Russo Tells of Doubt 3 Meant to Kill JFK

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NEW ORLEANS, March 16 (AP)—Perry R. Russo, star witness in the Kennedy assassination conspiracy hearing, testified today that he did not think Lee Harvey Oswald, Clay Shaw and David W. Ferrie intended to participate in an assassination attempt.

Under cross-examination about details of the conspiracy talk that Russo says he heard in Ferrie's apartment, the witness was asked:

"You weren't part of it?"

A. "No, sir.

Q. Was it understood that these three men would actively participate in the assassination?

A. I didn't get that impression, no.

Q. Was Dallas mentioned?

A. No.

"That's all," Attorney F. Irvin Dymond said and sat down.

At that point, Russo, who admitted being hypnotized recently in the courthouse, was excused from further cross-examination.

He testified earlier that he never spoke to the Warren Commission because "I was a voice in the wilderness, I wasn't going to fight with the Government."

Russo's testimony was brought out by attorneys for Shaw, who has been charged by District Attorney Jim Garrison with conspiring to kill President Kennedy.

The other two alleged conspirators, Oswald and Ferrie, are dead.

Russo, on the stand for the

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third straight day in a hearing to decide whether Shaw should go to trial, told a three-judge Criminal District Court panel that "there were no specific instructions that I can recall" during the hypnosis sessions. He said they took place between Feb. 24 and March 13 in the office of the Orleans Parish (county) Coroner, and were handled by Dr. Esmond Fatter.

Probe at Explanation

Shaw's attorney's probed hard at Russo's explanation of why he did not speak to authorities immediately after the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination. They hope to prove that Garrison does not have sufficient evidence to take Shaw to trial.

Russo, a 25-year-old insurance salesman from Baton Rouge, testified he was present in Ferrie's apartment in mid-September, 1963, and heard Oswald, Shaw and Ferrie plotting to kill Mr. Kennedy.

"Attorney Dymond Said"

"You're an intelligent man, Mr. Russo, You knew a long time ago that the FBI and the Warren Commission were investigating and you knew what they had said in their findings. You knew how to get to the Secret Service, the FBI and the Warren Commisison to tell them what you knew."

A. I don't know about the Warren Commission. The FBI said they arrested Oswald and that he was the man. I was 23 then, a voice in the wilderness. I wasn't going to fight with the Government.

Russo said he decided to come forth with his information after Ferrie died Feb. 22 because "it's a little closer to home now."

Statement Brings Hush

At one point, Russo said he once saw Oswald clean-shaven but paid little attention to him. This statement brought a hush over the crowded courtroom, and brought the defense up alertly.

"Will you tell me why, after seeing him cleanly shaven, you had to have whiskers put on his photograph before you could recognize him?" roared Dymond.

Russo shrugged and said the occasion was "the day that Oswald left New Orleans for Houston" and they were together only a few minutes and he mainly noticed that Oswald was not dirty.

Russo had testified previously that not until Garrison's men had touched up a photograph of Oswald by adding a five-day beard and mussing the hair did he recognize him as the man he knew as Ferrie's roommate.

"I considered him a vagabond," Russo said of Oswald. "Ferrie introduced him to me as his roommate."

Under Dymond's often-sarcastic questioning about why he had not come forward after seeing Oswald's pictures after the assassination, Russo said:

"I saw pictures of Oswald in the sun holding a gun, one with him delivering pamphlets, a picture of him getting shot . . .

'Face Stayed in My Mind'

"That face stayed in my mind, but the FBI said they had got the man who shot President Kennedy. I read the Warren Commission was to investigate . . . I'm not going to argue with the FBI. But I told several of my friends, 'I might know that man.'"

Q. Are you referring to Lee Harvey Oswald and that you may have known him as Leon Oswald?

A. Leon Oswald had a different face to me.

Q. You made the dogmatic statement in the March 1 interview in New Orleans that you had never seen that man.

A. There were several reasons. I knew the DA was investigating at this time and I didn't want to say to someone who was not legal, 'That was the man.' I wanted to get off the hook. I just said, 'I don't know that man.'

In response to Dymond's probing, Russo denied being under hypnosis while testifying. Dymond asked what instructions Dr. Fatter had given him.

A. He talked. There were no specific instructions that I can recall. He talked. It's not an instruction thing . . . He told me relaxing things."

The defense recalled Russo's testimony that he had noticed Shaw, whom he said he knew later as Clem Bertrand, at a wharf dedication in New Orleans in May, 1962, at which President Kennedy spoke. Russo said he thought Shaw was a Secret Service man.