# Witness Says He Heard Oswald and 2

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 1967

# New Orleans Men Plot to Kill Kennedy

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Special to The New York Times

NEW ORLEANS, March 14—A life insurance agent who previously denied that he had ever met Lee Harvey Oswald prior to the assassination of President Kennedy testified today that he had heard Oswald and two New Orleans men plot to kill the President.

Then the witness, Perry Raymond Russo, an agent for the Equitable Life Assurance Society, left his chair in court and held his hand above the head of Clay L. Shaw to point him out as one of the participants in the alleged conspiracy.

Mr. Shaw, a retired New Orleans business executive, was arrested by District Attorney Jim Harrison on March 1 and accused of—but not formally charged with—helping to plot Mr. Kennedy's assassination.

A third conspirator, according to Mr. Russo, was David W. Ferrie, a former airline pilot who was found dead in bed here on Feb. 22.

Mr. Russo said he saw Mr. Shaw and Oswald together at Mr. Ferrie's apartment in New Orleans on three occasions in September of 1963. He said that on one occasion they carried on a detailed discussion of plans and alternate plans for assassinating President Kennedy.

They talked, he said, of "using diversionary tactics," of an "escape" route by airplane, of "selecting a kind of scapegoat" to draw attention from the real assassins and of "triangulation"—shots from three directions.

At the conclusion of the hearthree judges will rule on whether Mr. Garrison has presented enough evidence to warrant binding Mr. Shaw over for trial. Tomorrow Mr. Russo is to undergo cross-examination.

Mr. Shaw, soon after his arrest, denied that he had ever known Mr. Ferrie or Oswald or that he had ever taken part in any conspiracy. He headed the International Trade Mart here for 19 years.

### Interviewed by TV Man

In a tape-recorded interview on Feb. 24 with WDSU, a New Orleans television station, Mr. Russo said, "I never heard of Oswald until television [at the time of the assassination]."

He said much the same thing in another tape-recorded interview on the same day with Al Crouch, news director of television station WBRZ in Baton Rouge.

In that interview he said he met Mr. Ferrie in 1962 through a mutual friend.

"Did he [Ferrie] ever say [that] he knew Lee Harvey Oswald?" Mr. Crouch asked.

"No," Mr. Russo replied.

"Had you ever heard of Lee Harvey Oswald before the assassination?"

"No," Mr. Russo said.

In an interview with The Morning Advocate in Baton Rouge on Feb. 24, Mr. Russo did not mention Oswald but said he had once heard Mr. Ferrie say that "we will get him [President Kennedy] and it won't be long.

He also told the paper, according to its news article, that he first met Mr. Ferrie 18 months before the Kennedy assassination, which would have been in mid-1962.

In court today he said he first met Mr. Ferrie about 1960.

During all the interviews, he was asked why he had waited until this year to tell the authorities his story. In two of them he replied that it did not occur to him that Mr. Ferrie might be involved until he read in newspapers that Mr. Garrison was investigating Mr. Ferrie.

In the WDSU interview he said, "The assassination caught me by surprise."

The Morning Advocate article quoted him as saying Mr. Ferrie had told him on several occasions that it would be easy to assassinate the President. But Mr. Russo described all these discussions as "general conversation."

Associated Press Wirephoto

**Perry Raymond Russo**

### 'Some Sort of Party'

District Attorney Garrison, making his third official appearance in a courtroom since assuming office five years ago, called Mr. Russo to testify before the three-judge panel today. He questioned the witness for more than three hours.

Mr. Russo gave his age as 25 and said he had graduated from high school and from Loyola University in New Orleans and had completed a year of law school.

Then he told how he visited Mr. Ferrie's apartment on Louisiana Avenue Parkway here one night in September, 1963, and found "some sort of party in progress."

The party, with about eight people, was soon over, he said, and he, Mr. Ferrie, a man he

had met previously and knew as "Leon Oswald" and another man who called himself "Clem Bertrand" were left behind in the apartment.

At Mr. Garrison's request, Mr. Russo then identified Lee Harvey Oswald from a photograph as "Leon Oswald" and pointed out Mr. Shaw in the courtroom as the man he said he had known as "Clem Bertrand."

He said the three men began talking over plans and alternate plans for killing President Kennedy.

"Dave Ferrie," he testified, "took the initiative in the conversation. He paced back and forth and was talking.

"He said the assassination would have to use diversionary tactics.

**Visited Ferrie Apartment**

"He said three people, at the very least two, would have to be there and another man would have to be a kind of scapegoat.

"If there were only two people," he continued, "then definitely one would have to be the scapegoat."

"Did he mention the phrase triangulation of cross-fire?" Mr. Garrison asked.

Mr. Russo said he did.

Mr. Russo said Mr. Ferrie had made it clear that he had "worked up two proposals" for escaping soon after the assassination.

One involved flying to Mexico and Brazil and then perhaps to Cuba, he said, and the other involved going directly to Cuba.

According to Mr. Russo, Mr. Ferrie thought there might be danger in both plans—that they could be shot down going directly into Cuba, and that they might be picked up by Mexican authorities if they stopped in Mexico to refuel.

"Bertrand," Mr. Russo said, "offered an alternate solution on the day of the assassination—making sure they [the conspirators] had been at a certain place at a certain time."

At one point in the discussion, Mr. Russo said, Oswald told Bertrand to "shut up and leave him [Ferrie] alone—he knows what he's talking about, he's been a pilot."

"But Bertrand said as far as he was concerned Dave [Mr. Ferrie] was a washed-up pilot," Mr. Russo continued.

**Needed a 'Scapegoat'**

Later in the month of September, Mr. Russo said, he visited Mr. Ferrie's apartment again and found him "wearing baggy pants and a general's hat" and Oswald "half-shaved—there was three or four days' growth [of beard]."

He said Oswald was cleaning a rifle, which appeared to have a "bolt action" and a "hunting sight."

At this point, Mr. Garrison introduced a rifle that he identified only as "Exhibit S-14" and asked Mr. Russo to tell him how it differed from the rifle Oswald was cleaning.

Mr. Russo said Oswald's rifle appeared to have a "straight" telescopic sight, whereas the rifle Mr. Garrison exhibited was bulbous at one end.

Near the end of his testimony, Mr. Russo said Mr. Garrison's investigators took him to Mr. Shaw's apartment on Dauphine Street one night in late February and had him wait outside in a car for about two hours to get a look at Mr. Shaw if he came out of the house and determine whether he was "Clem Bertrand."

Mr. Russo testified that Mr. Shaw came out of the house briefly and that he immediately recognized him.

"I said he was the man—I am sure of it," he said.

"I asked," he went on, "if I could go to his [Mr. Shaw's] house and impersonate a Mutual of Omaha [insurance] man, which I did with the help of a member of your [Mr. Garrison's] staff."

"He said he was covered adequately as far as he thought. I was absolutely sure I had seen him before at Dave Ferrie's apartment."

At today's hearing Mr. Russo was smartly dressed in a dark suit and talked in rapid-fire sentences as he outlined the story of what he said was a conspiracy.

After attending law school, Mr. Russo went to work in New Orleans for the General Electric Company as a collector of delinquent accounts in its consumer finance department.

In the following September he went to work as a trainee agent for Equitable in Baton Rouge. He told an official of the company that a brother planned to attend Louisiana State University there and that he wanted to help with the cost.

Both General Electric and the life insurance company were impressed by Mr. Russo. General Electric's employment form asked whether his superior would consider hiring him again, and the answer was: "Yes, definitely."

Mr. Russo said today that before being taken to Mr. Shaw's apartment by Mr. Garrison's investigators he had seen Mr. Shaw several times. The first time was at a speech President Kennedy made in New Orleans about a year before the assassination.

"I took note [because] he was not looking at the President," he said. "I said to a friend at the time that he was a Secret Service man."

He said he saw Mr. Shaw next at Mr. Ferrie's apartment in September, 1963, and again in 1964 at a service station operated by Mr. Ferrie.

Mr. Ferrie, a pilot, was discharged by Eastern Airlines in 1962 after he was arrested, but not brought to trial, on charges of homosexual activity.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and Secret Service investigated him at length, according to a Warren Commission staff member, immediately after the assassination when they learned that he had driven from New Orleans to Houston soon after the assassination.

The commission, which investigated the slaying of the President, concluded that Oswald had acted alone and not as a part of any conspiracy in the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

Today a commission source said Mr. Russo's name had not come up in the commission's investigation.

Late last year, Mr. Garrison opened his own investigation of Mr. Ferrie and an alleged assassination plot. He said after Mr. Ferrie's death on Feb. 22 that he would have been arrested if he had lived.

Mr. Garrison called Mr. Ferrie's death a suicide. However, Dr. Nicholas Chetta, the Orleans Parish coroner, ruled that Mr. Ferrie died of "natural causes," as a result of a brain hemorrhage.

Mr. Ferrie, who lived in a clutter of pills, books and rosary beads, spent the last days of his life trying to prove that he was not involved in an assassination conspiracy. He was known here as an eccentric who wore a wig, mascara and false eyelashes.

Mr. Garrison's decision to make Mr. Russo his chief witness caught many by surprise because Mr. Russo did not talk with Mr. Garrison's investigators until the District Attorney had already announced that he had "solved" the assassination and would make arrests.

In his press interviews, Mr. Russo said he wrote a letter to Mr. Garrison on Feb. 22 or 23 but as late as Feb. 24 had not received a reply.

His first public statements came on Feb. 24, when he called television stations and newspapers in the Baton Rouge area and said he wanted to tell them about anti-Kennedy statements by Mr. Ferrie.

**No Comment in Capital**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 14—Spokesmen for the Justice Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation declined comment on today's developments in New Orleans.