

How 'JFK Plot' Was Unveiled

Garrison and The JFK Plot

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Special to The Press

New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison is considerably more clever than some recent pronouncements would indicate.

In the early days he was subtly planting seeds with selected news media, but it wasn't until mid-February of 1967 that the story broke like a torrent in the daily press. By then Garrison was ready to take The Case to the public.

In mid-January that year Garrison was feigning lack of interest in Clay Shaw, the man he believed to be the mysterious Clay Bertrand. In truth, he was interested enough to have Shaw called in for questioning back on Dec. 23, 1966.

Moreover, Shaw made two slips in the interview that may well have been honest memory lapses, but they apparently struck Garrison as outright lies.

SHAW, WHO was managing director of the International Trade Mart in 1963, swore he had never met Lee Harvey Oswald. He did say, however, that his assistant J. B. Dauenhauer, had given Oswald permission to hand out Fair Play for Cuba leaflets in front of the trade mart. Dauenhauer later denied this.

Shaw also said he was flying to California at the time of President Kennedy's assassination, when in fact he was already in San Francisco that day. As the interview ended, Shaw amiably wished an assistant D.A. a Merry Christmas, but he left under a cloud of dark suspicion.

Shaw probably didn't know it, but the testimony of the widow of a former Cuban consul in New Orleans made his situa-



Perry Russo testified at a public hearing that he heard Lee Harvey Oswald and Clay Shaw plot to kill President John Kennedy.

tion even more perilous.

Mrs. Carlos Marquez, whose husband had an office in the Trade Mart in 1963, said she not only watched Oswald hand out the leaflets, but she also saw him return to the mart two days later.

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THEN IN February Garrison made a connection he considered very significant. Leafing through old New Orleans directories, he found that in 1962 one James R. Lewallen lived next door to Shaw.

Garrison knew Lewallen to be David Ferrie's oldest friend in New Orleans. They had known each other years before in Cleveland, and it was at Ferrie's suggestion that Lewallen came south in the 1950s. This convinced Garrison that Shaw and Ferrie were acquainted.

On Feb. 17 the New Orleans States-Item printed a story that blew the lid off Garrison's probe. The paper was horrified to learn the district attorney's office had already spent \$8,000 on the caper.

Garrison was prepared for the disclosure. In fact, he seemed to relish it. He responded on nationwide television, charging the press with interfering with justice.

But since it was now out in the open, he blustered about The Case. Yes, he had indeed uncovered a conspiracy, and for that matter there would be arrests, charges and convictions.

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DAVID FERRIE didn't live long enough to be arrested, but for five days he played a dramatic last act. Reporters flocked to him, for by his own announcement he was a suspect. He said Garrison had tabbed him as a "getaway pilot."

Then on Feb. 22, the first night back at his own apartment, Ferrie died. "Suicide," claimed Garrison, citing as evidence some notes he had found. His eulogy placed Ferrie among history's most important men.

The coroner's report listed Ferrie's death as due to natural causes, but Garrison seemed unperturbed by the contradiction. He shifted his interest to a more positive development in The Case: Ferrie's death had prompted Perry Raymond Russo to come forward.

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RUSSO WAS a 25-year-old insurance salesman who appeared suddenly by way of a television interview in Baton Rouge.

Assistant District Attorney Andrew Sciambra talked to Russo in Baton Rouge on Feb. 25. Back in New Orleans the next day Sciambra gave the following account of what Russo told him:

Russo said, he had known Ferrie since 1962, when they made a deal to market pornographic films. Ferrie, who often hung around with tough-looking Cubans talked openly of an assassination during the summer of 1963, but President Kennedy was not named as the target.

Then, at Ferrie's apartment in September, Russo was introduced to a roommate. He described this roommate as "a man in his middle 20s with dirty blond hair and a scrubby beard, a typical beatnik."

At the meeting an assassination was discussed, and Kennedy was to be the victim.

Sciambra showed a picture of Shaw to Russo, who said he had seen the man, though he was unable to identify him, at two different times: Once in 1962 when Kennedy spoke at the dedication of a new wharf in New Orleans, and once with Ferrie in a service station. He did not say he had ever seen Shaw at Ferrie's apartment.

Shown a picture of Oswald, Russo said it looked a little like Ferrie's roommate, but only after a beard was drawn on the photograph, could he confirm the "identification."

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ON FEB. 27 Russo took a sodium penothal test, which was administered by Dr. Nicholas Chetta, the Orleans Parish coroner. Sciambra's report stated Russo confirmed his earlier story and volunteered these additional details:

- Ferrie called the roommate "Leon." Leon was a "real nut" about guns, and Russo once watched him clean a bolt action rifle with a telescopic sight.

- He did not know Clay Shaw. But Clay Bertrand? Yes, he had met Bertrand at Ferrie's apartment. He was a tall man with white kinky hair. He had seen him two other times! At the wharf dedication and once with Ferrie at a service station.

- He witnessed a meeting at which the Kennedy assassination was planned.

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THAT EVENING, no longer under the

influence of the truth drug, Russo was unable to recall the name, Bertrand, but he thought he would be able to recognize the tall man with white kinky hair. Garrison decided his witness should have a look at Clay Shaw.

The next day Russo was taken to Shaw's home where he made the identification. Shaw, he claimed, was one of the men he overheard planning the assassination.

On March 1, 1967, Shaw answered a subpoena and that evening he was handcuffed and paraded before press and television cameras, charged with conspiracy to murder John F. Kennedy.

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THE DISPUTED hypnosis of Russo occurred the day after Shaw's arrest. A transcript of the test tends to corroborate the testimony he had given previously, but it also suggests, as Shaw's defense has charged, that post-hypnotic suggestion was used on Russo. Garrison adamantly maintains the sodium pentothal and hypnosis were objectifying examinations aimed at learning the truth.

The public hearing that followed Shaw's arrest was enough to make the best Perry Mason fan wince. It was a legally superfluous maneuver by Garrison, for he could have accomplished his purpose by getting a grand jury indictment, which he later did. But Garrison was on the offensive. Russo's story convinced him he had overwhelming evidence, and he was anxious to take The Case to the jury of public opinion.

The session took four tedious days, during which an unmistakable impression pervaded the courtroom: Shaw, accused of plotting the crime of the century, was already on trial.

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BUT SHAW had a problem, and his lawyers knew it. For years he has lived a double life.

To many of his friends he is the epitome of a Southern gentleman, courtly and cultivated. His fine taste and gracious manners equip him well for the social position he enjoys in New Orleans.

"Clay is an international personality and a homosexual," says one friend. "He can't defend himself as others could. He's a patsy. I doubt if even Garrison thinks he conspired to murder Kennedy. But he's charged with it."

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TOMORROW: The basis of Garrison's charge that federal agencies conspired to conceal the facts of JFK's assassination.

(Chicago Daily News)