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Attempt at Suicide Is Denied by Russo

Perry R. Russo, the state's star witness in the preliminary hearing for Clay L. Shaw, took the stand on cross-examination again this morning as the hearing resumed.

The questioning of Russo began after an audio tape which apparently had been made by a WVUE reporter was played in the courtroom.

It was a short interview in which Russo had been asked if he had taken a truth serum test.

When Russo took the stand, Dymond asked if he had heard the recording and he said he had.

Q. DO YOU CONSIDER IT a true recording in front of the Civil District Court building?

A. I cannot attest to who talked to me. I didn't know him. To me it was just some reporter doing his job. It wasn't in front of the Civil District Court building, it was at the Broad st. entrance.

Q. Is it a fact that you made more than one interview?

A. I DO NOT CONSIDER it an interview. I walked out of the building and the man questioned me. It was more like a conversation.

Q. Would you say this conversation took

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place on March 1, 1967?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Russo, did you ever attend Colton Junior High School?

A. Yes, sir, in 1955.

Q. Did you ever attempt to jump out of a window?

HERE ASST. DIST. ATTY. Alvin Oser objected.

Dymond argued this evidence was relative to the case. When a person attempts suicide by jumping out a window, he told the judge, it was relevant.

The judge overruled the objection.

Dymond asked again.

A. Absolutely not.

Q. At any time did you attempt to commit suicide . . . take your own life?

A. ABSOLUTELY NOT.

Q. Yesterday, Mr. Russo, you were shown a photograph of Lee Harvey Oswald and could not identify it as Leon Oswald?

A. That's right. He looked

anyway.

Q. THERE WAS A resentment then to you?

A. Yes.

Q. In spite of it, you didn't know he had been picked up by the DA's office?

A. No, sir.

Q. You were not interested enough to find out?

A. No, sir. Dave Ferrie talked about so many things. When he would talk to me, he would give advice or make statements and he would refer to certain books—certain pages—and advise that I read them.

RUSSO SAID HE had made up the name of the book he mentioned to strengthen that statement. "But you've got to know that man to appreciate it."

Q. When a man does that, you do not question him?

A. There was some talk of the assassination last summer but he talked about many things. He talked about a cure for cancer. You name it, he talked about it. I learned not to argue with him. I knew that he knew everything. I believed him. People say to me about Ferrie "What was he like?" To me he was a walking encyclopedia . . . he knew it all . . . all the answers . . . why should I question him? That was the way he was.

Q. WAS FERRIE inclined to brag?

A. At first I thought so, but afterwards when he cited chapter and verse and supported most of his contentions with what I believed was fact, I didn't.

Q. Did Ferrie state to you his plan to kill Kennedy had succeeded?

A. No, sir.

Q. DID HE EVER mention to you his plan?

A. Never.

Q. Did you ever ask him about it?

A. No, sir.

Q. Why?

A. After being around David for some time, you didn't question him, he gave you all the answers before a question was necessary. You got out of the habit of asking questions.

Q. You were present when Ferrie planned to kill President Kennedy?

Dymond then reiterated the chronological events after that and said to Russo, "and you never mentioned them?"

A. YES, SIR.

Q. On March 1, 1967, in an interview, a reporter asked if you were given any tests by the DA's office. Had you?

A. Yes.

Q. Been hypnotized?

A. Yes. By Dr. Fatter.

Q. Was it the same date of that interview?

A. I'M SURE IT wasn't but maybe Dr. Fatter can tell you.

Suddenly Dymond switched from the line of questioning on the television interview to hypnosis.

He asked: "Had you been hypnotized?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

Q—By whom?

A—Dr. Fatter.

Q—Were you hypnotized on March 1?

A—I don't remember.

Q—Were you hypnotized at the time you appeared on television?

HE SAID HE didn't think so.

Q—Are you telling us you can't remember the date you were first hypnotized in the district attorney's office? Where were you first hypnotized?

A—In Dr. Nicholas Chetta's office.

Q—Was the hypnotism by Dr. Fatter?

A—Yes, sir.

AT THIS POINT, Dymond attempted to establish the date on which Russo came to New Orleans to talk to the district attorney's office.

Russo finally concluded that "the district attorney's office contacted me the 25th and I came down Monday morning, the 27th."

Q—Were you interviewed in the district attorney's office?

A—Yes, sir.

Q—Did you come back the 28th?

A—Yes, sir.

Q—Where did you go?

A—Into the district attorney's office.

Q—Did you go to the coroner's office on the 28th?

A—I don't recall.

HE WAS ASKED the same question again by Dymond and answered, "I may have and I may not have."

Q—Were you hypnotized on the 28th?

A—I don't recall.

Q—Did you come to the district attorney's office on March 1?

A—Yes, sir.

Q—Were you hypnotized on March 1?

A—I don't remember.

At this point, Russo said the dates had become confusing and that something to the effect that he did not want publicity.

DYMOND TURNED to the back of the court, smiled, and said, "You say you don't want publicity?"

A—No, sir.

Q. How many times have you been hypnotized?

A. My recollection is three times.

Q. Were you hypnotized March 14 (the day the preliminary hearing started)?

A. Absolutely not.

Q. Were you hypnotized yesterday?

A. Absolutely not.

Q. Are you under hypnosis right now, then?

A. Absolutely not.

Q. On March 13, were you hypnotized on that date?

A. I don' tthink I was.

Q. You say you don't know?

RUSSO THEN SAID that the hypnosis occurred between February 24 and March 13.

Dymond questioned him sharply about the fact that on the 24th he was still in Baton Rouge and asked him if he had been hypnotized while in Baton Rouge.

When Russo answered, that he had not been hypnotized in Baton Rouge, Dymond asked:

"Russo, if you know you were not hypnotized in Baton Rouge why can you not say that it took place between the 27th and the 13th."

At this point, Assistant District Attorney Alvin Oser objected, contending that Dy-

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Q. Were you shown any of Lee Harvey Oswald?

A. Yes.

Q. I show you a photograph marked D-23 . . .

At this point Judge Bagert called a five-minute recess.

Russo said that on Feb. 27 he was shown 40 to 50 photographs, including those of Oswald, Ferrie and Shaw, which he identified.

He was not told at the time who they were, however.

Q. Are you a regular reader of the newspapers?

A. It runs in cycles. Sometimes I was studying for exams and I couldn't read them.

Q. DID YOU READ them thoroughly?

A. I usually read page one, the editorial page and sports. That was my routine.

Q. Did you ever see Clay Shaw's picture on television or in the papers?

A. Not that I recall.

Q. When was the first time you saw the defendant?

A. The first time I saw him was when Kennedy was here. It was in a large crowd at the Nashville ave. wharf.

Q. You never saw him before that?

A. I don't think so. Possibly once before at Republican campaign headquarters sometime.

Q. DO YOU REMEMBER anyone else in the crowd?

A. I saw Kennedy and Secret Service men. I don't remember anyone else.

Q. You saw Shaw and remembered him six years later?

A. I remember him because I thought he was a Secret Service man. He was looking around at the crowd and the exits. I said to my friend that was with me, "that's got to be a Secret Service man."

Q. Prior to this investigation had you ever heard the name of Clay Shaw?

A. To my recollection I never heard the name of Clay Shaw.

Q. When did you first meet Clay Shaw?

A. I met him at Dave Ferrie's house. He was introduced to me as Clem Bertrand.

Q. DID YOU RECOGNIZE him as the man you had seen on the wharf?

A. Yes. I said "I know you. Weren't you at the Napoleon ave wharf?" I don't remember what he answered.

Q. After the party and the discussion of the assassination began, didn't you feel awfully uneasy when you knew one of the men was a Secret Service man?

A. He seemed to dispel to me that relationship.

Q. What part were you to play in the assassination of the President?

A. I had no part.

Q. You mean you were told you were not to play a part?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. YOU HAD SAID at one time you wanted to see President Kennedy killed. Is that correct?

A. No, sir.

Q. Had you ever evidenced any violent feeling toward President Kennedy?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you contribute anything toward the planning of the assassination?

A. No, sir.

Q. Were you on friendly terms with Lee Harvey Oswald?

A. No, sir. I felt he was antagonistic toward me.

Q. Was there any antagonism between you?

A. I thought so. Dave and he (Oswald) had had some words over me.

Q. Had you met Clay Bertrand before then?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you have the feeling he knew you?

A. No, sir.

A. WERE YOU GIVEN any indication to the effect that you were to tell no one about this?

A. There was hesitation about the whole thing. There were words between Oswald, Ferrie and Bertrand.

Q. What words.

A. Well, there was lots of profanity about Oswald, I think.

Q. Did anyone ever tell you not to say anything about this meeting to anyone?

A. No, sir.

Q. What were Oswald and Bertrand arguing about?

A. Oswald had looked over at me and asked Dave Ferrie "what in the hell was he doing here."

THE WITNESS ADDED that Bertrand had said something at this time.

The witness continued that Ferrie told them (Oswald and Bertrand) to forget about him, adding, "he's all right."

The witness added that Ferrie kept walking up and down in the living room during the discussion.

At this point, Dymond showed the witness a photograph marked D-14 and asked a question.

Q. I show you a photo marked D-14 and ask you if this was the living room of the apartment that you just referred to.

The witness examined the photograph briefly.

A. IT LOOKS LIKE IT. Dymond took the photo back and handing Russo a pen, asked the witness to place an "F" in the photo where Ferrie was at the meeting.

A. That's hard to do. He didn't stay in one place too long. As I recall it, he mostly moved around.

Q. Did Clay Bertrand sit down?

A. Yes.

Q. Put the letter B on the spot where Bertrand sat?

A. He sat on a sofa located in this area (and here the witness pointed to a spot in the photo). The sofa does not show up. This looks like it.

Q. Would you mark the section B where the sofa was to indicate where Bertrand sat?

THE WITNESS complied and Dymond asked:

Q. What about Oswald . . . did he walk around, too?

A. Yes, he was walking around, talking to some of the Spanish boys.

Q. I'm speaking now of

when the party boiled down to just four men. In reference to these four men, where was Oswald?

The witness studied the photograph for a while and said that Oswald was seated near a piano chair.

Q. Where were you? Put an R in the spot where you were.

A. I was here. (And he marked an R where he sat.)

JUDGE O'HARA SAID the judges were unable to see the photo and where the witness was putting the marks.

The witness showed the photo to the judges, and Bagert said they would study it later.

Q. Is this photo a faithful reproduction of the room as you saw it?

A. No, sir.

Q. What's inaccurate about it?

The witness studied the photo again and said:

A. For one thing there were more chairs, more paper on the floor, it was more cluttered up.

DYMOND now introduced photos marked E-2, 7, 10, 11 and 12. In submitting this evidence he said they were made by private photographer Robert Sneed on March 11.

Oser then introduced into evidence photos marked S-4, 5, 6, and 7 which he said were taken of Ferrie's apartment on Feb. 22. He told the court they were taken by Peter Schuster of the Orleans Parish Coroner's Office.

Dymond showed the witness a photo supposedly of the hallway of Ferrie's apartment and asked:

Q. Do you recognize it?

A. From this angle, I'm not sure. I don't want to say yes and I don't want to say no.

HE OFERED ANOTHER photograph saying:

Q. I show you a photo marked D-9 purported to be the kitchen and ask you if you recognize it.

A. No, sir, I was never in the kitchen.

Dymond reminded the judge about recessing court and asked if this would be the time for it. Judge Bagert said the court would recess for lunch.