Clay Shaw Is Touring Colleges Lecturing on 'Erosion of Rights'

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 26 — Clay L. Shaw, the man once accused by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison of conspiring to murder former President John F. Kennedy, is touring college campuses to warn students of what he calls "a creeping erosion of individual rights in this country."

Mr. Shaw, who was acquitted of the conspiracy charge in March of last year after an hour's deliberation by a New Orleans jury, said in a speech here this week that his case showed "the truly terrifying power which the state has over an individual."

Although he was found not guilty, Mr. Shaw told a group of several hundred students at American University, his reputation had been tarnished and his personal fortune depleted by the trial, which he called "one of the seediest and shabbiest episodes in American judicial history."

"I was arrested and charged with what must surely be the most shocking crime of the century, of which I had absolutely no knowledge whatsoever," Mr. Shaw said. "It doesn't matter what happened to me personally, terrible things happen to everybody. But what I'm talking about tonight could happen to anybody within the sound of my voice. You think that's impossible? I assure you it's not."

Only Source of Crime

Mr. Shaw, who until 1965 was managing director of the New Orleans International Trade Mart, said that his campus lectures, for which he collects a fee of $1,000 and that have taken him to such widely scattered schools as the University of Wyoming, Memphis State University and the State University of New York, were his only source of income.

Mr. Shaw has said he was forced to sell his showplace home in New Orleans' French Quarter to write a play based on his trial, which he hopes will bring some royalties.

Mr. Shaw talked about Mr. Garrison's presentation of what he called "manufactured evidence characterized by lu[illegible] mendacity and irrelevance."

At his trial, which he said reminded him of "a Warner Brothers grade-B movie," Mr. Shaw said a succession of prosecution witnesses were introduced who were "the wackiest and kookiest you've ever seen."

Mistaken Identity

He told of one man who appeared to testify dressed in a red toga, and who solemnly told the court that he was a reincarnation of Julius Caesar and of a second man, an itinerant mural painter who first testified that he had seen Mr. Shaw in a Louisiana motel with Jack Ruby and Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Shaw said, laughing, "Two months later he told the court that he made a mistake—that it wasn't me he seen there after all, but rather former Secretary of State Edward Stettinius."

Mr. Shaw's message that "individual rights granted by our Constitution can be canceled at any time" has been well received by his student hearer. At the University of Wyoming, he spoke before one of the largest audiences to hear a speaker there in recent years. His speech at American University was met with enthusiastic applause.

"The importance of the Garrison case is not that he failed," Mr. Shaw told the student. "He might have succeeded. Had I lacked the money to defend myself properly, I would be in jail now instead of talking to you."