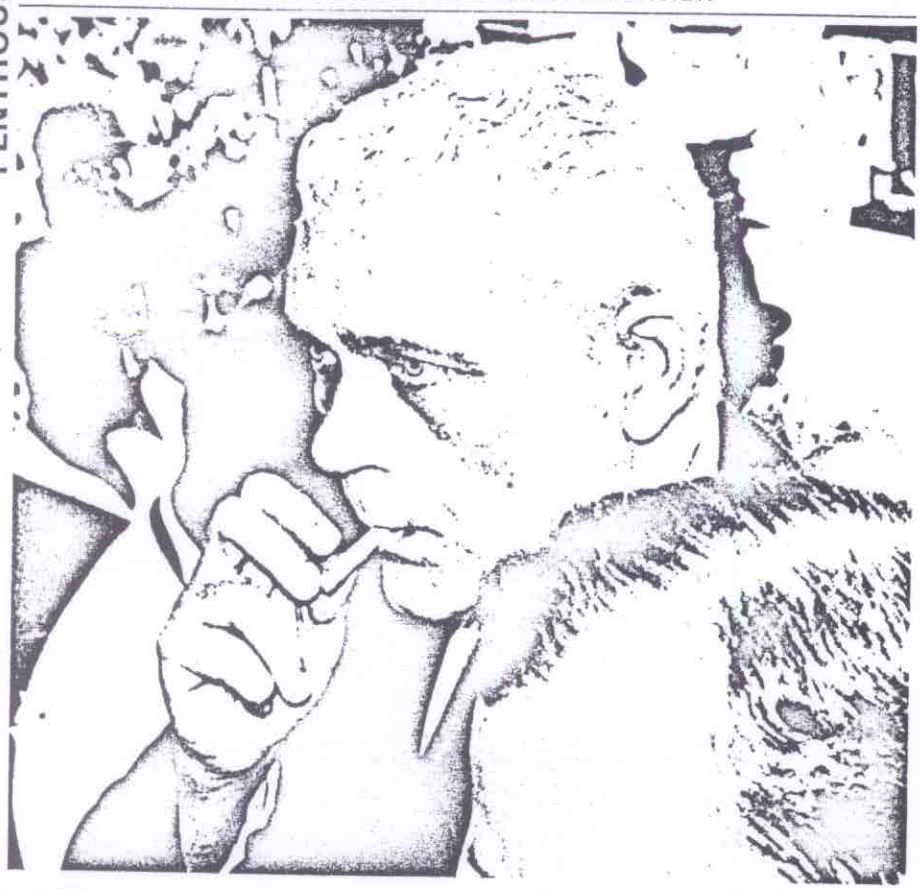
PENTHOUSE

AN EXCLUSIVE PENTHOUSE INTERVIEW



CLAY SHAW

"If a jury could convict me on such shoddy evidence as Garrison presented, I would gladly have gone to jail—it would be the safest place in a world gone mad"

Clay Shaw, a deep-chested soft-spoken bachelor of 57, achieved instant notoriety on March 1 1967. He was charged by District Attorney Jim Garrison with having conspired with Lee Harvey Oswald and an eccentric one-time airline pilot, private eye and fake psychologist, David Ferrie, to assassinate President John F. Kennedy. Until then Shaw was unknown on the world stage, and barely known beyond his home city of New Orleans, where he lives alone in a handsomely furnished little French Quarter house on Dauphine Street, and has a broad circle of friends, including playwright Tennessee Williams. But Garrison's sensational charge brought hundreds of American and foreign newsmen racing to the city to satisfy their readers' curiosity about the man at the centre of Garrison's "conspiracy" revelation. "My staff and I," Garrison told them, in one of a series of public pronouncements that made headlines around the world, "solved the Kennedy assassination weeks ago. I wouldn't say this if we didn't have the evidence beyond the shadow of a doubt. We know the key individuals, the cities involved, and how it was done." Denouncing the Warren Report as a fraud and a whitewash, Garrison promised further arrests, and privately assured newsmen that "this case isn't even close. If you want to lose money, bet against me."

Garrison's reckless claims found a ready audience. A glut of books critical of the Warren Report had eroded confidence in the commission's procedures and the validity of its findings—particularly its key conclusion that Oswald was a lone assassin. Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* had been a best-seller for months and according to a national poll, two-thirds of the US population had come to doubt that Oswald had operated alone.

Two weeks after Shaw's arrest, a special three-judge panel ruled in a preliminary hearing that there was enough evidence to hold Clay Shaw for trial. Garrison produced only two witnesses: an admitted drug addict, Vernon Bundy, and a young insurance salesman-trainee, Perry Raymond Russo. Russo's was the only testimony directly supporting the charge against Shaw. Russo claimed to have dropped in at a party in Ferrie's apartment in September 1963. After the other guests left and while Russo waited around for a ride home—he swore on the stand—Shaw, Oswald, and Ferrie had openly discussed plans to assassinate the President.

It was only nine weeks later that Kennedy was assassinated and Oswald was charged with the crime, yet Russo did not come forward with this story for four years, after David Ferrie had died. Shaw immediately denied not only the conspiracy charge but that he had ever known or even met either Ferrie or Oswald.

Garrison declared that Shaw had engaged in the conspiracy under the alias of "Clay Bertrand"—a name that showed up briefly in the Warren Report. According to a New Orleans attorney called Dean Andrews, a man using the name had telephoned him the day after Kennedy was killed and asked Andrews to go to Dallas to represent Oswald. After a series of wildly contradictory descriptions of "Bertrand," Andrews was convicted of perjury and ultimately confessed on the stand at Shaw's trial that "Bertrand" was a figment of his imagination and that he had concocted the whole story "to get on the gravy train of publicity."

After the initial headlines generated by Shaw's arrest subsided, a number of outside newsmen began digging into the Garrison investigation. They uncovered some peculiar circumstances. The *Saturday Evening Post* disclosed, in an article by James Phelan, that Russo had said nothing whatever about Shaw's involvement in the "Kennedy conspiracy" when he first came forward as a witness, but had developed his tale of the conspiracy when asked suggestive questions under hypnosis conducted under the supervision of Garrison's office. The *New York Times* and *Newsweek* magazine's Hugh Aynesworth followed with accounts of Garrison's staff pressuring and attempting to induce witnesses to tell incriminating stories. Several of Garrison's staff defected and charged that the "Kennedy conspiracy" existed mainly in his imagination.

In the face of these developments, Garrison began to assert that there was a vast federal conspiracy to conceal the

truth about the Dallas tragedy. He declared without qualification that Lyndon Johnson knew that the Warren Report was false and that the assassination was a CIA plot aimed at removing Kennedy because he wanted to ease the cold war with Russia and end the war in Vietnam.

In the two-year-long hullabaloo, Clay Shaw became virtually the forgotten man. He just worked quietly with his four attorneys, Irving Dymond, Edward and William Wegmann, and Sal Panzeca, trying to build his defense. "It is an extraordinarily difficult job to prove a negative," he said later. "How do you establish that you *didn't* attend a party held years ago, and that you *didn't* know two men who now are dead and can't confirm your story?"

Late this January his case finally went to trial before a New Orleans courtroom packed with newsmen. The case had aroused such intense passions in New Orleans that it was necessary to examine 1170 veniremen to obtain 12 jurors and two alternates who said they could weigh the evidence objectively. The trial lasted 35 days. With Mark Lane sitting at the prosecutors' side and feeding them suggestions, it devolved mainly into a trial of the Warren Report. Despite Garrison's flamboyant boasts of "secret witnesses" and "disclosures that will rock the nation," he produced no evidence of CIA involvement and never even mentioned that agency. His case against Shaw was largely a rerun of the preliminary hearing, resting almost wholly on the testimony of Perry Russo. After a dramatic summation in which Garrison appealed to the jurors to save the US from a federal plot that he had not established, the jurors filed out, took one ballot, and unanimously acquitted Clay Shaw.

What seemed a fitting conclusion to one of the most bizarre chapters in US jurisprudence proved to be not a conclusion at all. Three days later, at his own instigation and over his own signature, Jim Garrison charged Shaw with perjury for having denied on the witness stand that he had known Oswald or David Ferrie. Shortly afterwards Garrison announced that he had scrapped his plans to retire to private law practice and would run for a third term as District Attorney in November.

Clay Shaw sustained this new legal blow with at least outward equanimity. He abandoned his plans to take a "recuperative vacation" with friends in North Carolina and is once more blocking out a legal defense with his attorneys. In this exclusive *Penthouse* Interview, conducted in New Orleans by James Phelan, the central figure in this far-out case says he "is beginning to feel like a character in a Kafka novel," and tells how it feels to be pursued by a District Attorney who just won't quit.

Penthouse: Being accused of plotting to kill an American President is a unique predicament. Could you reconstruct your feelings when you first heard of the charge against you?

Shaw: My reaction was shock, disbelief, incredulity. I was inclined to tell Garrison's men, "Gentlemen, this is a very bad joke," but it was obvious that they were taking themselves seriously. Actually, I had been asked to come out to the DA's office several months before I was charged. Back on December 23 1966, I was questioned by one of the assistant DAs and finally by Garrison himself. They questioned me largely about "Clay Bertrand"—whom I said I didn't know—and about the Cuban consulate, which had been housed in the International Trade Mart, of which I was managing director, and about the fact that Lee Harvey Oswald had chosen to distribute leaflets in front of the Trade Mart on that pro-Castro Cuban thing he was involved in. I gave them all the information I had and thought no more about it. I had read that a national magazine was reinstituting an investigation into the Kennedy assassination and I thought that Mr. Garrison was working with or for the magazine. I assumed that he was questioning me in search of information in this context and I paid no serious attention to the matter.

Penthouse: You had no idea then that you were under consideration as a suspect?

Shaw: None whatsoever. Then on March 1 1967, I received a phone call from a friend that he had just heard on the radio that a subpoena had been issued for me. I thought that was peculiar—if Garrison wanted any further information from me he didn't have to subpoena me. So I called the DA's office and asked "Do you people want to talk to me?" A Mr. Ivon said they did and I told him I was perfectly willing and when should I come in. He said about 1 pm and I told him I'd be there.

Penthouse: By this time, had you received any hint or indication that Garrison was after you?

Shaw: Only an indirect hint. On the Sunday before I was arrested, Walter Sheridan who was covering the Garrison investigation for NBC—whom I didn't know—called me up and said he wanted to see me. He came down and told me there was a rumor in town that I was "Clay Bertrand." I told him this was silly and ridiculous, that I had never been "Clay Bertrand" and that if there was anyone in New Orleans who would have difficulty using an alias it would be me. And again, I dismissed this from my mind. Innocence, I must say, can be a frightening thing.

So I went out to the DA's office with a perfectly clear conscience. I didn't take a lawyer with me. When I got there they kept me waiting for about two hours, which rather annoyed me. To my mind, I was in the position of a good citizen making himself available to give information to these people, which might or might not be useful. Finally they began to question me about David Ferrie and Louisiana Parkway—where I later learned he had an apartment. I told them I didn't know Ferrie and had never been to his place. Then suddenly they said: "What would you say if we said we had three witnesses proving that you have been there?" I told them that their witnesses were either mistaken or they were lying. At this point it was suggested that I take a lie-detector test. I said: "Certainly not. Why on earth should I take a lie-detector test?"

They told me: "If you don't take a lie-detector test, we're going to charge you with conspiring to kill the President of the United States. To put it mildly, I was stunned. I said, "Well, in *that* case, I certainly do want a lawyer, and I want one right now." They locked me in the interrogation room, and I tried to call my long-time lawyer, Ed Wegmann, who was out of town. I then tried his brother, William Wegmann, who was not available. I finally got one of their associates, Sal Panzeca, who came rushing to the rescue.

Penthouse: Why do you say that the idea of your using the alias of "Clay Bertrand"—as Garrison charged—was ridiculous? Using a cover name is not unheard of. In fact, on some touchy assignments, journalists occasionally use a cover name.

Shaw: I doubt that you would try to use one in your home town where you were well known. For about 17 or 18 years I had been managing director of the International Trade Mart here and in that capacity I was in the public eye a great deal. I was on television quite often and my picture had been in the local papers. I attended many civic affairs, luncheons, meetings. In addition, I'm a highly recognizable fellow. I'm rather outsized—6 ft 4 inches tall—and I have a shock of prematurely grey hair that is almost white. In a town of this size, where I had made perhaps 500 speeches and knew literally thousands of people, the idea that I would go around here trying to use an alias is utterly fantastic. Then at my trial, of course, the man who told the story about "Clay Bertrand"—a local lawyer named Dean Andrews—admitted that he had made up the whole story in an attempt to get in on the Oswald publicity. Andrews finally confessed that Clay Bertrand didn't exist. As someone put it after Andrews testified, "Dean Andrews assassinated Clay Bertrand." And if Clay Bertrand existed only in Andrews' mind, how could I have impersonated him?

This was only one of the inconsistencies that ran through Garrison's case. He charged, for example, that I went out to San Francisco on the day of the Kennedy assassination to establish an alibi for myself. But if I had needed an alibi, I could have stayed right here at my desk in the Trade Mart in New Orleans, where everyone knew me. I wouldn't have had to go to a distant, strange city where I was largely unknown.

Penthouse: In the March 1 interrogation that resulted in your arrest, were you questioned by Garrison?

Shaw: No, he wasn't present. As a matter of fact, I have not had one word of conversation with Garrison from that first casual questioning in December 1966 to the present time. My only communication has been his new charge that I committed perjury.

Penthouse: Panzeca says that he felt as if he had been hit by a two-by-four when he found that he was suddenly representing a client charged with plotting to kill the President.

Shaw: He was plainly astonished, as I guess any lawyer would be.

Penthouse: When Garrison's men told you they had three witnesses who would testify that you knew David Ferrie, did they tell you who these witnesses were?

Shaw: They did not. And if they had three at that time, they did not produce them at my preliminary hearing. They produced only one, Perry Raymond Russo. Indeed, every additional witness that they produced at my trial this year had come forward, or been sought out, or acquired after the date of my arrest.

Penthouse: When was the first time you saw Perry Russo, to your knowledge?

Shaw: The day before my arrest. A friend had dropped in at my house and we were having drinks when the doorbell rang. I went to the door, and a guy I now know to be Perry Russo gave me a false business card with a false name and said he was conducting an insurance survey. I told him I was a very poor prospect. He asked if he could call me later. This visit was for the purpose of Russo's "identifying" me. There was a fellow with him who, I learnt later, was from the DA's office.

I would like to point out the rather idiotic logic behind this incident. You will recall that Russo testified under oath that he attended a party at David Ferrie's apartment in 1963 where he claimed to have heard me, Ferrie and Lee Oswald plot to kill John F. Kennedy. Now if Russo's story were true and I had sat in a room with him and two other people and plotted to kill the President, I think I might have recognized him when he came to my door, even if he gave me a false name. I don't know why Garrison thought that Russo would recognize me—assuming his story was true—but that I wouldn't recognize him. But this is just another of a long series of logical inconsistencies that ran through Garrison's case.

Penthouse: Have you ever understood what motive Mr. Garrison ascribed to you for wanting to kill the President?

Shaw: He never ascribed any motive so far as I know. Certainly none was brought forward at my trial. The only motive I've ever heard attributed to me was his statement to a journalist, shortly after my arrest, that the assassination was a "thrill killing" like the Loeb-Leopold murder of Bobby Franks. But Garrison quickly abandoned this idea, and in his subsequent public statements he came up with a bewildering series of "principals" and "motives". First it was the anti-Castro Cubans who were supposedly angry at Kennedy over the Bay of Pigs fiasco. But nothing about the Cubans was brought out at my trial. Then it was the CIA, or certain elements of the CIA, and the FBI. Then it was oil-rich Texas millionaires, and after that the Minutemen. Over the two years between my arrest and my trial, Garrison must have produced eight or ten separate groups of "masterminds," sometimes combining them or switching from one to another. He finally wound up with the major villain being the "military-defense industry complex." According to Garrison, their motive was a desire to remove Kennedy because of his intention of ending the cold war. But other than his quickly abandoned notion that I was a "thrill-killer," I never understood what role he attributed to me.

> "I must admit that I voted for Garrison when he first ran for District Attorney"

Penthouse: Did you actually know President Kennedy?

Shaw: I met him once, and was greatly impressed by him. When Chep Morrison was mayor of New Orleans, he and I worked closely in the building of the International Trade Mart and the furthering of New Orleans as an international trade center. When Morrison became our ambassador to the Organization of American States he asked me to come to Washington when he was sworn into office. There were 20 or 30 of us there, and he was sworn in by President Kennedy and I had the opportunity to meet him.

What made Garrison's charge so outrageous to me was that I was a great admirer of Kennedy. I thought he had given the nation a new turn after the rather drab Eisenhower years, and that he was in the tradition of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt—in the stream of liberal Presidents. I felt he was vitally concerned about social issues, which concerned me also. I thought he had youth, imagination, style, and élan. All in all, I considered him a splendid President.

Penthouse: Before your arrest, had you known Jim Garrison?

Shaw: I had met him on occasion. In a city the size of New Orleans—and with the jobs we both had—I would encounter him from time to time at civic affairs, luncheons, meetings. We were on a first name basis—it was "Hi, Jim," and "Hello Clay," but I had never known him to the extent of sitting down and having a drink with him or a meal, and I'd never been in his home nor had he been in mine. In all honesty, I must admit that I voted for him when he first ran for District Attorney.

Penthouse: What kind of reaction did you encounter in New Orleans after you were publicly charged with plotting the Kennedy assassination?

Shaw: Well, there was a rallying around by my good friends, which was enormously helpful. And I encountered no animosity whatsoever from people here in New Orleans. In fact, when I went out, perfect strangers came up to me and patted me on the back and said, "Don't worry—you're going to come out all right." I never met any evidence of hostility. Immediately after the accusation, I received three or four hundred letters and of these only three were hostile. It was quite apparent from the tone of these three letters that they were written by disturbed people.

Actually, the ordeal brought me some new friends. One of the most heart-warming experiences involved a New Orleans cab-driver. Shortly after the preliminary hearing back in 1967, I called a cab to take me to my lawyer's office. The driver was a typical cabbie—if you called Central Casting he'd be the kind they'd send you. When I got in his cab he said, "Haven't I seen you somewhere before? Your face is familiar." I told him, "You've probably seen me on TV. I'm Clay Shaw." "Oh, *you're* Mr. Shaw," he said, and flipped down the flag on his taxi-meter. "There's no charge," he said. "Come on, you have to make a living," I told him. "Besides, maybe I did all these things I've been accused of." "Naw" he said, "Everybody knows that s.o.b. Garrison. We know what's goin' on." He took me to the lawyer's and asked when I would be going home. I said in about 40 minutes. "I'll be waitin' over at that cab stand," he told me. "I've got my Daily Racin' Form." When he took me home, he still wouldn't take any money. "Naw," he said, "you've got a bum rap to fight and I want to help. Whenever you need a cab, give me a ring." I figured he really *wanted* to do something for me, and I've used Marty ever since. He's a wonderful human being, and by now his family is just like a part of my own. So something good came out of all this.

Penthouse: When you finally came to trial, were you apprehensive about the outcome?

Shaw: Well, I made up my mind very early that my only defense was the truth. I decided to take the stand in my own defense and allow myself to be cross-questioned. I expected that there would be witnesses who would perjure themselves—as there were—and I hoped that the jury would get to the heart of the matter, as this jury did, and would see the flimsiness of the case that had been constructed against me. But of course you never can really know what a jury will do, and it was a very trying experience. As the case drew to a close, I told a number of friends and newsmen that if the jury could convict me on such shoddy evidence as Garrison presented I would go gladly to jail because that would be the safest place to be in a world gone mad.

Penthouse: How would you account for the fact that a total of perhaps eight witnesses positively identified you either as Clay Betrand or as an associate of David Ferrie?

Shaw: Of these, there were about five from Clinton, Louisiana, who claimed to have seen me up there in 1963 in a car with Ferrie. I think these people actually saw someone who must have resembled me, though I have never been in Clinton in my life. Of course, as people who have studied this case know, there was a private investigator—now dead—named Guy Banister who was involved with Ferrie. Banister did resemble me. So far as the Clinton people are concerned, I must conclude that if they did see someone up there it may well have been Banister, and their testimony was a case of mistaken identification. Even so, it did seem odd to me that they would remember in detail an encounter with a stranger that happened five or six years earlier. In his closing argument to the jury, my attorney Irving Dymond quotes Justice Frankfurter on the lack of reliability of eyewitness identification. Justice Frankfurter

said that such identification was the greatest single cause of error in the judicial process. I think that with the Clinton witnesses it was perhaps an honest case of mistaken identity. As to the other few witnesses, I have my own ideas about them, but I don't care to express them for publication.

Penthouse: In his investigation of the assassination, Garrison has been financed in part by a group of New Orleans businessmen who call themselves Truth and Consequences. What is your reaction to their activity in this case?

Shaw: There are many appalling things about this affair but one of the most appalling is that a group of private citizens can contribute money to a District Attorney to investigate this, that, or the other thing. You can see the doors to abuse that this opens. My God, any group of people can go to the DA and say: "We want you to investigate so-and-so and here's the dough." The District Attorney is paid a salary and given a budget and it's his duty to investigate crimes that come under his jurisdiction. There should not be one penny accepted by him under any circumstances whatever to do any particular thing for any group. I think this is fundamental.

Penthouse: Do you know whether Truth and Consequences is still functioning since you have been acquitted?

Shaw: I don't know. I haven't seen any of the principals in the organization. Before the trial we subpoenaed their records, but Judge Haggerty impounded them and says now that they will not be released because they are not pertinent. So we don't even know how much money they contributed privately to the District Attorney, but even a dollar would have been too much.

Penthouse: You have had four lawyers, including one of the most able New Orleans trial lawyers, Irving Dymond, to represent you. Wasn't this rather costly?

Shaw: Extremely costly. In addition to legal fees, there was the matter of hiring investigators to check on some of the peculiar witnesses that popped up in the case. Before Garrison accused me, I was rather comfortably fixed. Now I'm broke. It is a somewhat cold comfort, of course, that I was financially able to obtain competent defense. Throughout these two years, the thought was rarely absent from my mind that had I not been able to do the costly things involved in properly defending oneself, what would have happened to me? And of course there is the corollary to this thought—how many men are in jail now, falsely charged, simply because they lacked the money to defend themselves adequately.

Penthouse: Some of your critics have raised the point that you seemed to be trying to avoid trial. Although you had a speedy preliminary hearing, it took almost two years for your case actually to come to trial.

Shaw: I think the record should be made clear on that point. After all the pleadings had been taken care of—and this took months—sometime in the fall of 1967 we applied for a change of venue. Because of the vast torrents of publicity that poured out of the DA's office and were religiously printed by the local papers, it seemed impossible to get a fair trial in New Orleans. As an alternative to a change of venue, we asked that the trial be delayed for a reasonable period. The District Attorney agreed to a six-month-continuance. In the spring of 1968, we again applied for a change of venue and there was a lengthy hearing on this. It was denied. My lawyers then decided that there was no reason to go to trial on such fraudulent and contrived evidence, and they decided to ask a federal court to enjoin Garrison against any further prosecution. It was their intention to prove in the federal court the false nature of Garrison's case. The three-judge federal court decided against our request for an injunction, but they did enjoin Garrison against further prosecution pending an appeal. It took the US Supreme Court until December of 1968 to rule that they would not hear the appeal. Garrison then set the case for January, 1969. The delays were for proper legal purposes, not for avoiding trial.

> "My God, any group of people can go the the DA and say 'We want you to investigate so-and-so, and here's the dough.' That is one of the most appalling things about this affair"

When I became involved in this matter, I decided that since I knew nothing about the law I would be guided by my attorneys. The decisions to seek a change of venue and to appeal to the federal courts were all made by my legal counsel and I simply went along with their decisions.

I think it should be pointed out that Garrison repeatedly charged that there was a vast federal conspiracy to keep my case from coming to trial and thereby—in his words—to frustrate him from "bringing out the truth for the American people." But in fact, the Warren court declined to intervene when the matter came before it.

Penthouse: There is a tremendous public curiosity about Jim Garrison's motives in this whole affair. If his case was as flimsy as the jury apparently decided it was, what do you think drove him to push it to trial?

Shaw: I certainly refuse to speculate about what goes on in Garrison's mind. This is a question that only he can answer. The minds of most humans are a labyrinth and Garrison's mind is more labyrinthine than most. Possibly he thought that all this would rebound to his credit somehow—maybe politically—but I'm not going to try to figure out what made him do it.

Penthouse: What are your personal feelings about Garrison now?

Shaw: At the risk of sounding like an early Christian martyr, early on I recognised that I could not bear the burden of hating as much as the circumstances seemed to justify. Hate is a very corrosive emotion and it doesn't hurt the guy you hate. It hurts you. If I had allowed myself for two years to hate—really to hate—the people who were oppressing me, I don't think I would have survived. What it comes down to is that hate was a psychological luxury I couldn't afford.

Penthouse: Are you saying that you have no animosity toward him, or that you have just blocked it out of your mind?

Shaw: I *will* say that he is not one of my favorite public officials. But a feeling of personal hatred and vindictiveness? That I don't have.

Penthouse: Have you ever wanted to sit down and talk to him?

Shaw: Well, I think it would be an extremely interesting conversation.

Penthouse: Didn't you at one point before your trial agree to sit down and talk to your chief accuser, Perry Russo, when he expressed a desire to do so?

Shaw: Yes, I was delighted at the opportunity but it seems that he changed his mind after I agreed to his request.

Penthouse: Are you a native of Louisiana?

Shaw: Yes, I was born in a small town north of here. I went to New York in my early twenties and lived there until the war. I was in public relations and advertising. I went into the army in 1941, and became deputy chief of staff to General Charles Thrasher, who commanded Northern France, Belgium and Luxembourg as the supply base for the three armies fanning out across Europe after the invasion of the continent. It was a very interesting job to have everything at the right point at the right time for a million men moving forward and I learnt some things about organization from it. When I was discharged, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. There was a group of men here in New Orleans who had an idea of reconstructing an old building as an international trade center, and they invited me to come in and work on the project. I spent 18 years altogether—first reconstructing the old building and then planning and financing a new $15,000,000 structure—the present International Trade Mart. The Trade Mart was designed to increase trade through the port of New Orleans, and if I do say so myself, we did a pretty good job. There has been an increase in trade here year after year. When I was 52—in 1965—I decided that I had achieved what I set out to do. The new building was a reality and I decided I wanted to travel and to write. I had accumulated a little money. It was not that I had so much money, but I am a man of rather few wants and what I wanted most was freedom. I wanted to travel before I had to be carried up the gangplank on a steamer. I thought then that my whole life was planned, and I did get to make a trip to Spain and to England. Then I came back here, and suddenly the world fell in on me on March 1 1967.

Penthouse: In his public utterances, Garrison repeatedly declared that the CIA had a major role in the Kennedy assassination. In this connection, the Rome newspaper *Paesa Sara* published a long story alleging that you were connected with an "international commercial organization" named *Centro Mondiale Com-*

merciale, which *Paesa Sara* termed "a CIA front." What is your explanation?

Shaw: Back in 1959 or 1960, a young Italian came to see me in New Orleans and told me about a world trade center that was being planned in Rome. The idea was to have one place where buyers coming into the Common Market area would find all the Common Market countries represented in one center. He wanted my advice and asked me to serve on the board of directors. I had no objection if it was a legitimate project. I investigated it and found that the head of it was a man named Imre Nagy, who had been the last non-communist premier of Hungary. Some of the other people involved were Italian senators, journalists, lawyers, and other responsible people. It was agreed that we would have an exhibit at their center, and they would have one at the mart here in New Orleans, and we would exchange information and so on. I didn't mind being on their board, although there was no money involved, but I would have to go to Rome annually for the board meetings and my way would be paid, so why not? Then they ran into difficulties, but they finally got the center opened. It turned out to be either badly planned or badly organized and it closed very shortly, and that was the last I ever heard of it. I never heard that it was a CIA operation and I don't know that it was. I'll say this—it was a highly unsuccessful operation which is not customary with the CIA. Other than what I've told you, I know nothing more about the *Centro Mondiale Commerciale.* I have never had any connection with the CIA.

Penthouse: You say that defending yourself against Garrison's charge has wrecked you financially. Do you feel that you should be compensated for this?

Shaw: I certainly do. I don't know what responsibility the state has for the erratic actions of one of its officers. My lawyers are studying this now with a view to recouping my losses. I don't know the legal obligations, but I think as a matter of equity *somebody* ought to have to reimburse me. Good Lord, a District Attorney can wreck anyone financially on his mere whim by filing serious charges against him.

Penthouse: Has there been any move by any state legislator to put in a bill of relief in your behalf?

Shaw: Not so far.

Penthouse: Do you plan to sue any of the people involved in the charges against you?

Shaw: My lawyers are studying this now, and I'll be guided by them. My personal inclination is to sue everybody in sight. If they find a cause for action, you better believe that I'll be willing and eager to go to court. I'd like to put a number of people in the dock where *they'll* have to answer the questions.

Penthouse: What have you been doing with yourself since your acquittal?

Shaw: I'm busily engaged in restoring some property here in the French Quarter. This is something I've been doing for some years—I've restored a total of about 20 buildings in the Quarter. This has kept me busy with carpenters, painters, paper-hangers, gardeners, plumbers. And I'm also working on a book about the Clay Shaw case. I'd done some play-writing in the past, and trying my hand at a book keeps me occupied in my spare time. In fact, I was engaged in translating a play from the Spanish when Garrison got this notion that I was involved in the Kennedy assassination. When they raided my home and carted off a lot of my possessions, they took the manuscript for this Spanish play. I don't know what they thought that had to do with the tragedy in Dealey Plaza, but as I've said, Mr. Garrison has a very labyrinthine mind. Though it is more than a month since I was acquitted, Mr. Garrison has not yet returned my manuscript.

> "I wouldn't say that what happened to me couldn't happen elsewhere, because it could. But New Orleans is a sort of fantasy-land—a unique city, I think, preoccupied by Mardi Gras"

Penthouse: What do you think will happen to Garrison as a result of having lost his case against you?

Shaw: There are elections coming up in November and Garrison has announced that he will run for DA again. There already is one opponent in the field against him and I hear another candidate will announce shortly. After that, what happens will be up to the people of New Orleans. If they decide that they want Jim Garrison to continue in office, well—so be it. I think it was Lord Acton who once said the people get the government that they deserve. Personally, I think that some move should be made to curb the tremendous powers of the District Attorney by revising our laws, but so far nothing has been done.

Penthouse: A number of the members of the national press who covered the Garrison investigation and your trial commented on the apparent apathy of New Orleans toward what happened to you. Now that you have been cleared, there seems to be a tendency merely to revert to business as usual. Do you think New Orleans is unique in its response?

Shaw: I wouldn't say that what happened to me couldn't happen elsewhere, because it could. But I think New Orleans is a unique city in some respects. For one thing, it is a sort of fantasy-land. This stems from its preoccupation with Mardi Gras. This not only pervades the weeks before the carnival but occupies everyone's attention for many months of the year. People devote a tremendous amount of time and attention to working out the costumes they will wear as dukes and kings, and sometimes I think they forget that they are not really dukes and kings. So there is an abiding air of fantasy here and I think it is easier for people here to accept the kind of fantastic plot that Jim Garrison spun. Any rational analysis of the various contradictory statements that he made and the wild variety of "solutions" he came up with before my trial would impel a person of common sense to the conclusion that he really had no case. I would say that New Orleans provides a good culture in which Garrison's bacteria could grow.

Penthouse: Now that you have been quickly and unanimously cleared by the jury, what do you think the future effects of the case will be?

Shaw: As to the effects on me, personally, I don't think I'll ever be entirely free again. I'll be known as the man who was accused of this heinous thing. This doesn't disturb me too much, now that the truth has been legally established. It has certainly had the effect of impoverishing me, but that doesn't truly disturb me too much, either. The French have a saying that the wounds that come from money are never fatal. I suppose that I can make my living somehow as I've done in the past. It has had considerable effect as far as Mr. Garrison is concerned. His credibility on a national scale has been completely destroyed. It would be truly ironic if he now discovered some new information of a serious nature. I greatly doubt that anyone would pay him any serious mind.

Penthouse: Do you agree or disagree with the findings of the Warren Commission?

Shaw: By and large, I agree with them. I think there were certainly errors, both of ommision and commission, but I think that fundamentally their conclusions were sound and valid. Just one point, that no one ever much dwelt on. There were five Republicans on the commission and two Democrats. If there had been any attempt in the report to cover up on the part of the administration, you can be sure that those Republicans would never have signed the report. They would have brought out a stinging report of their own and this would have become an issue in the next presidential campaign. I just don't believe that if there had been any kind of cover-up or whitewash or collusion that Republicans of the stature of Gerald Ford or Sherman Cooper would have gone along. By exposing this they could have put a Republican in the White House and they would have exploited it to the hilt. And that's just one reason for accepting the report.

The commission conducted something like 25,000 interviews and there were about 500 witnesses whose testimony was taken under oath. I simply cannot believe in any conspiracy that would have to run from the Dallas police on up to the president of the United States. If Mr. Garrison's ideas were taken seriously, there would have to be a cast of two or three thousand people involved. Certainly by now there would be some leaks somewhere, some death-bed confessions.

I think that it was just Lee Oswald, a poor psychotic loser, who got a lucky shot at the President. People find it difficult to believe that the great golden prince should be killed by this psychotic little man, crouching behind pasteboard boxes, with a cheap mailorder rifle. But the fact that it is inappropriate doesn't mean that it didn't happen. Life is full of inappropriate things, and I believe that I am a well-qualified person to make that statement. I speak from first-hand experience.

Penthouse: Mr. Shaw, thank you.