

Witness in Assassination 'Plot' Says That He Was Hypnotized

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The state's chief witness in an alleged Kennedy assassination plot testified today that investigators had him placed under hypnosis three times before this week's court hearing.

Benny Raymond Russo, 25, years old, told a three-judge panel that he did not remember the dates of the hypnosis sessions but that they took place within two weeks of the hearing.

Although Mr. Russo gave no details as to why he had been placed in the trances, a close friend said yesterday in Baton Rouge that it had been to job his memory.

"The assistant district attorney asked him questions," said Steve Derby, a 20-year-old student at Louisiana State University. "And the more questions he asked the more the story came back to Perry."

Involvement Denied

Mr. Russo, in ending three days of testimony, denied that he had been involved in a Kennedy assassination plot, the planning of which he said took place here in mid-September, 1963, in the apartment of the late David W. Ferrie, a former airline pilot.

He said he had sat quietly while Lee Harvey Oswald, Mr. Ferrie and Clay L. Shaw, discussed killing the President.

The court hearing was called by the three-judge panel to determine whether District Attorney Jim Garrison and his investigators had sufficient evidence against Mr. Shaw, a retired New Orleans business executive, to warrant binding him over for trial.

Staff members of the Warren Commission have said their investigation convinced them that neither Mr. Shaw nor Mr. Ferrie were involved in an assassination conspiracy. The

commission concluded that Oswald had killed the President alone and had not been part of any plot.

Appearance Questioned

At one point, Mr. Russo testified that Oswald was clean-shaven and neatly dressed when he last saw him in October, 1963.

This drew a flurry of questions from the defense because Mr. Russo said yesterday that he was unable to link Oswald and two New Orleans men in the alleged assassination plot until Mr. Garrison's investigators spent six hours painting whiskers on Oswald's photographs.

The whisker painting was necessary, Mr. Russo said, because at the time of the alleged conspiracy in mid-September of 1963 Oswald had a three-or-four-day growth of whiskers. But today he testified that "somewhere around the first of October" in 1963 he saw Oswald and that Oswald was clean-shaven and was talking of "going to Cuba."

The defense wanted to know why Mr. Russo could not identify Oswald from assassination photographs if he had seen him clean shaven less than two months before the assassination.

Time a Factor

Mr. Russo replied that perhaps it was because he had seen Oswald "clean shaven and neatly dressed for only eight or 10 minutes." He said, however, that he had seen Oswald with a three-or-four-day growth of whiskers for a much longer time. When the defense asked him how long, he said he could not remember.

"What part did you play in this assassination plot?" Irving Dymond, one of the defense attorneys, asked Mr. Russo.

"I had no part," Mr. Russo said. "I never said I wanted to see President Kennedy killed." "Did you contribute anything to the [assassination] plan that

was formulated at that time?" Mr. Dymond asked.

"No sir," was the reply. "Did anyone," Mr. Dymond continued, "tell you not to say anything about this meeting?"

"No one told me anything," Mr. Russo replied. Mr. Dymond then asked Mr. Russo if he did not think it strange that three conspirators might let someone sit in on a planning session unless that person was a part of the plot.

Presence Protested

Mr. Russo said that Oswald and Mr. Shaw, whom he said he knew then as "Clem Bertrand," protested but that Mr. Ferrie prevailed upon them to let him stay in the apartment.

"Oswald looked up and said 'What the hell are we doing here?'" Mr. Russo said, "and a few seconds later Bertrand said, 'It's risky, we shouldn't have anyone here or that sort of stuff.'"

"Am I to understand," Mr. Dymond asked later in the day, "that you sat there all through the conversation and said not one word?"

"No sir," Mr. Russo said. Then he said that the conspiracy was "their business, I wasn't particularly interested." He also said that he frequently went to the window in Mr. Ferrie's apartment where the alleged conspiracy took place to see if "Lefty" Peterson, a friend who drove him to Mr. Ferrie's apartment, had returned to "drive him home."

Mr. Dymond pointed out that yesterday Mr. Russo said that he expected Mr. Ferrie might take him home.

Trip Home Discussed

Mr. Russo said he could not recall ever saying that and that in any event he did not believe that either Mr. Peterson or Mr. Ferrie drove him home after the alleged conspiratorial meeting.

"I think I caught a bus," he said. "I'm not sure."

Meanwhile, an Orleans Parish grand jury, conducting a separate investigation of the assassination at the district attorney's request, heard testimony from other witnesses.

One witness at the closed session was Dean A. Andrews Jr., a suspended assistant district attorney in neighboring Jefferson Parish, who also testified last week.

Mr. Andrews told the Warren Commission that a telephone caller he identified as "Clay Bertrand" had asked him to represent Oswald after the assassination.

The district attorney has contended that Bertrand was an alias used by Mr. Shaw, but Mr. Andrews has indicated publicly that he did not know whether Mr. Shaw was Bertrand. Also, summoned before the

grand jury was Gordon Novel, a 29-year-old bar owner who said he believed he had been subpoenaed for questioning about the activities of a one-time Cuban exile leader.

Mr. Novel identified the leader as a Sergio Arcacha Smith, who lived here in 1961 and was a leader of the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front, an anti-Castro group.

The exile leader was reported to have been training men for an invasion of Cuba. But he left here in 1962 and moved to Houston. After the assassination he was located in Dallas.

The district attorney's office once tried to question Mr. Arcacha in Dallas, but he refused to cooperate unless Dallas law enforcement authorities were present.