

Citizens Commission of Inquiry

103 2nd Street, N. E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 546-7500

Introduction:

At the trial, State of Louisiana vs. Clay Shaw in 1969, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison charged that the death of President John F. Kennedy resulted from a premeditated conspiracy, engineered from a source deep within the covert operations division of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Residents of Clinton, La. gave conclusive testimony which showed that Clay Shaw, Lee Harvey Oswald, and David Ferrie all knew one another. Due to the sudden and mysterious deaths of Oswald and Ferrie, Shaw was left to stand trial alone. Therefore, the jury never had the benefit of any testimony from Ferrie or Oswald.

Following the acquittal of Clay Shaw, members of the jury submitted themselves to questioning at an interview during which they indicated the major reason for their not bringing a guilty verdict against Shaw was due to the failure of Garrison to demonstrate that Shaw was an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Interview on April 22, 1975:

Victor Marchetti, former Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, attended high level conferences in early 1969 at the time Clay Shaw was brought to trial by Jim Garrison. At these conferences Richard Helms, Director of the CIA, seemed determined to "give help in the trial."

The following is a text of an interview with Mr. Marchetti that centered about Shaw's relationships with the CIA and Mr. Helm's concern about those connections. The interview was conducted for the Citizens Commission of Inquiry by K.R. Walsh.

Marchetti: "I used to attend, among other things, the Directors' morning meeting, his morning staff meeting. This was Richard Helms at the time, and he held a meeting every morning at 9:00 a.m. which was attended by 12 to 14 of his leading deputies plus 3 or 4 staffers — the executive assistants to the number one, two, and three men in the Agency and also the Press Officer. I often used to take the minutes of this meeting . . . which are a joke because things would be left out or written in a vague fashion so they were meaningless.

But during the Clay Shaw trial I remember the Director on several occasions asking questions like, 'Are we giving them all the help they need?' I didn't know who 'they' were at the time.

I knew they didn't like Garrison because there were a lot of remarks passed about him. They would talk in half sentences like 'is everything going all right down there' . . . 'yeah, but talk with me about it after the meeting' or 'we'll pick it up later in my office.'

"So after several of these over a week or two, I began to ask myself 'what is going on? What is the big concern?'

"I began to ask around. And one of the other people who attended the meeting at the time, I asked 'What's the concern about the trial and this guy Shaw?'

"I was then told 'Well, Shaw, a long time ago had been a contract employee of the Agency. He was in the export-import business. He knew people coming and going from certain areas; the domestic contact service. He used to deal with them, but it's been cut off a long time ago.'

"And then I was told that the Agency, of course, does not want this to come out now because Garrison will distort it; the public would misconstrue it."

Citizens Commission: "Could this have been a cover story?"

Marchetti: "At the time I accepted this on face value, but I know the Agency cons its own people and cons itself and everything, so I could have been given a cover story. But that was what I was

told.

"At the time or shortly thereafter this guy Ferrie came up. And I was given a similar kind of explanation; that he'd been involved in a section of the Bay of Pigs operation and that he had been a contract agent or a contact at the time.

"As I say, I accepted these explanations on face value and never thought more of them until I began to get connected with the Committee to Investigate Assassinations and looked back. One of the reasons I accepted that at face value is that usually when you were being put off you were told, 'look it's sensitive and you have no need to know.'

"Sometimes when it was *really sensitive* they would give you a phony excuse his association in contacts could have been more extensive and I was just being put off."