Russo Intelligent, Athletic and Likable, Say Friends

Described as 'Radical' in Political Thinking

Perry R. Russo—the newest member of a growing cast of characters in the Kennedy assassination probe—possesses a number of attributes any other American would envy: wide-ranging intelligence, athletically-sound body, likable personality, a far-reaching sense of humor, a host of friends and a thirst for politics.

The one jarring exception: his radical political stance.

This, in capsule form, is how Russo is described by his fellow workers in Baton Rouge and his acquaintances in New Orleans.

Russo, 25, was first linked publicly to District Attorney Jim Garrison's case two days after the death of David W. Ferrie on Feb. 22. At that time he told newsmen that Ferrie had told him a month before Kennedy's death that "we will get him and it won't be long."

SAW PHOTO, WROTE DA

Russo said he did not take any of Ferrie's statements about the assassination seriously until he saw Ferrie's photograph in a newspaper during Garrison's current investigation. he said he wrote Garrison on Feb. 24, relating his contacts with Ferrie.

A dark, intense man, Russo lives with a younger brother in a white frame duplex near the Louisiana State University campus. He is currently taking a course at LSU in insurance underwriting.

Mrs. Eleanor Durand, who lives in the other half of the duplex, describes Russo as "a nice young kid. He told us he's helping his younger brother through high school."

She said Russo and his brother moved into the duplex recently. "Lots of young folks come in there and have a party once in a hile," she said.

BODYGARD, REPORT

Mrs. Durand said she understood from a next-door neighbor that Russo had a bodyguard assigned to him.

A fellow student, who refused to give his name, described Russo as a "a real fine boy—a quiet type who is interested in politics."

Russo, who played for and managed several local baseball teams, enrolled at Tulane university following graduation from a New Orleans high school. He later transferred to Loyola University of the South and was awarded a bachelor's degree in political science in 1964.

"He's a real fine guy, a hard worker and an intellectual," says his supervisor at the Equitable Life Assurance Company in Baton Rouge, where Russo is employed as one of 10 salesmen.

"He's a brilliant, but unpredictable guy. And a natural leader. In fact, he was a darn good strategist and was always pulling tactical surprises when he was managing a baseball team here," says a friend of Russo's who once played with the latter's New Orleans Young Republican team back in the summer of 1963.

Though he leaned toward the Republican party in elections, Russo is described as a radical thinker by those who knew him. A friend said he once saw "Cuba pamphlets" in Russo's home.

While attending Loyola, Russo lived alone in a three-room bungalo, situated next to his parents' home in the eGntilly section.

"He can do anything he puts his mind to," said Pete Barrouquere Jr., a fellow league baseball player.

Barrouquere, a sports writer for The Times-Picayune, last saw Russo in the summer of 1964, but met him for the first time in the spring of 1963 when Russo was organizing the Young

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Republican baseball team for the local Perry Roehm League.

'FUN-LOVING PERSON'

"He was an outgoing, fun-loving person," recalls Barrouquere, continuing:

"He was a bit unpredictable at times. I saw him lose his temper a couple of times and he would ge madder than anyone I've seen. Still, he was a popular and nice guy. Loaded with friends. Very agile in both mind and body. A really good athlete."

Asked if Russo ever mentioned President Kennedy or politics in general during the spring and summer of 1963 — months before Kennedy's assassination in Dallas—Barrouguere had this to say:

'RADICAL IN POLITICS'

"I'd say Perry was a keen political student, but a radical in politics. When I visited his bungalow he had 'Fair Play for Cuba' pamphlets strewn among his law books. He never said whether he was a member of the pro-Castro group though.

"He made a statment once that the Kennedys were starting a political dynasty and he expressed concern about it. He said the only way to beat Kennedy was to kill him at the polls. He was very interested in the Republican Party and often took an active interest in causes he believed in. For instance, he participated with Negro friends in several sit-ins at lunch counters here."

Barrouquere said it was inconceivable to him that Russo would be deliberately deceiving the world in his contention that he heard an assassination plot involving Clay Shaw, Lee Harvey Oswald and David Ferrie.

'NO GLORY HOUND'

"He's no glory hound. I don't think he would make a thing like this up. Above all, he is loyal to American laws and knows the consequences of perjury."

Meeting Russo several months after the assassination, Barrouquere said Russo expressed the opinion that Kennedy's death made the United States look "very bad" in the eyes of the world.

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