministers and priests . . . I've had no occasion to talk to a rabbi yet . . . people who listen . . . preferably in the confines of a church."

Dymond asked, "Do you believe it is a sin to lie?"

"Yes," he said, "I think it would be a sin to God and to my friends and everyone."

DYMOND then asked a question which Russo said he did not understand.

The defense attorney's question referred to Russo's "very little belief in God."

Russo said he did not un-

derstand the question and Judge Bernard J. Bagert quickly said he did not understand either.

"This is not a catechism class, let's move on out of this area," said the judge.

DYMOND asked Russo his birth date.

Russo said, "May 14, 1941." He said his father is named Francis Raymond Russo and his mother's maiden name was Morie Kimbrell.

"How many other children did your parents have?" asked Dymond.

"A sister who died when I was four and her name was Frances, and a brother named Edwin."

DYMOND asked if his parents were married only once and to each other. Russo said he had a feeling his father was married before but he did not know.

Russo said his parents were never very close, as "I can recollect." His mother is dead.

He said his mother and father argued a lot and that his mother fussed about his father's working late and his resources. He said he heard arguments about the previous marriage, which, he said, he could find no records of.

ASKED BY Dymond if the previous marriage produced any children, he said he liked to think there were no children.

He said he has only one brother, who is 28, was born here, is working with Boeing and Chrysler ("I think") and is studying for his doctorate at Louisiana State University. He has a master's degree from Tulane and he needed some teaching hours in order to get his doctorate.

"Is your father living?"

"Yes, sir, my mother died in 1963."

Russo was asked if his father was supporting his mother, and he said yes. The problem was always one of money, said Russo.

"You didn't support your mother, did you?" queried Dymond.

RUSSO said if he had money on him and she wanted it, she could have it.

"I didn't support her," he added.

Asked if his brother is self-

supporting, Russo said he thinks he gets some money from LSU and "maybe from Boeing and Chrysler," said Russo.

"Are you supporting anyone?" Russo was asked.

He said, "My grandmother in Mississippi."

His mother inherited some family property in Mississippi when her father died, and when his mother died, he inherited the property, said Russo.

"I NEVER did understand the law, but I signed some papers that any money that grandmother gets from these properties will go to her, not to me."

Dymond: "Money you could get, you gave to your grandmother?"

"I turn the property money over to her once a year and I assume that since I was an heir to this property the money would come to me."

"Is this property in your name?" asked Dymond.

"I don't know. I do not know the law in this area. I think I came into my mother's share."

DYMOND: "Have you ever given your grandmother any money toward her support?"

"I've given her five or ten dollars now and then."

"How often?"

"If I have money and they need help, I give it to my family and friends whenever I can help."

At this point Asst. Dist. Atty. James Alcock jumped to his feet and told the judge that he objected to the line of questioning and that he could see no point in it.

DYMOND told the judge the questions are a part of his cross-examination and that he could furnish evidence that the witness has made contradictory statements and that this line of questioning bears

on the witness' credibility. Judge Bagert had earlier sustained the state's objection but, following Dymond's remarks, he went into a huddle with the other two judges.

WHEN THE brief conference was ended, Judge Bagert restated that the objection raised by the state was sustained.

Dymond reserved a bill of exceptions to the court's ruling and explained his reason for filing the bill was that when the credibility of a witness is vital, the defense on cross-examination has a right to elicit prior contradictory statements by the witness.

Dymond then showed the witness a document which he marked D-19 and told the witness this purported to be his personnel and employment record.

ADDRESSING his remarks to Russo, Dymond asserted, "I now direct your attention to a pamphlet contained within this folder which purports to be a personal history, and in particular I call your attention to page 7 of that pamphlet.

"I now ask you whether or not the handwriting contained herein is your handwriting."

ANSWER: "No, sir, it is not mine."

Question. "Was the information contained therein supplied by you?"

The witness studied it. Alcock came up and peered over Russo's shoulder.

Judge Braniff interjected a question at this point: "What was the date on that entry?" he asked.

DYMOND replied, "August of 1966."

After the witness looked up and indicated he had completed his study of the pamphlet, Dymond asked, "Did you represent this information to be the truth?"

"The information was given by me in confidence to — (here the witness mentioned a name which sounded like Taylor Bernard). It looks like his handwriting."

QUESTION: "Was this information the truth?"

Answer: "Yes."

Question: "I now direct you

to Page 7 of the pamphlet which asks how many adults exclusive of wife were dependent on you for support and the answer given was one partially. Is that the information you gave?"

"No, sir," replied Russo.

"DID YOU not give information that you supported one adult," Russo was asked. The state objected to the question on the grounds of relevancy.

There followed an argument between Dymond and district attorney's representatives over the line of questioning.

When questioning resumed, Russo testified that when he filled out the personal history pamphlet for the insurance firm, he was asked about support he rendered to his grandmother.

RUSSO said he told his employer he offered help to her when he could. Russo said he was asked if she could be claimed as a dependent. He said she was not a dependent and could not be claimed as such "because it would not be fair to the government."

"Did you or did you not claim her as a dependent?" asked Dymond.

"No sir," replied Russo.

Dymond resumed his cross-examination after shuffling through some papers.

Dymond suddenly asked:

"Did you ever have any psychiatric treatment?"

"Yes, sir," Russo said.

"When?"

"In 1959 . . . mid 1960 or, maybe it was late 1960."

"What did the treatment consist of and how long a period did it cover?"

"It consisted of treatment and consultations and covered a period of one and a half or two years."

Dymond asked specifically when the treatment began.

RUSSO answered, "About October of 1959."

"When did it end?"

"It terminated in late or early 1961, I don't remember exactly," said Russo.

"What other visits did you pay to a psychiatrist since that time?"

"When my mother died, I went back for a visit."

"Whenever you were under great stress in other words, you went to a psychiatrist, is that correct?"

"NO, SIR, I wouldn't evaluate it that way."

"How would you evaluate it, then?"

"Well, whenever I felt like I wanted to talk about my past life."

"When was the last time you went to a psychiatrist?"

"Around October or September of 1965."

"You did not consult a psychiatrist in 1966?"

"I'm not willing to say that as such. In other words, I talked to a psychiatrist on the telephone."

"CAN YOU state that you have not consulted with any psychiatrist during the current year, 1967?"

Russo replied, "What do you mean? With any doctor? I have lots of friends, some of whom are doctors and I've talked to them."

Dymond explained, "Any time, any doctor."

"I'VE TALKED TO a psychiatrist about social things, not necessarily medical problems. What is the line of demarcation?"

"In other words, you have had no professional consultations?"

"No, sir," said Russo.

Finished with this line of questioning, Dymond switched to an apparent examination of the witness' early childhood.

"What neighborhood were you born in?"

An objection was raised by

Asst. Dist. Atty. Alvin who complained the questioning had gone too far afield.

Dymond defended his right to question the witness about his boyhood saying, "We're entitled to know all about this man. We didn't even know he was going to be a witness until he was called into court. We have a right to find out about him."

After a judicial huddle, Judge Bagert ordered the objection be sustained.

DYMOND took another bill of exceptions here.

Dymond queried. "Did you ever attend McDonogh High

School?"

"Yes, sir. In 1956 through 1959."

"Did you know David Ferrie when you were in high school?"

"I don't think so," said Russo.

"When did you first meet him?"

"IN 1960 or 1961," said Russo.

"Who introduced you to

Russo answered, "A friend of mine named Al Landry."

"Mr. Russo, is it not true that you were threatened with expulsion at McDonogh High School because of expressions you made that you did not believe in God?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't members of the faculty discuss with you statements that you did not believe in God?"

"I THINK the faculty at McDonogh could better answer that question. I don't remember."

"Were you accused by anyone of making such statements."

"By whom do you mean?" asked Russo.

"By anyone," said Dymond.

"I don't remember," said Russo.

HERE DYMOND shook his head incredulously, "Mr. Russo, are you telling me that you don't remember something like that? Do you deny it?"

"I don't deny it or admit it."

"Did you graduate from McDonogh," asked Dymond.

"Yes, sir," said Russo.

"When?"

"In May or June of 1959."

"How old were you then?"

"Eighteen," said Russo, "or nineteen."

"What did you do then?"

"I ENTERED Tulane."

"The college of arts and sciences?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long did you matriculate at Tulane?"

"Two years. 1959 to 1960 and 1960 to 1961."

"Among the student body, did you have any close

friends?" Dymond asked.

"I had many friends," replied Russo.

"CAN YOU name some of them?"

At this point Russo paused in reflection and then offered names which sounded like "Ronald N'Aquin . . . Jess Schoendorff . . . He's a doctor . . . And I had others."

"Are you able to name any more?"

Russo thought for a while and then said, "No, I am not able."

"What was the occasion of your leaving Tulane?"

"MY FATHER told me I was going to go to Loyola," said Russo.

"Were you ever accused of giving false testimony at any proceeding while you were in college?"

Russo answered, "No, sir, I never have."

Dymond asked, "You are sure you never did give false testimony?"

"Yes, I am sure. I never gave false testimony anywhere."

"DID YOU ever take a political science course?"

"That was my major."

"What other courses did you take?"

At this point, assistant DA Alcock objected, claiming that the line of questioning was irrelevant.

Dymond retaliated that in as much as the college transcripts were not entered yet as evidence, the defense has a perfect right to question Russo about the courses he took in college.

JUDGE Braniff interjected at this point, and said the line of questioning had nothing to do with the attack on the credibility of the witness. Dymond quickly asked, "Are you say-

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