Associated Press

CHARGES CONSPIRACY—Perry R. Russo, left, testified in New Orleans that he heard Clay L. Shaw, at right, entering courtroom, conspire with Lee Harvey Oswald and David W. Ferrie to assassinate President Kennedy.

Oswald, Ferrie, Shaw There, Salesman Says

Witness Tells of JFK Plot Session in '63

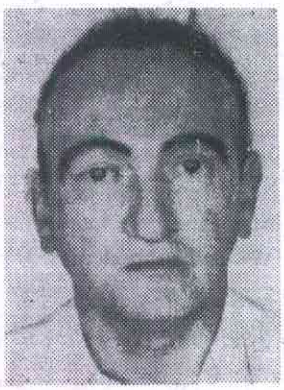
Post 3/15/67

NEW ORLEANS, March 14 (UPI)—A 25-year-old insurance salesman testified today that he heard Lee Harvey Oswald, David W. Ferrie and Clay L. Shaw conspiring to assassinate President Kennedy at a party in mid-September of 1963, two months before Mr. Kennedy was killed in Dallas.

Perry R. Russo, a former college student who now lives in Baton Rouge, said he was present as the three men sat in Ferrie's apartment and argued about escape routes, and discussed "triangulation of crossfire."

He pointed out Shaw, 54, former managing director of the New Orleans International Trade Mart, in the courtroom as the man he met at the party as "Clem Bertrand."

He identified Oswald, named as the assassin of Mr. Kennedy by the Warren Commission, and Ferrie from photographs. Both are now dead.



Associated Press

LEE HARVEY OSWALD DAVID W. FERRIE

. . . named in New Orleans plot

Russo's testimony took up much of the first day of a preliminary hearing to determine whether District Attorney Jim Garrison has enough evidence to try Shaw for conspiracy to murder. The hearing resumes at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

Russo said he saw Oswald four times in New Orleans, in the months before Mr. Kennedy was assassinated Nov. 22, 1963. He knew him as "Leon Oswald," he said.

He described Oswald as a dirty, half-shaven and unpleasant figure who sharply disagreed at the meeting on the best methods and once told "Bertrand" to "shut up and leave him (Ferrie) alone. He knows what he's doing."

"He did not take a liking to me," Russo said of Oswald. "The first time I was introduced to Leon Oswald, he made a crack about not wanting me to be there."

Russo said Oswald questioned his presence at the

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Heard Slaying Plotted, Salesman Tells Court

September meeting in Ferrie's apartment.

Oswald asked, "He's going to stay? What's he doing here?" Russo said.

'Ferrie said, 'He's all right.' "

Name Not in Archives

Russo's name does not appear in the National Archives in Washington among the hundreds of persons questioned by the Warren Commission, which concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin of Mr. Kennedy. The FBI declined comment on whether it had ever questioned Russo.

In a newspaper interview on Feb. 24 in Louisiana, Russo did not mention the September meeting, although he said he once heard Ferrie threaten to "get" Mr. Kennedy.

Russo, who graduated in 1964 from Loyola University of the South in New Orleans, told the court he met Ferrie at a Civil Air Patrol meeting in Kenner, La. He said he had known him since 1960 and they often visited at each other's home.

He said Ferrie was obsessed with Mr. Kennedy.

"At his apartment, I saw clippings of the President and his picture," he said. "There was always much talk and deliberation."

At the September meeting, Russo said, he heard Ferrie advise Shaw and Oswald that three persons should be involved, one a "good shot", and that one might have to be sacrificed and the others should be in the "public eye" on the day of the killing.

He said such technical ballistic subjects as "triangulation of crossfire" were discussed and Ferrie, a pilot, explored the possibilities of escaping by air.

Russo's revelation as Garrison's "confidential informant" came late in the morning sessions of the preliminary hearing before a three-judge District Court panel in a packed room in the New Orleans Criminal Court Building.

In the Feb. 24 interview with the Baton Rouge State Times, Russo did not mention anything about the 1963 meeting. He said he saw Ferrie's picture in the newspaper in connection with Garrison's investigation and wrote Garrison about a conversation he once had in which Ferrie allegedly told that "we will get him (Mr. Kennedy) and it won't be long."

Russo said then that he had forgotten the statement until he saw Ferrie's picture. Today he talked about the September (1963) meeting for what was apparently the first time.

Cautioned by Judge

Presiding Judge Bernard J. Bagert repeatedly cautioned Russo to confine his testimony to what he actually heard, and not to what he heard someone else say about a third person.

Shaw's lawyers objected to the testimony on the grounds that it was all hearsay.

When the objections were turned down, Defense Attorney William Wegmann said:

"The Court is saying the preliminary hearing may be used by the State for going on a fishing expedition."