Shaw Elated After Jury Frees Him

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From News Dispatches

NEW ORLEANS, March 1—Clay L. Shaw freed from a two-year nightmare of having to defend himself against charges of plotting the death of President John F. Kennedy, said today he felt "Great! Simply great!"

Shaw, a 55-year-old former New Orleans businessman, had just been declared not guilty by the unanimous vote of an all-male jury that took only 54 minutes of deliberation to decide it did not believe the charges of district attorney Jim Garrison.

The trial lasted 34 days.

The 6-foot-4, white-haired defendant, his face stretched into a smile, strode over to the jury box and shook each juror's hand amid the applause and cheers of spectators who had spent more than 12 hours in the coutroom the final day to hear the 1:02 a.m. (CST) verdict.

Shaw left through a back door and departed in a car, protected from further questioning by a phalanx of deputies.

"We took one ballot, and it was unanimous," said Larry D. Morgan, 34, who was the seventh man chosen for the jury. "There was just not enough conclusive evidence to make me believe Shaw was involved."

See SHAW, A3, Col. 1

Shaw Elated After Jury Acquits Him

SHAW, From A1

Morgan said the jurors gave their attention to evidence directly concerning Shaw, rather than the protracted attack on the Warren Commission report presented by Garrison and his aides.

"We weren't there to try the Warren report," Morgan said.

Garrison, his two-year investigation reduced to shambles, has not indicated whether he will continue the investigation.

But Shaw's acquittal did not quiet critics who do not believe Oswald acted alone, as the Warren Commission asserts, in the 1963 killing of the President in Dallas's Dealey Plaza.

Sen. Russell Long (D-La.), said to be the man who first encouraged Garrison to investigate the assassination, said the Shaw acquittal did not prove the Warren Commission correct.

"I just do not think Oswald acted alone and I bet if you ask members of that jury about it, they would agree . . . that Oswald did not act alone," Long said. "The acquittal of Clay Shaw was probably based on the fact they could not establish without a reasonable doubt the connection between Shaw and Oswald."

By contrast, the New Orleans States-Item, a one-time supporter of the District Attorney, published a front-page editorial calling for Garrison's resignation.

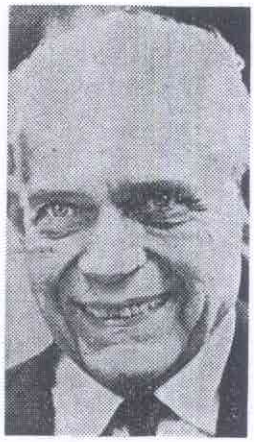
"He has shown himself unfit to hold the office of District Attorney or any other office," the newspaper said. "Mr. Garrison has abused the vast powers of his office. He has perverted the law rather than prosecuted it. . .

The newspaper said Garrison himself "should now be brough to the bar to answer for his conduct."

The verdict came exactly two years after Shaw's arrest on March 1, 1967, on the charge of criminal conspiracy that carries a penalty of 1 to 20 years.

Garrison, leaning against a table, climaxed his case by urging the jurors to strike a blow against the Government and the Warren Commission.

"The government handling of the assassination," Garrison said, "was a fraud. Probably the greatest fraud perpetrated in the history of mankind."



CLAY SHAW
. . . "Great! Simply great!"

His assistants, James L. Alcock and Alvin Oser, argued that they had proved Shaw guilty. Oser used arithmetic, angles and photographs to arrive at the conclusion that Kennedy was killed by three gunmen in three locations in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

Defense attorney F. Irvin Dymond, sandwiched between five prosecution speeches, said Garrison's case was "an Alice-in-Wonderland story" and the trial was nothing more than "a forum for an attack on the Warren Commission."

Garrison's investigation began in October 1966, with the first "lead" apparently a private detective's story—in 1963—that he thought David Ferrie, a former airline pilot, had something to do with the assassination.

Ferrie was arrested once. He denied any knowledge of a plot. In February 1967, he died of a brain hemorrhage. Garrison said it was suicide.

The next "lead" was Dean A. Andrews Jr., a lawyer who claimed he got a call from someone wanting a lawyer for Oswald soon after the assassination.

Who was the caller? "Clay Bertrand," said Andrews. The FBI checked his story and discounted it.

Andrews said at the trial, however, that the name "Bertrand" was a figment of his imagination and that he had made it up to gain a reputation.

After Andrews turned up in the case, the state's star witness emerged from obscurity: Perry Raymond Russo, now 27, a dark-haired, talkative man who said he'd known Ferrie. After several hypnotic sessions, Russo told more: he knew Oswald and Shaw, under different names—Leon Oswald and Clem Bertrand.

Russo told of a party at Ferrie's apartment in mid-September, 1963. He said Ferrie, Shaw and Oswald plotted Kennedy's death.

Russo was, as Alcock acknowledged, the state's case. His testimony and that of another hypnosis-involved witness, New York accountant Charles I. Spiesel, may have been the turning points for Shaw.

On cross-examination, Russo admitted he had told a police officer after Shaw's preliminary hearing in 1967 that he couldn't honestly say Shaw was at the "plot" party.

"If I had to say yes or no, I would have to say no" he told the officer, who confirmed it in his testimony.

Spiesel told the jury of dark conspiracies with his enemies hypnotizing him, robbing him of sexual powers and disguising themselves as relatives. He testified he was at a 1963 New Orleans party and Shaw with others talked about how Kennedy might be killed.

His testimony led jury, judge and lawyers on a French Quarter hunt for the site of the party. It was not found.

The state quickly shifted from Shaw, the defendant, to a "trial" of the Warren Commission. Huge exhibits were mounted, angles of fire discussed, numerous photos introduced. One supposedly showed "a man holding something" in Dallas' Dealey Plaza. And eyewitnesses from Dallas said they thought gunfire came from some direction other than the Texas School Book Depository, where Oswald fired from, according to the Warren Commission.

Garrison had no counterpart witness to the testimony of Col. Pierre A. Finck, the Swiss-born Army doctor who helped perform the Kennedy autopsy. Finck said positively Kennedy was shot twice from behind.