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Witness Says Beard Painted on a Photo Enabled ' Him to Link Oswald to Kennedy

By GENE ROBERTS
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NEW ORLEANS, March 15—An insurance salesman testified today that he had been unable to link Lee Harvey Oswald and two New Orleans men in an alleged Kennedy assassination plot until investigators spent six hours painting whiskers on Oswald's photographs.

The witness, Perry Raymond Russo, 25 years old, told of the whisker painting session in a day during which his testimony in a court hearing conflicted sharply with the Warren Commission's findings.

"We tried beard after beard after beard," he said.

This was done, he added, to see if Oswald's photographs could be made to look like an alleged conspirator named "Leon Oswald," who Mr. Russo contends plotted in September, 1963, with David W. Ferrie and Clay L. Shaw to kill President Kennedy.

He said that at the time of the alleged conspiracy the man he knew as Leon Oswald was wearing a few days' growth of beard.

Mr. Russo also testified that he received treatment from a psychiatrist over an 18-month period ending in late 1960 and had talked with a psychiatrist as recently as January of this year, but not on a professional basis. He did not say why he had sought psychiatric treatment.

Mr. Russo's testimony was given before a three-judge panel, headed by Judge Bernard J. Bagert, which must decide decide whether District Attorney Jim Garrison has enough evidence against Mr. Shaw to bind him over for trial.

Chief Witness

Mr. Shaw was arrested here on March 1 by Mr. Garrison, who says he has "solved" the Kennedy assassination. Mr. Shaw, who was released on $10,000 bond, has denied any knowledge of any conspiracy.

This week Mr. Garrison revealed Mr. Russo as his chief witness against Mr. Shaw. Yesterday, on the first day of the hearing, Mr. Russo gave direct testimony on his allegations about a plot. Today he was cross-examined, and will be tomorrow.

Meanwhile, today, a close friend of Mr. Russo said in Baton Rouge that the witness had remembered the story of the alleged conspiracy after Mr. Garrison's investigators had placed him under hypnosis.

"This old doctor placed Perry under hypnosis," Steve Derby, a 20-year-old student at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, said.

"The District Attorney asked him questions. And the more questions he asked, the more the story came back to Perry."

Interested in Hypnosis

In a tape-recorded interview with station WBRZ-TV in Baton Rouge on Feb. 24, Mr. Russo expressed an interest in hypnosis and said he practiced hypnosis himself.

"He [Ferrie] could play the piano," Mr. Russo said in the interview. "He had extensive knowledge of medicine, of psychology, and to me he was a pretty good hypnotist from what I had seen, 'cause I do the same type thing."

In his testimony today Mr. Russo said that Oswald shared an apartment with Mr. Ferrie in September, 1963, and that Oswald was in New Orleans as late as October of that year.

This conflicted with the Warren Report, which concluded that Oswald moved from New Orleans no later than Sept. 25, 1963.

Findings on Couple

The commission also found that Oswald was living with his wife, Marina, in New Orleans from May 11, 1963, until Sept. 23, 1963.

The Commission held that Oswald killed President Kennedy alone and unaided, without being a part of any conspiracy.

Although the Warren Report did not specifically exonerate Mr. Shaw, a retired business executive, or Mr. Ferrie, a former airline pilot, who was found dead in bed here last Feb. 22, Government officials have said the investigation showed that neither was involved in an assassination plot.

The defense questioned Mr. Russo at length today as to why he waited more than three years before telling anyone of what he said was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy.

"At that time [the time of the assassination]," he said, "everybody on TV said Oswald was the only man who did it. And I said [to himself] it's O.K with me."

Later, he said, he read that the Warren Commission had been appointed to investigate the assassination and assumed that the investigation "was in professional hands" and that there was no need for him to tell his story. Still later, he said, he became involved in his studies at Loyola University here and dismissed the conspiracy from his mind.

The defense asked what made Mr. Russo feel that his knowledge of the alleged "plot" might not be valuable?

"Because," Mr. Russo said, "everybody else except Mr. Garrison had said that Oswald acted alone.

"I have never pushed myself on anybody. From what I read on the Warren Report, every nut had something to say."

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Slaying 'Plot'

Asked if he did not think his testimony would have been valuable to the Warren Commission, Mr. Russo replied, "No, I never did think about."

The Warren Commission, he went on, "was supposed to be people who knew what they were doing, and I let them investigate it. I had other things that were on my mind at the time," he said.

When Mr. Russo said he last saw Oswald in late September or early October of 1963, the defense challenged him on the ground that the Warren Commission had concluded Oswald had left New Orleans by Sept. 25.

Mr. Garrison's staff objected. They said the time of Oswald's departure was not definitely proved "in this court."

The defense at this point tried to introduce the commission's report.

"You're not serious, are you?" Judge Bagert said. "Motion denied."

The defense declared Louisiana law required that documents by the United States Government be admitted into state court hearings.

"I tell you, you're wrong," Judge Bagert said. "Motion denied."

The court sustained the state's objection.

When the debate had ended, the defense asked Mr. Russo if he still believed Oswald might have been in New Orleans in early October.

"I say in October, yes, Sir," Mr. Russo replied.

Although Mr. Russo did not go into it at the hearing, newspaper reporters and television men in Baton Rouge said he sought them out last Feb. 24 and told them he had known Mr. Ferrie to be "obsessed with Kennedy."

Asked if he had told law enforcement officers, the newsmen added, Mr. Russo replied on Feb. 24 that he had mailed Mr. Garrison a letter on Feb. 22 or 23 but had not yet heard from him.

The sound track of one of the tape-recorded interviews was played in the courtroom today. In the interview, conducted by a Baton Rouge representative of station WDSU in New Orleans, Mr. Russo said Mr. Ferrie had talked "in a joking way" of how easy it would be to kill the President.

When the defense demanded to know why he had since changed his story, Mr. Russo replied that there was no conflict between the television interview and his testimony in court.

In using the word "joking," he said, he had been referring to conversations in the summer of 1963. But, he said, in telling the court Mr. Ferrie and others had "conspired" to kill the President, he was talking about a meeting in September of that year.

"I don't claim to this minute that there was anything serious in the summer months," he testified, "but in September it was a different story altogether."

Before the WDSU sound track was played in court, Mr. Russo testified under questioning by the defense that he had never seen anyone practicing "jungle warfare" near a house in which Mr. Ferrie once lived in suburban New Orleans.

Questioned on Identification

However, the WDSU sound track indicated Mr. Russo had told WDSU that "Ferrie had a group of boys practicing jungle warfare" in his neighborhood.

After the sound track was played, Mr. Russo was asked by the defense if he thought it was an accurate reproduction of his interview. He said it seemed to be.

In the interviews with television and newspaper reporters on Feb. 24, Mr. Russo also said he had never heard of Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

When Mr. Shaw's attorneys questioned him about this today, he said he did not positively connect Oswald with "Leon Oswald" until Mr. Garrison's investigators spent six hours painting whiskers on photographs.

The photographs, Mr. Russo said, were altered "10 or 15 times" before he made the final identification.

During testimony yesterday, Mr. Russo looked at a clean-shaven photograph of Lee Harvey Oswald and identified him as "Leon Oswald."

Under cross-examination today, he said he must have seen photographs of Oswald at least 100 times since the assassination.

A large part of the defense cross-examination was directed at what Mr. Russo said was a "party" that immediately preceded the alleged conspiratorial meeting.

Mr. Russo testified yesterday that one night in September of 1963 he visited Mr. Ferrie's apartment on Louisiana Avenue Parkway with several friends. After the party, he said, Mr. Ferrie, Mr. Shaw [whom he said he knew as "Clem Bertrand"] and Lee Oswald [whom he said he knew as "Leon Oswald"] remained at the apartment to discuss ways of killing Mr. Kennedy.

Today the defense asked him to identify the other persons he had brought to the party.

He said that one was a man named Lefty Peterson of New Orleans and one was a girl named Sandra Moffett, but that he could not remember the others. He said he had recently seen Mr. Peterson in the District Attorney's office here but had not seen Miss Moffett recently.

He added that she was originally from Alabama and that they had dated several times but that he could not remember precisely where she lived in New Orleans.

He also added that Miss Moffett and his other friends had left the party alone and that he could not remember what they had been wearing that night. He said, however, that "Clem Bertrand" was wearing a maroon jacket.

Oswald Widow Dubious

DALLAS, March 15 (AP) — The former wife of Lee Harvey Oswald said today that she had never heard of nor met any of the persons mentioned in the New Orleans investigation into a possible conspiracy to kill President Kennedy.