

a June 1963 party in New Orleans's French Quarter. Oswald was in the New Orleans area from the end of April until late September 1963—and under Louisiana's extremely loose conspiracy law Garrison needs only to convince nine of the jurors that there was a plot among two or more people followed by an act to further the scheme. He assured the court in his opening statement that he would do just that—and would further show that Kennedy was shot by at least two different assassins in Dallas.

Mardi Gras Season

For two years, big Jim Garrison has been an extraordinarily imaginative barker in promoting his assassination sideshow in New Orleans. Once the audience got inside the tent, the district attorney promised, it would witness eye-popping proof of a plot to murder John F. Kennedy. Finally last week all the jurors were chosen in the conspiracy trial of Garrison's only legally charged sus-

But after the D.A.'s mystery witness had presented his opening testimony on the alleged plot, he was—to the wonderment of the courtroom—suddenly telling of a conspiracy against himself. Under the low-key cross-examination of Shaw's attorney, F. Irvin Dymond, Spiesel reported that he had been victimized by a New York psychiatrist, a private detective agency and Communists. Dymond read the petition from a lawsuit filed by



Garrison lights up: A peek inside the carnival tent

pect—former businessman Clay L. Shaw, 55. And with that, on the eve of Mardi Gras season in New Orleans, the flamboyant D.A. pulled back the flap of the carnival tent to show what—if anything—he had to reveal.

As an added inducement to the curious, the district attorney's office produced a new "mystery witness" to supplement the exotic array of stars who had already been trotted out for public showing. The new witness turned out to be a 50-year-old New York accountant named Charles I. Spiesel, and the mystery was why Big Jim had apparently chosen him as one of the bulwarks of his case against Clay Shaw.

Beard: The hulking prosecutor evidently counted on Spiesel to buttress his central charge that Shaw conspired with Lee Harvey Oswald and a onetime pilot named David Ferrie to kill Kennedy. And, in fact, Spiesel calmly testified that he had heard Shaw, Ferrie (who died in 1967), and a handful of other people, including one man with a beard, talk about murdering the President during

Spiesel charging that he had been forced out of business and kept "from having normal sex relations" through "hypnosis and psychological warfare." Spiesel further said he had been hypnotized by as many as 50 or 60 people "without my consent."

It thus appeared that Jim Garrison might, after all, have to rely on Perry Raymond Russo, the former insurance salesman, as his star witness. In March 1967, Russo alleged that he had heard Shaw, Ferrie and Oswald plot to kill Kennedy in September 1963. Already, Dymond had charged last week that Russo was "a notoriety-seeking liar." But before Russo was to take the stand, the entire court went trooping off to see if Charles Spiesel could find the building where he had heard talk of shooting the President. He never definitely located the spot. And the first week of testimony in the Clay Shaw trial ended on that inconclusive note, with judge, jury, witnesses and attorneys flocking through the streets of the French Quarter just ahead of the first big parades of Mardi Gras.