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Acquittal of Shaw  
Preserves Integrity  
of Warren Report

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NEW ORLEANS—One of the most remarkable episodes in American jurisprudence has ended.

Clay L. Shaw goes free. New Orleans Parish (County) Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, perhaps has been discredited. The jury system is vindicated. And the integrity of the Warren Commission, which Garrison tried to destroy, remains intact.

Such, in capsule summary, is the effect of Shaw's swift acquittal early Saturday on a charge of conspiring to assassinate President John F. Kennedy.

The trial was long, consuming 34 court days, and the testimony was complex. But the 12 men, mostly blue-collar workers, who sat in judgment on Shaw, needed only 54 minutes to unanimously exonerate the 55-year-old defendant.

#### Attack on Warren Commission

The trial, by law, was that of Shaw. But in truth the proceedings were transparently the vehicle for a public airing of the massive attack on the Warren Commission which Garrison has been mounting for more than two years.

Shaw's chief counsel, F. Irvin Dymond, put it succinctly when he said in his final argument: "Clay Shaw was brought here for no other purpose than to create a forum for this attack on the Warren Commission."

Garrison's assault on the commission's findings fell as flat as his case against Shaw, despite the district attorney's proclamation in his last argument to the jury that:

"The Warren Commission perpetrated . . . probably the greatest fraud in the history of humankind."

While the verdict left the Warren Report untarnished, a sampling of jurors indicated it could not be

construed as a blanket endorsement of it.

Some jurors said that, while they believed the testimony of expert witnesses presented by the defense to establish that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin, doubt still lingered.

Charles Ordes, 33, a can company supervisor, said: "I think there still is much to be sought out about the assassination."

Nevertheless, the verdict established that 12 men with open minds, after hearing all evidence Garrison had assembled against both Shaw and the com-

mission, during the last two-and-one-half years, simply could not accept it as credible.

"Garrison has a right to his opinion about the government and the Warren Commission. But his opinion is not enough to convict a man," said another juror, David I. Powe, a youthful credit manager who served on the jury.

The jury's decision probably turned on the credibility of the witnesses Garrison used in an attempt to back up his claim that he had solved the assassination of Mr. Kennedy and found it to be a

conspiracy. Notable among these witnesses was Perry Raymond Russo.

Russo's testimony was important to Garrison's case. He testified at Shaw's preliminary hearing when he was arrested in March, 1967, and appeared before the grand jury that indicted Shaw.

In the trial, he was the key prosecution witness, claiming, as before, that he had attended a party where he heard Shaw, Oswald and the late David W. Ferrie discussing a plan to assassinate Mr. Kennedy.

But the defense forged sizable gaps in his credibility, and the jurors acknowledged this.

"So many conflicting statements to sort out,"

said Ordes.

"I just couldn't believe in the character of the witnesses, especially the main witness," said juror Peter Tatum, a maintenance mechanic.

Dymond produced testimony, some of it from Russo's own lips, that:

—He considered the party conversation nothing more than a "bull session," never a "conspiracy."

—He told a police lieutenant after Shaw's indictment that Shaw was not the man he had seen in the apartment.

Garrison, unavailable later, told a reporter before the verdict:

"It certainly has been an interesting case, hasn't it? No matter how this thing ends, I will not hold a news conference. I'm tired of being called a nabooyant. Everybody

knows I'm not flamboyant."

Shaw's acquittal, exactly two years to the day after his arrest date, March 1, 1967, came after Garrison's half-hour summing up of his case, a repetition of the extravagant allegations about government "secrecy," "manipulations" of news media and Warren Commission "cover-ups" that he has made during the last two years.

Shaw said at a news conference Saturday afternoon that he agreed with Garrison's closing argument that the jurors had to make the final decision between the district attorney's investigation and the Warren Commission Report. "But he had a mixed cast of characters."

A good indicator of what appears to be mounting local public sentiment against Garrison came Saturday when the New Orleans States-Item called for the resignation of the district attorney in its editorial page.

The newspaper said he should resign "because he is unfit to hold the office of district attorney, or any other office . . . His perse-

... cution of Clay Shaw was a perversion of the legal process . . . Mr. Garrison himself now should be brought to the bar . . . for his conduct . . ."

Powe, probably the most vocal of the jurors, perhaps revealed one of the most interesting aspects of the jury's concept of Garrison's case when he commented on the prosecution's main witness, Russo: "Russo wouldn't know the truth if it came up and slapped him in the face."

"I changed (opinions) a couple of times," he said, "but I knew what I was doing when I went up (to begin deliberations in the jury room).

"They didn't prove that Shaw was part of the conspiracy," he said. *Q. 14*