Shaw Expansive, Smiling, Says Matter Not Ended

Press Conference Held at Attorney's Home

By PAUL ATKINSON

Clay L. Shaw, relaxed, smiling, expansive, told a packed press conference Saturday afternoon that the acquittal verdict "is by no means the end of the matter."

Shaw was flanked by his chief defensive counsel, F. Irvin Dymond, and his civil lawyers, Edward F. and William Wegmann, and their associate, Salvatore Panzeca.

The basement of the Edward Wegmann home at 350 Broadway formed the backdrop for the press conference for Shaw, who was found not guilty less than 14 hours before by a 12-man jury that deliberated less than an hour. District Attorney Jim Garrison charged Shaw with conspiracy to murder President John F. Kennedy.

Neither Shaw nor Edward Wegmann could be pinned down on what sort of suit—if any—he is planning.

HIGHLIGHTS GIVEN

Here are highlights of the press conference:

—Shaw said he believes Garrison actually feels he (Shaw) is innocent but used him as a forum for the Warren Commission.

—The economic drain of the trial and defense means he will have to come out of retirement, and he is available for offers.

—Shaw took a solid punch at the private group of businessmen, "Truth And Consequences," which financed part of the Garrison probe. He called its contributions "appalling."

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Following is the complete text of the Shaw press conference:

Q.: Mr. Shaw, how do you feel?

Shaw: I feel wonderful, of course. Two years ago today I was arrested, and two years ago Sunday I said I would be vindicated. It has been a long time, but it has happened; and the fact that it has happened as it has happened is, I think, a tremendous indication of the strength and validity of the judicial system and, particularly, the jury system as it is employed here.

Q.: Did you ever lose faith?

Shaw: No, I won't say I lost faith. There were dark times, of course, during these two years; but really I feel that there is something in juries that has an almost mystical way of getting at the truth of matters. And I think this jury did exactly that.

Q.: What about Jim Garrison, can you say anything about how he came upon your name, why did he pick you to prosecute?

Shaw: I wouldn't undertake the mental processes of many people, and Mr. Garrison is one I absolutely refuse to try to understand. I don't know.

Q.: Do you think Mr. Garrison should resign?

Shaw: That is a matter for Mr. Garrison and his conscience. I won't comment on that.

Q.: Do you believe Mr. Garrison simply used you in oredr to get the Warren Commission testimony on trial?

Shaw: In large measure, yes. (Sitting beside Shaw, his attorney, Edward F. Wegmann said, "Definitely.")

Q.: Do you think he (Garrison) didn't believe you were guilty?

Shaw: Yes, I think he did not.

OUTLINES FUTURE

Q.: What are your plans for the future?

Shaw: I hope to be able to sort of pick up the strings as much as I can as of two years ago today. That means writing, traveling . . . but mainly, writing. There are a couple of plays I hope to do.

Q.: Don't you have a house

you are restoring?

Shaw: Yes, that has been part of the pattern of my life for 10 or 15 years, as you know. So I will continue working and finish this restoration.

Q.: Do you plan to write a book on your experiences?

Shaw: (Smiling) Quite possibly.

Q.: How has this affected you, Mr. Shaw, these past two years?

Shaw: Well, you can't give a definite answer to that. It's been a horrifying nightmare-like experience. It also on a purely practical level has been disastrous financially because these matters—investigators—cost a great deal of money. On the other hand, adversity of this sort has deepened my life somewhat. I have met many people I would not have met, otherwise, some of whom are in this room. While I might not go so far as to say I would go through it all to have met them, nevertheless, having done so, it is a positive factor in the whole experience. It has been a very sad time in many ways, but there have been some good things.

Q.: Over the past two years, you have been heard to say you had nothing to worry about. What were your thoughts when the jury was out deliberating?

Shaw: I said I had nothing to worry about, and yet you don't know what 12 men will decide. You can never tell the interactions of 12 people upon each other. And, of course, I had to consider the possibility that they might have returned an unfavorable verdict. But when I took that into account and was prepared for it if it should come, I was not really worried in the sense that you use the word.

Q.: How do you mean prepared?

Shaw: Psychologically prepared. Had there been an unfavorable verdict, it meant an appeal in another court, another year, two years of the same kind of thing I had been going through. But I was psychologically prepared that if that was what had to be done, that was what had to be done.

SUIT DISCUSSED

Q.: Is there any possibility of a suit?

Shaw: Well, you are all members of the news media and you know that news is made when it is made and not by somebody talking about what they are going to do when. Remember Mr. Garrison came last February and got the press of the world down here because he said he had solved the Kennedy assassination. And then when the press found out that he started telling them it might take him 30 years to bring this all about, well, the press yawned deeply and began to pack their notebooks and cameras. So I don't want to sit here and tell you what I am going to do except to say that this is by no means the end of the matter.

Q.: What options are available to you?

Shaw: You better talk to my lawyers about that.

Dymond: Actually, you are a little out of my field.

E. Wegmann: We have it under consideration, and we will continue to do what is best for Mr. Shaw.

Q.: What do you have under consideration?

E. Wegmann: His rights. As Mr. Shaw just said so well, we will talk about it when we do it.

Q.: Have you considered a complaint to the organized bar?

E. Wegmann: We've considered a lot of things.

Q.: Would that be one of them?

E. Wegmann: We prefer not to discuss those matters until such time as we are prepared to take definitive action.

Q.: Do you think Mr. Garrison should resign?

E. Wegmann: I will go along wholeheartedly with Mr. Shaw's statement to the effect that that is up to his own conscience.

Q.: Philosophically speaking, what do you think this all proves, Mr. Shaw.

DANGER CITED

Shaw: It has proven the dangers and strengths of our system. The danger is that a district attorney — prosecutor — has altogether too much power; and while this is generally not used to its fullest, it can be. It has been in the past two years.

The strength of the system is the corrective fact, that when this kind of power is abused, there is always a recourse to the judicial forum and to a jury.

I've been struck by a number of things that might be of interest to you. And I think one of these things is that I am surprised that the press has not paid more attention to.

You are all aware of the fact that a group of private businessmen has contributed money to the public prosecutor to go out and investigate someone. This appalled me when I first read it in the paper. I didn't have any idea I would be involved in it.

But I was appalled to think that a public official would accept funds from two or three rich men to investigate anybody or anything. I think this is one of the most vicious things I have ever heard of.

If you think about it, you can see the door it opens on wild and bizarre abuses of power. Suppose two rich fellows didn't like Rosemary James (a television reporter). But I can't imagine anybody not liking Romesmary (laughter).

No, let's suppose they did, and they went to the district attorney and said here's a considerable chunk of money and we are going to give you a chunk of money every month until you find out the truth about whatever it is . . . We might say there was a murder in the French Quarter, you know, and Rosemary James lives in the French Quarter.

But why has there been no comment in the press that this hideously vicious thing has been allowed to happen? I don't know . . . I don't think there is any Louisiana law forbidding it, is there? I don't think the framers of the laws ever considered the possibility.

Shaw was interrupted by a reporter who quipped, "Are you saying now that there has been Truth, there shall be Consequences?" Shaw laughed heartily.

I really believe this is one of the most important things—and most overlooked—in this whole investigation that any group of men can pay money to the public prosecutor to do anything at all is a wild, vicious thing. Do you agree?

ASKS OF BRIBERY

Q. (to Dymond) Do you think this might constitute public bribery?

Dymond: I would not go so

far as to say that it constitutes public bribery. It certainly creates a frightening situation, when you consider the usual funds and resources available to the defendant and those available to the state, and then add to those of the state; it creates a greater imbalance as was created in this case, as was very sorely felt by us.

Q.: Mr. Shaw, what possible reason could Mr. Garrison have had in charging you with conspiracy to assassinate the President?

Shaw: I said before that I was not going to try to explain the workings of Mr. Garrison's mind.

Q.: Mr. Shaw, did it ever occur to you during the proceedings what it might be to be really poor?

Shaw: It has occurred to me many times.

Q.: I mean someone who could not afford the likes of Mr. Dymond and Mr. Wegmann? (laughter).

Shaw: No, it's a very valid question. I don't like to joke about it. The thought has rarely been absent from my mind during the two years what would have happened if I had been friendless, absolutely poor—as I will be soon but am not at this time—and not in a position to defend myself. And you can't help thinking that maybe this has happened more often than any of us realize. Yes, that has been very much in my mind.

'ROSES RETURN'

There was a pause while some cameramen put in more film. In the break, someone suggested to Dymond that roses have come back to his cheeks. Shaw quipped to Dymond, "You looked pretty ashen there for a while last night."

Q.: (To Dymond) Is there any way of determining how much money the district attorney has spent on his investigation?

Dymond: It appears there would be some records available on it. I also suggest that he be asked about it.

Q.: Would Truth and Consequences be required to make its records public?

Dymond: I know of no law per se that would require them to do that.

Q.: What were your feelings about the district attorney's closing statement, Mr. Shaw, particularly your feelings as they might apply beyond the confines of your own case? In other words, were you worried or frightened at all about this?

Shaw: No, I wasn't worried or frightened.

I thought it interesting, as a matter of fact. For while it dealt mostly in generalities which had nothing to do with the evidential qualities of the case, much of what he said is quite true.

He said, for example, that justice doesn't happen without some attention being paid to it and that, if free men are to remain free, we must be ever vigilant about justice. He pointed out the dangers in a society — any society — of power and authority preventing justice from happening. That is a true statement. The only thing I found wrong in the statement was that Mr. Garrison had mixed up the cast of characters. (Laughter).

No. he was St. George, and the dragon was the federal government. But actually the fact of the matter is the district attorney of the parish of Orleans was authority, was oppression, and I and my attorneys were representing justice and humanity. So I endorse his statement completely — with a change of the cast of characters.

Q.: A few months ago, you were quoted as saying you thought this was a tragedy without a villain. Now do you think there is one?

Shaw: I'm not going to be vindictive and talk in terms of villains. The thing has happened, and it has not ended here, as I say, but I will not say this man is wicked, this man is black, this man is that.

Q. Do you support the conclusions of the Warren Commission?

Shaw: Yes, this large, this sprawling, 25,000 interviews, there are bound to be loose ends; and these have been exploited as you all know by these so-called scavengers.

Q. But you believe Lee Harvey Oswald did it?

Shaw: Yes, I essentially believe that the Warren Commission is right.

GIVES REASON

I will give you one other argument that generally has not been evinced. That is this: Consider the Warren Commission, made up of, as I recall it, five Democrats and four Republicans.

Now the purpose of any Republican politican, statesman, call him what you will, is to get to the White House with his party. And I can say to you I think unequivocally that if there had been any evidence in the Warren Commission investigation, that people like Sherman Cooper, Chief Justice (Earl) Warren, (Rep.) Gerald Ford would not have signed it. You would have had the most stinging minority report. It would have been made a campaign issue, and the Republicans would have been in the White House.

The only alternative is that either they are stupid, these men are stupid and I don't believe they are, or they are venal, and how do you bribe a chief justice, how do you bribe Gerald Ford, Sen. Cooper? So just on the basis of pure, hard, practical politics, I don't think there is any provable fraud in the Warren Report or there would have certainly been a minority report, a campaign issue and probably a Republican in the White House instead of Lyndon B. Johnson.

Q.: In Mr. Garrison's closing argument, he quoted from the late President Kennedy. Did you find this in the least vulgar?

Shaw: Well, vulgarity is a thing hard to pin down. I thought, shall we say, that it was unfortunate.

Q.: Getting back to finances, would it be too personal a question to ask in what neighborhood this thing has cost you.

Shaw: (With a smile) It would be too personal. (Laughter).

Dymond: For income tax purposes, I hope you break it down.

Panzeca: Yes, 28 degrees.

Shaw: I won't give you exactly, except to say that this will leave me in not very good financial condition. I will have to go back to work doing something or other.

E. Wegmann: You are avail-

able, are you not?

hSaw: Oh, yes, (with a big smile).

Q.: Have you gotten any offers of help from any foundations?

Shaw: No, we accepted none.

Q.: About a year ago you said anything this horrible that was happening to you must have some reason. Have you figured out the reason yet?

Shaw: No, I haven't. As I say, these dividends have occurred in meeting people who I wouldn't have otherwise, and things of that sort.

Q.: Without characterizing the omtives of Mr. Garrison, could you say anymore about how you feel today?

'USED AS PAWN'

Shaw: Well, I feel he tried to use me as a pawn, if you will, to mount an attack on the Warren Commission. I think that attack has now failed. I am glad it failed, but beyond that I don't knuow what I could think of.

Q: (To Dymond) What about the next race for district attoney? Do you think this case is groing to have a big beaing on it?

But William Wegmann spoke up, "17,500 is not enough." There is loud laughter. Wegmann referred to a statement made about Dymond when once asked if he would run for the distr ct attorney's office.

Dymond: I think it conceivably could have a bearing on it.

Q.: Mr. Garison has refused to make any comment about the case. He said the jury's word would be the last. You think he can avoid making statements about this case?

Dymond: I don't know just what statements he could make about it. That's a decision he is going to have to make and wouldn't l ke to have to make it.

Q.: There is speculation that the Garrison investigation is really not finished. Do you ee anywhere it could go?

Dymond: I tell you I have bet on a few racing horses in my life, so past perfmances are important, so there is no telling where t will go.

Q.: Didn't he have another 'co-conspirator' in California?

Dymond: He did, and the governor of California refused to extradite him.

Q.: Mr. Shaw, do you have any animosity toward Perry Raymond Russo and his testimony?

Shaw: I don't have any animosity against anyone, really.

O.: Before your arrest you were considered a leading resident of New Orleans. Do you think the community deserted you doing this ordeal?

Shaw: No, I was treated very well, supported very well I must say. I went to my usual haunts, restaurants, theaters, concerts, to certain homes, setting aside my closer friends who I expected to (beloyal). But everywnere I went I had no difficulty; nobody made any scenes.

O.: It is true, is it not, that neither of the New Orleans newspapers printed an editorial comment until Saturday morning?

Shaw: That's correct.

Q.: Do you have any feeling about that? Do you think you or the community were let down?

Shaw: The newspapers must regulate or run themselves. I must be honest about this and say what I think. If a newspaper is to be a watchdog or guardian of the community, something more should have been done than simply handling the news. But then, of course, you have to take into account the fact that I am prejudiced.

SHAW THANKS HELPERS

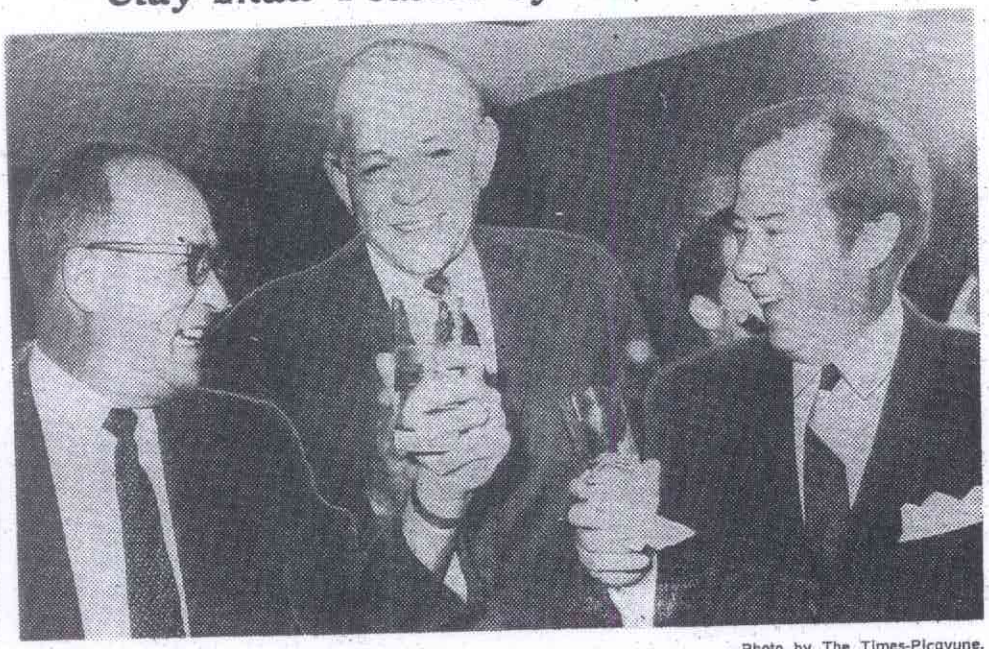
In a final statement, Shaw told newsmen:

"I want to thank a great many people who have come forward who have given their time and effort . . . for instance, Mrs. Charles Appel, the handwriting expert, from Washington, D. C., who agreed that without his services there might be a miscarriage of justice and came down here without a fee . . . I would like to thank Bill Gurvich who has been a tower of strength . . . James Phelan, who has come here at his own expense and spent a great deal of time . . . Peopl elike this have been so helpful, so encouraging . . . and the press generally has been marvelous . . . and officer William O'Donnell . . . I felt they were motivated by a real sense that justice must be done.

Q.: (To Dymond) What about the next DA's race?

Dymond: Oh, I'm not going to run for DA, no chance.

Clay Shaw Toasted by His Attorneys



—Photo by The Times-Picayune.

BEING TOASTED by his attorneys who waged the battle that won his freedom is Clay L. Shaw. F. Irvin Dymond (left) was chief defense counsel. Edward F. Wegmann also was attorney for the defense. They met Saturday at a press conference at the home of Wegmann, 350 Broadway.