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The Clay Shaw 'Nightmare': JFK Plot Suspect Looks Back

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New Orleans—After New Orleans civic leader Clay L. Shaw was arrested March 1 on a charge of conspiring to assassinate President John F. Kennedy, he told a friend his life had been ruined and he felt he was living a nightmare.

For three months he's been trying to awake from the nightmare, taking heart each time a newspaper, magazine or television report punctures another hole in Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigation of the assassination.

But not until Garrison's top aide, William Gurvich, resigned Monday and called on the District Attorney to drop the conspiracy charge did Shaw show any real exuberance.

One of his closest friends, Mrs. Howard F. Bogner, yesterday quoted him as saying:

"God, it's a gift from heaven. I had no idea this would happen."

On the advice of his attorneys, Shaw, 54-year-old former director of the New Orleans International Trade Mart, continued to refuse to comment on the case.

Mrs. Bogner, well known businesswoman, told how Shaw kept to himself at his French Quarter residence immediately after the arrest, reluctant to be seen in public, but then began to see old friends.

"All of his friends who know him well have stuck by him," she said. "They know he is innocent."

Shaw, a tall, handsome and silver-haired former Army Major who won combat decorations in World War II, has maintained an outward appearance of calm since his arrest. Mrs. Bogner says he is "a very self-contained, self-disciplined uerson."

"But he told me it was like living a inghtmare," she said, "like the end of the world."

Mrs. Bogner quoted Shaw as saying after his arrest, "my life is completely ruined. Here at my age when I thought I had accumulated enough to retire and write, I'm going to pay out everything to attorneys.

Shaw, described by friends as a political Liberal and an admirer of President Kenendy, went to the Mississippi Gulf Coast for a Roman Catholic retreat after being released on a bond following his arrest. He later told friends he was encouraged by a Jesuit priest who said:

"You say you are innocent so don't worry. Nobody can ruin your life except yourself. Justice will be done."

When Shaw returned from the retreat Mrs. Bogner invited him to her house for dinner, as she had in the past. This put her in the unusual position of explaining to others she invited that one of the guests would be a man accused of conspiring to murder the president.

"I always told them he was coming," she said, "and they could come or not. I did it because I did not want him embarrassed. All of the guests always came."

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