

Witness Says Shaw 'Plotting' Could Have Been Bull Session

NEW ORLEANS (UPI) — Perry Russo, a key witness in the Clay L. Shaw trial, says the 1963 presidential assassination plotting of which Shaw is accused could as easily have been "an inconsequential bull session" as a serious scheme.

The defense got in that lick late yesterday in the trial of the 55-year-old retired businessman on charges of conspiring to murder President John F. Kennedy.

Russo, 27, a book salesman, sometime cab driver and sports buff, has provided the principal public evidence in the two-year battle of Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison to prove a plot to kill President Kennedy.

Russo testified for the state on his friendship with a bizarre character — the late David W. Ferrie who in the summer of 1963 "became obsessed with the murder" of Kennedy. He said he had heard Ferrie say "we will kill him — it won't be long" several times and wasn't sure if he meant it.

In mid-September of 1963, in Ferrie's apartment, Russo testified, he listened while Ferrie, 49, a flying instructor, did most of the talking in the alleged plot.

Talking with him, Russo testified, were his roommate Lee Harvey Oswald, whom the witness knew as "Leon," and the dignified and culturally inclined

Shaw, who was introduced as Clem Bertrand.

He said they discussed a triangulation of crossfire, the necessity of a scapegoat, diversionary shots, escape by air and setting up of alibis by being in cities other than the murder site.

In testimony today, he acknowledged that he never heard them "agree" to try to kill Kennedy.

On cross examination by defense attorney F. Irvin Dymond, Russo said he had not been there all the time in the 3-to-4-hour session.

Under Dymond's questioning, Russo said Ferrie "was screwy but sharp—a paradox of a personality; he spoke 11 languages and claimed to have five degrees, and you'd think he'd be doing something better. He was prone toward the spectacular."

"You mean to infer that Ferrie was a little on the crazy side?" Dymond asked.

"I've always thought so," replied Russo.

Dymond read from a newspaper interview with Russo—made when the latter first became involved in the case nearly two years ago—which said that "Russo said he did not take any of Ferrie's statements seriously until he read" of Garrison's investigation.

"Is it not a fact that the conversation (of the alleged plotters) could just as well have been an inconsequential bull session as it could have been anything serious?" Dymond asked.

"Yes," said Russo.

"Is it not a fact that you have told people that it could well have been?"

"Yes."

Ferrie died on Feb. 22, 1967, and on Feb. 24 Garrison said he and his staff had "solved" the assassination. Dymond brought out that in three television interviews on the latter date Russo

never mentioned a conspiratorial meeting, Oswald or Clem Bertrand.

With the consent of both the state and defense, an interview with Russo on Feb. 25, 1967, by Asst. Dist. Atty. Andrew J. Sciambra was read to the jury.

It said that "Busso said . . . it was common knowledge to everyone that Ferrie was a homosexual," that Ferrie had surgical equipment and bones in his attic, was teaching young boys in the Civil Air Patrol jungle warfare in a plan to help "liberate South American countries."

It quoted Russo as saying "Ferrie showed him a drug he had concocted that was very similar to aphrodisiac but even better. He (Ferrie) said it would make a person extremely passionate . . . He had tried it on his roommate and it worked perfectly. . . ."

The memorandum said Russo was shown a picture of Shaw and recalled seeing him in 1962 when Kennedy spoke at a wharf dedication here, and "he said he particularly remembers this guy because he was apparently a queer."