

Shaw Witness, Jury Go 'Apartment Hunting'

Results Inconclusive in Quest for Spot Described as Site of Assassination Plot

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NEW ORLEANS—The Clay L. Shaw trial went apartment hunting Saturday in the ornate old French Quarter, led by a man more at home on the sidewalks of New York.

It was a lovely day for an outing. Soft winds blew up from the Gulf, and sunlight glittered on wrought-iron balconies and patio gates.

But the lower reach of the Old Quarter was no place Saturday for seekers after charm and tranquility. The apartment-hunting expedition produced chaos.

Even quarter dwellers, accustomed as they are to noisy nonsense, gawked. Tourists stared in disbelief. Car horns blared as the traffic snarl grew.

Purpose Described

The object of the apartment hunt was to determine if Charles I. Spiesel, a slight New York accountant, could find a residence where he claims he attended a party in June, 1963, and overheard the host, Shaw, discuss plans to assassinate President John F. Kennedy. Shaw is accused of conspiracy in connection with the assassination of Mr. Kennedy.

Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. ordered the search Saturday morning at the insistence of Shaw's chief defense counsel, F. Levin Dymond, who argued:

"Your Honor, it's important to know whether this man knows what he is talking about."

Haggerty agreed, and

adjourned the trial to the intersection of Dauphine St. and Esplanade Ave., about two miles from the sooty old Criminal Courts Building.

Spiesel had testified Friday that he recalled the apartment had been in what he thought was a "brownstone building" and "up two or three flights" near the intersection.

Spiesel's hunt was inconclusive. He appeared glum.

Good Time Event

But everyone else had a frantic good time, especially the 12 male jurors and two alternates who have spent long days and nights cooped up in either the courtroom or their motel.

The trial press corps, the curious, the attorneys and court officials descended on the intersection. Soon narrow Dauphine St., a major French Quarter artery, was impassable by auto at that point. Traffic was backed up for blocks.

The jurors did not arrive for nearly an hour.

As the crowd at the intersection mounted, an onlooker said to Haggerty: "Judge, the cops are going to arrest you for impeding traffic."

"Or vagrancy by loitering," cracked the judge, keeping a wary eye out for the bus bringing the jurors to the scene.

As the judge spoke, directly across the street squads of policemen emerged from blue-and-white patrol cars to aid fellow officers cleaning out a nest of hippies suspected of smoking marijuana.

Bus Arrives

Soon a red-and-yellow public service bus drove into view bearing the jurors. The driver coaxed the bus to the curb and parked, further complicating the traffic snarl at the intersection.

A horse drawing a carriage bearing a band of tourists clip-clopped by. The animal wore a French gendarme's hat atop his ears.

Newsmen flirted with leggy, scantily-clad girls, watching from balconied apartments. Residents walked their dogs on the grassy parkway of Esplanade Ave.

"You just lead us where you want to go," Judge Haggerty told Spiesel once the jurors had descended from the bus. The judge wore a bright cranberry-colored sports coat, Spiesel a jaunty hat.

Spiesel entered the first structure opposite him, a red-brick French Provincial apartment building next door to Shaw's home, which is a restored slave

quarters and one of the smartest residences in the Vieux Carre.

Spiesel was followed in by Shaw, the jurors, the judge, counsel for both sides and court attaches. He visited a single apartment, and the entourage emerged in five minutes.

Then Spiesel led the pack around the corner to a building on Esplanade. Spiesel and company emerged in about 20 minutes, having visited three apartments there. He had been instructed by the judge to say nothing until the trial was back in the courtroom.

Dymond, however, told newsmen: "I don't think he found anything. But we saw a couple of pretty girls."

Many of those watching were Shaw's neighbors. Several reached out to touch his shoulder or shake his hand, and say to him:

"Good luck, Mr. Shaw."

After a noon recess, Spiesel pretty well confirmed Dymond's judgment during a brief court session.

Spiesel said the living rooms in the apartments in the second building were "similar" to the one he claimed to have visited in 1963. During his testimony Friday, Spiesel had said he had passed through the living room so quickly he hardly had taken notice of it.

Spiesel said, however, he was not able to find the combination kitchen-dining area which he had described in detail Friday, the room in which he said he had overheard the alleged assassination plot.

"Unless some architectural changes were made, then that wasn't the same building," Dymond suggested.

OFF TO FRENCH QUARTER—Charles I. Spiesel, right, leads Clay Shaw jury on tour of several French Quarter apartments in effort to locate the building in which he said he met Shaw, standing in doorway, and late David Ferrie in 1963.

(AP Wirephoto)

