

It's my belief that sometime this summer of 1975 the cover-up of the murder of Jack Kennedy will collapse. We may not find out who murdered him, but we will learn of the series of overt acts which were taken to conceal the truth from us. Even now, late in the spring as I write this, there's a momentum gaining which must culminate in the exposure of

the Dallas-Washington cover-up instituted by that odd amalgam of professional liars known as the Warren Commission.

And if this does come to pass as I predict it will, the Assassination Conspiracy Theorists and their advocates will, in large measure, be responsible for keeping the issue alive. They must take the credit.

# CLAY SHAW, THE QUEAN NETWORK & THAT KENNEDY KILLING

#13 SUMMER '75 "FAG RAG"  
(BOSTON?)

OR

THE GAY VERSION OF THE WARREN REPORT

AND ITS CRITICS

"The quean network reaches everywhere, my dear."

"True, but mostly into the more interesting places, don't you think?"

*John Mitzel, with response  
from Tom Dawson, in conversation*

by John Mitzel

As an active follower of Kennediana since 1959, a supporter of attacks on the findings in the Warren Report for the last decade, and a writer interested in all the fallout of the Kennedy Assassination, I have come to the realization that amongst all the millions of words written about these matters (literally cartons of books inked about the assassination, the cover-ups, and the conspiracies high and low) not more than an occasional and elliptical mention is made of the panoramic sub-theme of homosexuality and homophobia through all this: in the Kennedy Administration itself (Bobby K.'s famous attack on Gore Vidal at a White House gala dinner when he instructed guards to "get that damn fag out of here!"), among conspiracy theorists, in the role of fucked-up closet queans who work for intelligence agencies, and most dramatically in the use to which "allegations of homosexuality" were put and the nefarious result garnered through an imaginary assumption of how the Quean Network operates in the New Orleans trial of Clay Shaw in 1969.

The fact of homosexual activity among the principles in all these, when it existed, was relegated to footnotes at best, if even there; presence of homosexual behavior was used for *ad hominem* attacks on a specific character without the accuser exploring the significance of his attack and the homophobia behind such

attacks. Yet the presence of closet quean behavior, gay lifestyles, and overt homophobia all play a part in the Kennedy Assassination miasma of the last decade, and they provide us with a good thumbhold for getting a grasp on the whole incredible series of events. (That no one prior to this has taken the occasion to probe this angle is also revealing as to the cowering and unimaginative nature of the American press at large.) So let's pry this open a bit and get a look backstage where the politer and/or more "respectable" press daren't look till now.



"Clay Shaw: America didn't kill him but we didn't help keep him alive," ran the obituary notice last August in *Variety* paid for by Rod McKuen and the staff of Stanyan Records (McKuen's recording company).

Clay Shaw was indicted in March of 1967 by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison for conspiring to assassinate President Kennedy. Garrison instantly became a hero to many determined Assassination Conspiracy Theorists who believed in some conspiracy—on whatever level—and who were willing to gung-ho support Big Jim Garrison in his wild attack on Shaw as long as it permitted them their attack on the Warren Report. Mark Lane and Mort Sahl were foremost among those who were activist Garrison-backers.

Garrison had originally targeted a strange New Orleans right-wing character named David Ferrie as his victim, but Ferrie dropped dead before G. could arrest him. The story that Garrison had "solved" the assassination had broken by then. The world press were winging their way to New Orleans waiting for this authoritative D.A. to arrest someone in "The Crime of the Century." With Ferrie's death Garrison was left with the press on his back, leaks promising forthcoming arrests and no patsy to nab. (I remember clearly watching Huntley & Brinkley at the time when the news came across that David Ferrie, "a homosexual," was hinted to be involved in Kennedy's murder; I was 19 then and I thought: oh boy, it's witchhunt time. I wasn't far off the mark.)

Anyway, immediately after Ferrie's death in Feb 67, a young man named Perry Raymond Russo stepped front and center in Baton Rouge and said he knew Ferrie and his gay friends and had overheard Ferrie and others talking of assassination. Bam! Garrison plucks this lad from obscurity, works him over, and *voilà!* Russo becomes the main witness in the state's case against Clay Shaw. Russo originally never put Shaw at Ferrie's "assassination conspiracy party"—that was an idea germinated in the D.A.'s office—but after being drugged, hypnotized and given suggestions, Russo came around to a position where he would testify that Shaw was there. Hence the indictment, allowing New Orleans "justice" to wend its weird and wary way.

Garrison's line was: Ferrie was a fairy, Russo was a homo, and Shaw was a fag. In Big Jim's bent mind it was a natural they should be hanging out together planning miscreant deeds. Or to quote the judge at Clay Shaw's trial, a Garrison lackie and notorious homophobe, Judge James Haggerty, a blustery, pugnacious, booze-swilling Irish-face who'd bamboozled his way into the New Orleans political scene through the usual corrupt methods: "The jury didn't get too much on the queer angle. They [the prosecution] didn't make the *cause célèbre* of it that I would have. I *would* have if I'd been the prosecution...I am personally convinced that—from people I've spoken to and what I've heard over two years—I am convinced that Shaw knew Ferrie. I am convinced...*queers know queers!* In New Orleans particularly...they've got a clique better than the CIA."

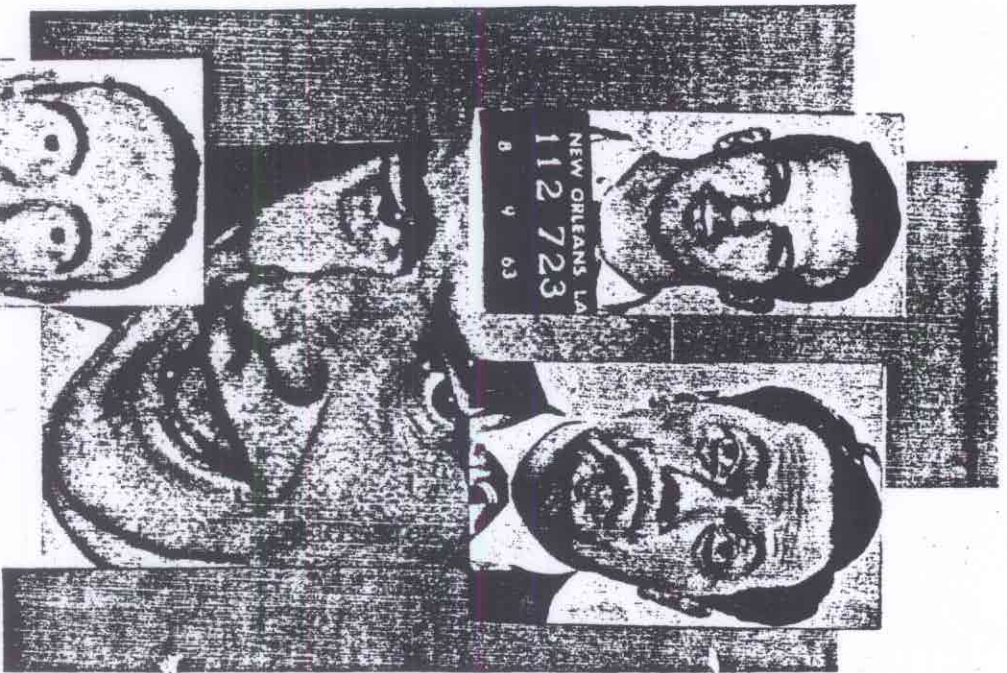
Ay! And there's the rub! I think most homophobes, since they're incapable of understanding the gay sub-culture, assume that all fags know *all* other fags, and that consequently Shaw must have known David Ferrie and through him must have had a hand in killing Kennedy—that is, when he wasn't otherwise preoccupied eating babies.

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A wall of hypocrisy and homophobia rises to obscure the truth and prevents even the well-motivated investigators from pursuing into areas they're ill-equipped to handle and/or culturally predisposed against exploring fairly. Their ignorance of the homosexual sub-culture

and their active homophobia and love of persecution allowed them to support Garrison in his starkly corrupt pursuit and destruction of Clay Shaw (be they the right-wing courtroom "Hanging Ladies" or scribes of the trendy lefty press). Lacking a respect for legality themselves, folks like Lane and Sahl indulged Garrison his illegalities to get at what they wanted. Garrison's filthy means were OK by them if they got to their end of debunking the conclusions of the Warren Report. This attitude not only set a bad tone for Assassination Theorists (since Lane and Sahl were quite happy in their roles of Super-Stars of the Theorists—Lane especially has made a full-time, money-making job of it), but it was a short-sighted tactic and ultimately a grave disservice to the many thousands who have worked in whatever ways to expose government lies in the Warren Report.

I won't be going into many specifics of the Shaw-Garrison trial; For those facts I encourage those who're interested to read Jim Kirkwood's fine book, *American Grottesque*, from which I quoted above, as well as *The Garrison Case: A Study In The Abuse Of Power* by Milton Brener. I do want to point out in this article the systemic homophobia which allows such a thing as the



*Dramatis Personae*  
Oswald, Garrison  
Judge Haggerty  
& David Ferrie

persecution of Shaw to happen in the first place. Life's too short to take on all injustice; consequently, I'm not terribly concerned with the murder of any particular President. They come and go, and they're only differentiated by the quality of their lies. What does actively concern me is the organized corruption and hypocrisy of our homophobic culture which allows ambitious men, in their brutal pursuit of power, to continue to select homosexuals as their victims when needed. And the Garrison-Shaw trial is a fine example of how a basically progressive cause (attacks on a government's cover-ups) can trip up on its own hypocrisies and assume some of the very corrupt characteristics of the men in power it's accusing. Clay Shaw was an innocent man whose life, reputation and career were disrupted and destroyed because and only because he happened to be actively homosexual in his tastes and because the society he lived in made him available for attacks on account of this.

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*Queers know queers!*

Well, of course they do, as Greeks know Greeks, Jews Jews etc. (In fact there's even a paper for Jewish youth called *The Network*.) But to infer from this casual fact of human association that there's something sinister *when comment*, that any specific queer knows all other queers and will probably deny it due to the proscribed social status of homosexual behavior, is patently ridiculous.

The Quean Network exists in a haphazard way, but it is not united and not all-of-a-piece as some homophobes fear. That some outsiders like to think so exists only as the "legacy" of centuries of rapid Christian persecution and superstition which in its most recent metamorphosis left "authorities" in our society with their twisted notion of "The Homintern," a phrase which blended repressed homosexuality-cum-homophobia with the evangelical anti-communism and anti-intellectualism of our nativist polity.

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Okay, Oswald had known Ferrie at one point (there's no evidence that Lee was a cocksucker or -ee despite his rumored status as a "swinger"), Ferrie knew a youth named Layten Martens and another named James Lewallen, both of whom

knew Clay Shaw. This is the New Orleans Quean Network bringing some people together, keeping some separate. This is the closet Shaw gets to Ferrie. Steps forward the man with the man with the missing piece—Perry Raymond Russo with his Garrison-printed line: *I saw Shaw there!* Garrison and his straight-man demagogists had their case. They had made a patsy!

Shaw was brought to trial two years after his indictment, and it took the jury only 50 minutes to acquit him by a unanimous vote, which was a surprise to some because it was believed that Garrison and the judge had the trial hopelessly rigged (as the original grand jury had been rigged).

It was assumed that the prosecution would transform Shaw's personal life into some orgiastic round of conspiratorial seductions and entrapments. Amazingly, the direct courtroom testimony kept pretty well clear of this.

Kirkwood: "I asked James Alcott [Asst. D.A. who handled the actual prosecution of the case in court] why he didn't get into the homosexual thing in the trial as much as everyone thought they would. Everyone thought Clay Shaw would be dragged through the mud. And you know what Alcott said to me? He said it was a bummer, that it could do nothing but backfire on the case [at that point]. Because what is the theory of a gay person trying to assassinate President Kennedy? Clay Shaw said to me one time: 'What do people think? That I made a pass at John Kennedy and was turned down, and because of that I wanted to kill him?'"

Of course the rumor mills worked full-time those two years before the case actually came to trial, with the D.A.'s office utilizing the maxim of all Dirty Tricksters: "Yiffity, yiffity, at least some of the mud will stick."

As I said, Judge Haggerty was disappointed that the D.A.'s staff didn't try to trap Shaw up in some denials of his homosexual life. Haggerty told Kirkwood what *he* would have done: "When Shaw himself was on the stand, Mr. Shaw, are you a homosexual?" They [defense] object: "It has nothing to do with the case." "I'm testing his credibility. If he says no, I intend to prove that he is." "Thus the mind of a hypocrite at work: even if he loses he wins because he waxes

what he's conditioned to see as "the dirty laundry" around for all viewers. Hypocrites and homophobes seek to stigmatize people rather than seeking to understand the totality of life.

What the prosecution did do was ask Shaw under oath if he knew David Ferrie. Shaw said no. After his acquittal for conspiracy, Shaw was immediately rearrested and indicted for perjury. Garrison asserted Shaw had lied in denying acquaintance with Ferrie. *Queers know queers!*

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I don't object to criticizing a public individual's life on the basis of what we know about his personal behavior. I'm frankly fascinated with people's 'private lives,' for there's a politics in private life which carries over into public behavior and can affect others. (A National Health Insurance plan was delayed for years, admits Wilbur Mills now, because he was loaded or hung-over all the time.) I intensely dislike the present state of affairs in which it is legally risky to comment on the private behavior of others—unless of course they've already done their damage. (In 1964 Ralph Ginzberg in his *Fate* Magazine printed shrink reports that Barry Goldwater was bonkers; Goldwater sued and won an impressive libel settlement.

If we had had an active press exploring Nixon's unstable mind and personal hypocrisies in the late 60s, things might be different than they are now; instead we have these timid "Was Nixon Sick In The Head" pieces. And I see in the papers where William Buckley has just won 60 grand in a libel suit because a writer referred to him as a "fascist.") People in public life should get it from all directions. Where I do draw the line is when a public official attempts to use a private person's "personal life" to discredit him in a public action when the accuser is assuming he can mobilize in his favor the force of hypocritical "public morality." This is exactly what Garrison, Lane, Sahl, Brussell and others have done and are doing, and I intend to point out the disingenuousness of their actions.

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Yes, Clay Shaw was actively and openly homosexual in his life, within the bounds of discretion, of course. He had integrated his homosexuality rather well into his life for a man of his social position (unlike Big Jim Garrison who belongs to the

have-to-get-drunk-before-I-can-do-it fraternity of closet queans, of which more later). Shaw's acquaintances in the Quean Network were vast, ranging from Layten Martens, whom we already met, a sort of young-thing-about-town with whom, according to Kirkwood, Shaw used to play chess to the most successful and respected members of literary society on the order of say Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, etc. (Speaking of the Literary Network, apparently Frances Parkinson Keyes was great chums with Clay and was going to write a book about him before her death.)

As retired Director of the New Orleans Trade Mart, Shaw had met many thousands of people in his life. If David Ferrie had been one of them, it's likely Shaw would have remembered and admitted it. (Ferie's body odor alone, it's said, made him unforgettable.) In a small and social city like New Orleans with its active gay underground, people get around. It's not at all improbable that Shaw could have met Ferrie. But Shaw said he didn't (in court under oath and to all his friends), and as a conscientious investigative journalist, I'll take his word.

But such is the power of Homintern-heritage mentality that, once pegged as a fagot, any nefarious activity could be attributed to the man's life. How best to stigmatize the man? Well, for starters, Garrison sent his boys out on a dragnet of Shaw's home after the arrest. God knows what he expected to find. What they brought back, among other things, were: 1 chain, 5 whips, 2 pieces of leather, 1 Army cartridge belt; 1 black hood & cape. Garrison "leaked" this info to the press immediately, and even called in photographers from *Life* to take pictures of the gear. This was sure to be significant evidence to his assertion that Shaw was a Member-In-Good-Standing of the duplicitous Homintern: Respectable Businessman by Day but a Notorious Street-Stalking Queer By Night. The irony of all this is that Garrison himself more nearly fits this description. It's even been suggested that in his own personal animosity for Shaw, Garrison projected all of his own hang-ups on Shaw who, in Big Jim's refracted mind, was getting away with all the things either denied Big Jim—social acceptance—or those that obsessed him—homosexuality.

I never understood what all the fuss was about with that hood and those whips, etc. It was a

casual turn-on just reading about them! I'm small potatoes, my dear, to what people who like imaginative sex should have on hand these days if, indeed, that was the connotation Garrison was trying to get across. If everyone who keeps sex-gear is a potential Presidential assassin, someone better tell Gerry Ford to watch out! Come browse through my closet anytime—bring a friend!

Speaking of friends, some of Shaw's played the D.A.'s game by implicitly denying Shaw was knowledgeable in leather/S&M sex. Their line was that all this was part of an old Mardi Gras costume (and it was true that Clay attended Mardi Gras in '65 dressed as a monk with a whip). But why bother with denials? I like the S&M connotation better because it's probably closest to the truth and it shows a healthy attitude of not being afraid to admit a fact. The real issue was Garrison's sleazy tactics, not Shaw's attire *a casa* during intimacy. Tom Dawson, a close friend of Clay's wrote me and said: "Clay played at S&M (just the icing on the cake, he once said)...and Garrison thought to make hay out of that one. Well, he did, but it was falsified. You see, Clay's house had recently been rented out and he had scoured it of the faintest compromising item. Garrison's lurid implications were indeed inspired by no more than Clay's two Mardi Gras costumes...no, three. He owned a Shinto priest's outfit complete with Korean horsehair hat, an executioner's hooded gown replete with rope sash and black hood and an old historic plantation whip some nice lady gave him, and finally a black Arabic costume, gold-embroidered and with Feisal-type headress, all given him by some dignitary in Damascus years back." Well, I don't want to turn this into a fashion show, but you get the point.

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#### Private lives.

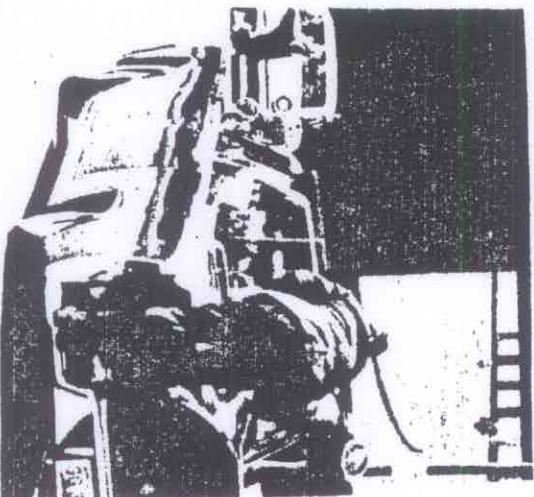
It seems to be essentially part of any progressive position that we constantly probe into peoples' private behavior, and especially those who slide into public office. Curtains of secrecy always invite shoddy dealings and criminality of the greatest sort. Full exposure is anathema to hypocrites. Wealth, privilege and abuse of power all require the secrecy of "privacy" for their crimes. Lack of disclosure invites double standards off which hypocrites prosper.

Why I bring all this up now is that it seems to me that a central theme in the gay liberation strug-

gle is a movement toward personal integrity and discovery of the *fullness* of self. We're coming to feel that there really are no secrets, nor should be, in the way we live our lives. Only straight men require the cloak of secrecy for the shame of their lives: Nixon, Helms, Vesco, Howard Hughes, Senator Kennedy, *inter alia*. Gay males move in the other direction, toward total accessibility and full discussion of their "personal lives."

This has been a running theme through great gay art since Whitman at least who made poetry out of the 'taboo' impulses in his day-to-day life. Or take Edward Carpenter who meshed his politics, love of comrades, socialism and esthetics into a working, unified whole; he had nothing to hide. Gay writers of all sorts have been at the forefront in being candid. The series of interviews in *Gay Sunshine* is a perfect example of this. Or, as one friend of mine put it with a weary sigh: "You just can't get Neddie Rorem to shut up!"

It seems only fair that if homophobic ambitious men wished to discredit and condemn Clay Shaw by stigmatizing him as homosexual and



The Event Itself

probing around in his private life—real or whatever they imagined—then it's our task to balance the issue and bring them under the same kind of scrutiny and discussion. In other words, as people dish, so shall they be dished!

#### MARK LANE

As Kirkwood mentioned in *American Course*, part of the informal press kit every reporter received upon arriving in New Orleans to cover the trial was a picture of a well-known Assassinologist. "In the photograph he is nude, face grimacing, hands behind him (rumored to be tied behind him), sporting a full erection. Also present in the picture is a woman's hand holding a pin or needle to his genitals." It's Mark Lane, of course.

As far as I know, this photo has never appeared in print before as other journals would no doubt decline on grounds of it being "irrelevant" or "in bad taste" (unknown words at *Fag Rag* editorial conferences). There's a story behind the photo: it was taken back when Lane was in the New York State Legislature and had embarrassed his party leaders on a vote. A D.A.'s search of some apartment turned up this photo. It got passed from hand to hand, and now it belongs to the ages. Such are the screen-tests for A Star.

I bring up this snap of Lane posing because it seems slightly disingenuous of him to so rabidly prod Garrison on in his witch-hunt—esp. when he saw what was happening to defame Shaw personally—when this very photo was floating around for all New Orleans to see as evidence that sexual "kinkiness" is not the sole domain of gay males! Lane's no dumb bunny; he should have read Garrison's heads right off and got the fuck out of there if he was any good. Surely, being a lawyer himself, and Oswald's posthumous legal rep, he must have known the tricks Big Jim was up to. I think Lane's continued support and encouragement of Garrison is indicative of the limits of his own ambition and the lengths he'll go to in order to get what he wants.

Mark Lane's long been on the conspiracy case. He and few others rejected and actively opposed the "conclusions" of the Warren Commission from the start. He braved public scorn to take his case to the people. Over the years he's met considerable success as well as attracted serious criticism even from those working his same side of the fence. I spoke with Carl

Oglesby, a brilliant theorist himself and member of the Boston-based Assassination Information Bureau. After a recent A.I.B. conference here in Boston, Oglesby told me that some of Lane's colleagues resent his flashy publicity-seeking as well as some of his methods. Surely, Lane's assistance to a pol like Garrison turned out to be a set-back for critics of the Warren Report, and Lane's ambition is partly to blame. Personally, I have few doubts that if Lane had been in a position of power like Garrison's he would have behaved in a similar manner—not worrying over means, just relentlessly pursuing his end.

#### JIM GARRISON

Jim Garrison made his entrance into New Orleans politics as a Crusader Against Vice, always an easy mark in that crime-ridden town. Unlike Shaw, who was single, Garrison was legally bonded into a Basic Heterosexual Breeding Unit that had birthed 5 times, well above the national average. The wife has been quoted as saying: "He keeps me pregnant in the summer and barefoot in winter." Garrison's a Fine Family Man with A Respectable Career—yeah, we know that type: the perfect hypocrite, capable of any kind of closet behavior, and being a bully in power, he dares anyone to squeal.

Yet barmaids and waitresses all around New Orleans will tell you that Big Jim has a taste for offbeat sex: being walked on naked by a woman in spiked heels, slapping around prostitutes, etc. My favorite New Orleans street story about Jim Garrison, unconfirmed but popular, has him being felled by a prostitute. Jim's got an ample piece, it's said, and he made her take it all. According to this tale, she choked to death while blowing him, and on her last gasp, Big Jim pulled out his pud and gismed all over her face. Big Man!

Stigmatizing Shaw as homosexual, and hopin g to make political gain out of it, was not only grubby pandering tactics and dirty tricks, it was hypocritical of G.'s part. As a closet quean himself, he was equally open to this "criticism." But hypocrites play dirty. Garrison played it safe by doing his scoring in those places largely reserved for married-men-fags: tearooms and baths. Garrison made news by being publically accused by another breeding heterosexual for "molesting" his 13-year-old son. It was only a front-prige accu-

sation, to be sure, and no legal charges came out of it (I wonder why), but my dear! For a D.A.'s who's got a lot of press out of the Twilight World of Clay Shaw's Sex Life, we've got a backroom full of stories about the ways and means and receptacles of Big Jim's Big Phallus. I've even heard from one who'd know that Garrison was making it with Perry Raymond Russo!

Even for an imaginative person, it takes a bit of work to conceive a man as thoroughly corrupt as Jim Garrison: corrupt and hypocritical in his personal life, a "bought-man" professionally (betolden to organized crime interests), power-mad, mentally unbalanced, a tyrant. He's an anarchist's best argument. He's no political freak; he's the norm with a lucky break. He, like Nixon, is a perfect lesson of how power really works in the United States. Dealers in drugs, death and intrigues will always set up innocent men and use hysterical charges to distract attention from their grubby day-to-day dealings. Garrison, by his actions, set back criticism on the Warren Report at least 6 years: a pity. The critics and theorists, or at least the super-stars among them, should take care the company they keep.

As part of his campaign to defame Shaw, Garrison attempted to coerce prisoners in the Parish prison to "testify" against Shaw with phoney stories made up by the D.A.'s staff linking Shaw with Ferric and Oswald. Vernon Bundy, a junkie, agreed to testify he saw Shaw give Oswald money on a beach. Two other prisoners, Miguel Torres and Jack Frost, refused. Torres kept quiet about his refusal. Frost boasted of it. Not long thereafter Frost was found murdered in his cell, and his death, it appears, came on orders.

"Clay thought Garrison felt he would commit suicide after he was arrested," Gail Baumgartner, a close friend of Shaw's, told me. And wouldn't that be neat for Garrison. He wouldn't need a trial then. He could move his juggernaut forward on the assumption that suicide implies guilt, *a la Ferric*. For Garrison knew, as do the men who killed Kennedy (or the Kennedys themselves for that matter), that careers for ambitious men are only secured over corpses and the cover-up of corpses.

Anyway, Shaw refused to play out Garrison's preferred scenario. He maintained a calm and, to

some of his friends, a maddening stoicism throughout his two-year ordeal.

Kirkwood: "I had dinner or drinks with Clay at least 3 nights a week during the trial, and the amazing thing was to me that he was cheering me up. When these yo-yos came into that courtroom with their ridiculous testimony—that man from New York, Spiessell—it was a terrible circus. It was so ridiculous that when you thought that this was in fact, supposedly, a sane, legal, criminal proceeding, and then you saw it turn into this farce, and you saw the press still playing it as something serious, I mean it's incredible that people could still give it serious attention! The feeling was that he was going to be found guilty by that jury, regardless of the testimony, because you cannot show the Zapruder film *that* many times [5 times in court and several more during deliberations] and have that man sitting there accused of it. It's such an emotional thing to see. You see his head blown off and Christ! you want somebody to pay for it!"

Shaw's harassment by the D.A. didn't end with the jury's prompt acquittal. Garrison immediately rearrested Shaw and charged him with perjury. After several years of appeals in higher courts, the perjury indictments were dismissed. Shaw's own civil suit against Garrison and his backers (and band of rich New Orleans businessmen who funneled large amounts of cash to Garrison through their group, Truth or Consequences, Inc.) was stuck with legal delays; he died before it was resolved. As Kirkwood told me: "If I ever wanted anyone to live I wanted Clay Shaw to live so he could nail them."

But even death didn't end the harassment by the State. Though no longer D.A., Garrison's clique were still around. As Gail Baumgartner tells it: "The police called me. They wanted to exhume the body. Some woman had called them and said the bodies had been switched. Someone said one of Shaw's friends had done him in. Baumgartner stood her ground and refused the agents of the State this final assault on Shaw's remains.

#### MORT SAHL

Just off the top of my head, I remember back a few years ago Mort Sahl was in Boston on a local radio talk show. I phoned in to ask him his

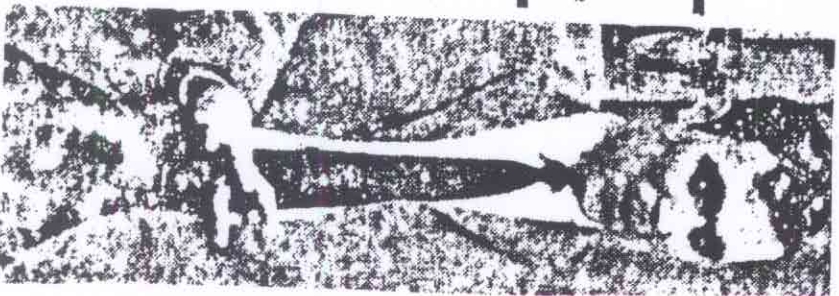
views on Kirkwood's book *American Grotesque*. Perhaps the moderator knew what was coming: at any rate he cut to an ad while I was left on the line. I heard Sahl snap: "That fucking Kirkwood's nothing but a goddamn fag and they all work together." Homophobia, as Freud observed, leads to conspiratorial thinking.

Sahl's current career finds him the host of a TV panel game show in Los Angeles called *Both Sides Now*. In late March of this year, while hosting a panel of women, Sahl lunged into attacking homosexuals, one of his favorite avocations: "They're scavengers," he told the women. "They're your enemy. They view nihilism as a way of life... They despise [women] because you have the real thing... Can't you see the negative force of homosexuals in society?... Have you ever seen a poor faggot?... they're a destructive force... I would suggest they seek psychiatric care or buy a plot at Forest Lawn."

The gay community in and around L. A. was, naturally, outraged, and they demanded time for representatives of their groups to discuss Sahl's homophobia on the air. Two men and two women were selected: Morris Kight, Bob Sircio, Sally Stewart and Sharon Cornelison. Sahl revealed irritation at even having to talk to these people. He was angered by the men, but it was the lesbians who drove him to expose his truly incredible homophobia. According to the account in the 11 April 75 edition of *Entertainment West*, Sahl "refused to deal with the women on anything close to a serious level... and reminded his guests, audience and public that he felt the whole matter beneath his time and intelligence. Again, after at least two dozen previous references, Sahl launched into the important role he was playing in reopening the Kennedy affair. At one point, he belittled to the audience that he was one of perhaps five persons in the world who know the killer of John Kennedy." Yeah, him, Mae Brussell, Mark Lane, Jim Garrison and God, in that order. After this went on for a while, one of the women reminded him: "I'm not John Kennedy... I'm Sally Stewart." Sahl exploded: "I won't have this kind of bullshit on my show!" and along with the other half of his Heterosexual Breeding Unit, he split. Sahl's so busy breaking open the Kennedy case, please don't disturb him with current and important problems like homophobia. Frankly, I'm not so sure I want him on the Kennedy Case anyway, as he sees

flags everywhere in "The Conspiracy." That Clay Shaw was gay was surely enough "proof" to Sahl that he was involved.

This is Perry Raymond Russo. He only wanted to be a Star. For that he implicated Shaw in the Crime of the Century.



DAVID FERRIE & "LEE HARVEY OSWALD"  
(all of them)

Perry Raymond Russo, the State's main witness in their slipshod case against Clay Shaw and a proven liar has unfortunately left us with his legacy of lies, half-truth, confused impressions and a jumble of tales of undetermined origins. What is true and uncontested is that Russo knew David Ferrie in the summer of 1963—which was otherwise a pretty good year. (To a friend, Russo referred to Ferrie as a "painted lady.")

Russo's Dad was in prison that summer and Perry was making a career out of burning around from one party to another. He was 21, kind of attrac-

tive in a pasty-faced way, just the kind of youth that David Ferrie would have latched on to.

Ferrie loved the young men, and he tried to keep himself in their company. Ferrie's the *bona fide* "character" in this whole fiasco, a real Right-Out-Of-The-Pages-Of-Ripley's-Believe-It-Or-Not Number, a sleazy fellow with Bold Aspirations and low-rent realities. *Tackola vrainment!* (I can see Donald Peasance playing Ferrie in the eventual film version.)

Back in 1961, Ferrie was fired as a pilot for Eastern Airlines when they found out about his arrest on a homosexual morals charge (for having sex with a minor). He had no hair on his body—the result of alopecia—he smelled bad, lived like a pig, pasted tufts of hair on his head and face or drew in his eyebrows with cosmetics—perhaps the origin of Russo's "painted lady" epithet. Besides being a pilot, he was a chemist, a cancer "researcher," a pianist, a self-styled priest in that weird cult called the Orthodox Old Catholic Church of North America (Ferrie conducted religious services involving animal sacrifice and blood guzzling). In addition he was involved in drug distribution—though he apparently didn't use them himself—and the sale of pornographic films. He was a stringer for the New Orleans Mafia. He once flew Carlos Marcello, New Orleans crime *capo*, back to this country after he was deported. He also worked for the intelligence services of some sort, not unlikely since they're fist-in-glove with the gunneters down there. Ferrie was also tight with anti-Castro *guzanos*. In researching this article



I've heard all sorts of Ferrie stories, and I'd gamble there's more truth than not in most of them: that he flew anti-Castro "guerrillas into Cuba as well as dropping bombs on Havana; that he was involved in gun-running for the CIA before the Bay of Pigs when that Agency was training the *guzanos* in a northern Louisiana swamp. Ferrie loved guns and the idea of killing people, a trait he shared with the Warren Commission's

"Oswald." At one point Ferrie was personally constructing a submarine to torpedo Havana harbor. And on.

The story I like best comes from Russo himself. Russo played baseball regularly that summer with a bunch of right-wing Cuban refugees. Ferrie encouraged Perry to drop by with his teammates after the game. Ferrie only wanted to blow them, of course, and when it didn't work out, they'd leave and never come back. Ferrie couldn't keep any boy for long. One letter found in Ferrie's effects after his death read: "Dear Al, I offered you love and the best I could: all I got in return, in the end, was a kick in the teeth"—probably to Al Landry, an old boy friend. (In fact, Russo's original contact with Ferrie had been to alienate him from Landry.)

Anyway, it was on one of these visits that Russo claims he met a "Leon Oswald" whom Ferrie identified as his roommate. Hold tight 'cause this is where the Quean Network Action gets fast and heavy and sets your Mort Sahl's salivating. Russo, who's really not known for the accuracy of his "memoiry," recalled "Leon Oswald" as husky and bearded, not at all like the "Lee" Harvey Oswald we all came to know that Friday afternoon, the one plucked from the pit of the Texas Theatre and destined for stardom. Most accounts never place Oswald and Ferrie together after their slight acquaintanceship in the Civil Air Patrol in the 50s. This "Leon" who lived with Ferrie in that summer of 1963 was actually James Lewallen, a bearded, scruffy number, a strong stalking type that Russo noticed. He was often referred to as "Leon" or "Lee." Interestingly, Shaw admitted in court to knowing both Laylen Martens and Jim Lewallen, probably as old tricks, or old tricks of friends.

Like a kiss-n-tell quean, Ferrie drew Russo aside and had to share word of his conquest. Ferrie revealed how he had whipped up a love potion, fed it to "Oswald." Lewallen who then became aroused and fucked him. Just wonderful but such work, my dear, to get fucked in the ass in New Orleans!

According to my sources, "Oswald" Lewallen was a kind of "referred trick" with Ferrie acting as contact-person/pimp. "Oswald" Lewallen was straight Trade who was sleeping his way through gay New Orleans society. This is where it's alleged Clay Shaw fit in—having used Ferrie's pimp services for meeting Martens and Lewallen. But this was never proved.

Where was our Lee Harvey Oswald all this time? He was in New Orleans too, puttering about, not working much, up to something. Marina's no help, even though she was with the husband in that city, breeding. She spoke virtually no English back then; their whole marriage was a queer affair if you ask me, obviously the shipshod work of some intelligence agent here or abroad. I have little doubt, however, that this Oswald was also a piece of Trade. That summer he was rarely home, even though he hadn't a job most of the time. Marina never questioned him about his activities. She once asked something of him and he beat her up. Did this Oswald know Ferrie? Both Marina and LHO's landlady in New Orleans have testified that they never knew LHO to wear a beard. In fact, he seems more the type to be pathologically clean cut. Look at the photos of him when he was arrested; his hair is neat, clean clothes, all characteristic of one with a military outlook on life.

(A subsequent roommate of Mr. David Ferrie's was Ray Broshears—now the Rev.—currently working the San Francisco scene and editor of *The Gay Crusader*, a curious gay paper of indeterminate though Californiasloppy-&-quasi-right-wing politics. He's also the famous Ray Broshears of the much-louder "Lavender Panthers," a man with much to tell and tell. Rev. Broshears has at times spoken of his life with Ferrie, and it's our hope that he will take future occasions to acquaint us all with whatever there is to know. One coastal correspondent of mine wrote of Broshears: "We have heard all sorts of rumors that the 'reverend' was in the thick of things down there; he remains a troublemaker here.")



David Ferrie dropped dead just a few days after the Garrison investigation story broke. His autopsy said death due to cerebral hemorrhage; it could have been murder or suicide as well as natural death. Ferrie *did* leave a farewell note. He had often bragged that he had in his possession a chemical that was fatal but left no signs of forced death and that the autopsy would reveal nothing more than a "blood clot."

Garrison had already talked with Ferrie extensively; I'd gamble Ferrie smelled a set-up—esp. since he knew how such things work. Garrison had him under surveillance. As it turned out, Ferrie was worth far more to Big Jim dead than alive. Had Ferrie lived, Shaw would likely have never been brought into this mess, except perhaps to find out how both Ferrie and Shaw knew so much of the same Trade—The Quean Network Angle again.

The night of the assassination, with Oswald already apprehended, Ferrie drove with two boys to a skating rink in Texas through a rainstorm. He made his presence known and spent most of the time by a pay phone. What all this signifies remains to be revealed; yet off the cuff I'd say it reads like some trashy pop thriller out of the murderous pen of that award-winning literary jailbird, E. Howard Hunt, another vulgar breeder.

#### PERRY RAYMOND RUSSO

P. R. Russo stepped forward immediately after Ferrie's death to cash in his chips held in reserve to those past four years. With the help of the D.A.'s sodium penitential, hypnosis, and some strong-arming by Garrison, Russo suddenly "remembered" that somebody like Clay Shaw, though under a different name, was talked about. The fellow he had met had been introduced to him as "Clem Bertrand."

Perry Russo till the time of the trial had been a salesman; he pushed insurance and *The Great Books of the Western World* series, but mostly Perry sold himself. He was impressive. He was easily hypnotized. He confessed to having difficulty separating what was real from what wasn't. Ferrie got him involved in pornographic film sales. (Perry might have appeared in some of these films.) He may also have helped Ferrie in some of his drug dealings (though I should watch myself here: like most people involved in seedier transactions—Wm. F. Buckley, say—Russo's touchy about being mislabeled). He sued *Time Magazine* for mistaking him for the junkie Vernon Bundy, and thereby defaming his fine character. This quean don't want no unearned cum stains on her ball gown!)

O! These young things that want to be stars! They are foot-loose, no politics, an inkling of what it takes to Get Ahead in America, willing to use a smile, their bodies, a phoney story to get their names in the news and make the Big Time. These types come by the yard all around the USA: Perry Russo's a classic cut from the cloth.

When Kirkwood went to interview Russo after the



trial—even though Russo had been warned not to talk to him—here's what happened:

Kirkwood: "So, we were hitting it off. He's really in effect telling me, yes, he could easily be mistaken about ever meeting Clay Shaw. It was very warm and he said, 'Do you mind if I take off my shirt?' I said no. He was drinking beer and I was—I don't like beer—so I was drinking wine or something. He was sitting across from me during the interview. I noticed that finally he put his hand down like this [into his trousers and rubbing his groin]. I did not put this in the book. He was trying to do it as subtly as he could, but he was doing that [rubbing] a lot. I just pretended that I couldn't even see him... I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't trying to accomplish some kind of entrapment." Poor Kirkwood! It just might have been an entrapment, though Louisiana hasn't any laws forbidding homosexual intercourse in private<sup>per se</sup>. But Garrison was out gunning for him. One plot of the D.A.'s was to plant some grass on him and bust him. Kirkwood has a marijuana arrest to his credit in East-hampton, New York. Garrison's thugs also stole K.'s mail regularly while he was in New Orleans—only a federal offense—scrounging for some dirt to nail him. Point being: who, ultimately, wouldn't flaky Perry Raymond Russo *fuck* for fame, fortune and...infamy? Russo wondered after Shaw's acquittal if Shaw begrudged him his efforts for the prosecution. Kirkwood loater: "I felt sorry for the poor fucker. He's a real loser. The evening I spent with him was a surprise to me because he had been told not to talk with me... Russo's main thing was: I wonder how does Shaw feel? I told Clay: 'Perry Russo wants to talk with you.' Clay said: 'For what? To apologize?' I said: 'I would imagine. But he really wants to meet you.' Sure. No problem. I would love to meet him. It didn't come about."

Sometime after the trial, Perry Russo was arrested on a stolen goods rap which some have hinted was a set-up by Garrison to get Russo for not coming through fully on his case. So much for this Cinderella of the Conspiracy Ball. \*\*\*

So there we have the principles who brought this case about. It's an odd assortment that could have pulled off The Crime of The Century and its subsequent "revelation."

Yet the question lingers: Why Clay Shaw?

Surely Garrison needed a victim rather badly. He had Sahl and Lane plying him with their rasputian plans to knock off the Warren Report ("Promise him anything, but give him...the Zapruder Film!"), the

press clucking for some results, and his primary suspect cold dead. Big Jim Garrison was on the verge of being left holding the proverbial bag. And He-Men like Jim Garrison would rather muck up the world and thousands of lives given the choice than risk personal humiliation in public.

Still, why Clay Shaw?

Here's the story Kirkwood got:

"After Ferrie died, Garrison was frantic to get somebody. He had to have a body; the show had to go on... There was that name that lawyer, Dean Andrews, had dropped, Clem Bertrand or Clay Bertrand... So when somebody said that some lawyer said that a private person called up on behalf of Lee Harvey Oswald, his name was 'Clem Bertrand,' then it was 'Clay Bertrand' and somebody said that Garrison said: 'Find a Bertrand in New Orleans!' Well, there was no Bertrand. Shaw's arrest came out of a meeting that went something like this: somebody said, 'We can't find a Clay Bertrand.' Garrison said: 'Find a Clay. Is there a Clay somebody?' Someone said, 'Hey! What about Clay Shaw at the International Trade Mart?' Another said, 'O! He speaks Spanish too!' And somebody said, 'And he's homosexual!' Once you had two given—that Clay had led a homosexual life and that he spoke Spanish as part of his work at the Trade Mart—once Garrison had someone who was vulnerable, then he *really* wouldn't let go. I think the homosexuality is the prime factor that allowed Garrison to keep his claws in Clay."

And what had Dean Andrews to say, as he was the man who made up the name Clem-Clay Bertrand? On the stand at Shaw's trial, Andrews earned himself a perjury charge by finally uttering the truth: "Clay Bertrand" is a figment of my imagination, or whatever you want to call it... If I had my life to live over again, I would say his name was John Jones," which would still keep the matter confused since there was *no man* to begin with!

There was no "evidence" against Shaw except these casual coincidences, but that didn't matter to a corrupt, ambitious pol like Garrison. He set out to manufacture his evidence (just as a corrupt police force, like the one in Dallas, say, can destroy evidence). Money, my dear, will buy *anything* in America: never doubt this. Toss in a liberal measure of personal animosity that Garrison bore Shaw, and Big Jim expected it all to cook up nicely.

Kirkwood: "I think that something that annoyed Garrison to no end was the fact that Clay Shaw was in his everyday dealings with people extremely masculine. He was not a 'camp.' He had great dignity, great strength. He had a great sense of business acumen. And

then the idea that he was also homosexual and was operating well on all other levels of his life I think was absolutely infuriating to Garrison."

A friend of mine who was in New Orleans at the time of the trial and who was also personally associated with one of the principles put it this way:

"It is known that Garrison really disliked Clay, and the bit about the D.A. feeling inferior is based on much truth. Garrison was tolerated in polite New Orleans circles. Law enforcement has never gone over well with socialites anyway, but in New Orleans the law is considered akin to the Mafia—a result of all the obvious graft and corruption... I don't think power-mad alone is the explanation for Jim. He half-assed believes his shit. The other half is a Nixon-crusade to wipe out some inner demon he has wrestled with all his life. He hates Shaw because Shaw made it the right way; he hates fags because he is one and can't come to terms with that; he hates Oswald because the man reached the pinnacle of notoriety in a matter of moments and Garrison is still trying. He hates the Eastern Establishment—Kirkwood, Vidal—because they have rejected him part and parcel."

Kirkwood: "I'll tell you how I feel about Garrison. I firmly believe that he believed there was a conspiracy. I think he's a megalomaniac which I said in the book. I also think he's an extremely *dangerous* man because he's also a bright man in certain ways. When you talk to him, he's not a dumb head at all. He tends to have blinders on... He had announced to the world that he had solved the assassination. Once that hit the papers, all you saw was Garrison on the news. And the planes started landing in New Orleans from all over the world. Now Ferrie was dead; Garrison had a corpse on his hands and he had to get somebody else. I know from talking to many members of his staff that they said: 'Jim, wait a minute. You're at a dead end now. Cool it. Wait till you get some concrete evidence.' But he was like a performer. He'd been hit by the spotlight and he couldn't step out of it. He could not get off-stage." Garrison also entertained visions of the Governor's manse and/or the U.S. Senate Chambers in his head. He was reelected as D.A. in Nov. '69, even after the embarrassment of the Shaw trial, which, oddly, increased his popularity with the voters. He did finally lose in the '73 election after another series of scandals. Currently, Garrison has a private law practice in New Orleans where he handles the business of friends and maps his come-back. \*\*\*

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Putting all of this aside, we're left with the memoir of Clay Shaw, a fine man.

He was born a country boy. At age 16 he co-authored a one-act play, *Submerged*, which has become one of the most-performed and most prize-winning plays among community theatre groups. (In Boston, *Submerged* is available at Baker's Plays.) He also wrote a full-length play, *In Memoriam*, which appeared in New Orleans in 1948. He was a translator of the Spanish playwright Alejandro Casona. He served and was decorated in WW II in which he suffered a back injury. Subsequently when this injury bothered him, it caused him to limp when he walked. Garrison was sure to pick up on this small detail and include it in Vernon Bundy's fabricated testimony.

For awhile Shaw was involved in a theatrical booking agency which handled tours for concert groups and the like. After the war he began his association with the Trade Mart. As Managing Director of that establishment, Shaw culminated his career there with the opening of the T.M.'s new building in 1965, the year he retired.

Shaw was, in addition, a leader in the movement to buy and restore old homes in that city's famous French Quarter, transforming it once again into a fashionable district. He had retired from the Trade Mart relatively early to pursue these pleasures: architectural restoration, travelling and writing. But Jim Garrison's ambitions ruined all that. Shaw's sayings and property were wiped out by his legal expenses; Tom Dawson writes: "By the way, Clay's lawyers never accepted a red cent, despite marathon work for him. But when it was over, Clay (then broke by the cost of private investigators and such) sold his house to give them something. He insisted."

During the trial Shaw continued to reside alone at his home at 1313 Dauphine St. in the French Quarter, even though many of his friends feared for his safety and prodded him to get some kind of security. (Right after his arrest, Shaw spent several days at the home of his friend Marilyn Tate when it was thought he risked physical assault and/or murder attempts if he stayed at home.) Though there were threats made against him during his ordeal, Shaw was pleased with the wide support he received from people all across the country. Various lawsuits kept him tied up until his death. He bought some buildings, in effect going back to work to make some money. He did some public speaking. At one college engagement Shaw told the students: "It doesn't matter what happens to me: terrible things happen to everybody. But what I'm talking about tonight could happen to anybody within the sound of my voice. You think it's impossible. I assure you it's not."

I write about Clay Shaw here because I think his strange ordeal was not just that of an individual at a time in a place caught in the specific confluence of events and ambitions. His was not a set of unreplicable events. What happened to Shaw provides us with one more clear-cut example of how Power really works in America and who prospers by it and who's destroyed. The Personality Type which succeeds most is one held together by a web of racism, sexism & homophobia. (The judge was not only obsessed with Shaw's homosexuality, he was also convinced Shaw was a "Mongrolid-Negro," and he found supportive "evidence" for this in that several black men in the vast jury pool were also named Shaw.)

It's no news to suggest that the Authoritarian Personality requires the repression of homosexual eroticism; the distortions which result from this repression ripple out into extensive public repercussions. One of the few proposals of Freud that wins me without debate, as I've mentioned above, is his idea that repressed homosexuality is connected with paranoia and conspiratorial thinking. Enter J. Edgar Hoover and Joe McCarthy *inter alia*. Jim Garrison, too. I hate to distract the Kennedy Assassination Theorists from their fine work, but I can't help but wonder how much of the energy that goes into their conspiratorial scenarios is actually rooted in their homophobic paranoid posturing. The queer-baiting of a public figure like Mort Sahl, for example, is equally important to me in the here and now as is breaking open assassination cover-ups. The snaring of Shaw as a victim is all that more alarming because he's A) viewed as "vulnerable" because he was gay, and B) he was productive and integrated in his life and not a weird neurotic like Ferrite and hence an even more "attractive" choice to target for destruction. One thing I've found in my own life is that ambitious people (almost always men-people) possess an irrational dislike of homosexual men of comparable social standing who seem in their eyes "to be getting away with it," while they remain repressed as part of their effort to succeed. Someone like Shaw was obviously threatening to Garrison on many levels. It's easier for a man like Garrison to understand double-standards, sleazy backroom sex-scandals (as his own sensational molestation, or Judge Haggerty's bust at a stag party) than it is for him to deal with the integrity of Clay Shaw who had no need for a cover-up in his life. Hence, to serve his needs, Garrison and his backers had to create a need for Shaw to have a cover-up of something: hence, the Queen Network angle, queers know queers, and you name it. The job for the D.A., Lane, Brussel, etc., was to some way successfully stigmatize Shaw.

"If he had ever met Ferrite, he would have admitted it," Gail Baumgartner said. "He once told me over dinner that he wished he had met the man. He said he probably would have found him fascinating."



As part of the "stigmatizing" campaign, Mae Brussel led the pack in defaming Shaw as an obvious conspirator because he had been a C.I.A. agent. For many people this was the mud that was thrown which stuck. (Jim Herlihy's comment was: "Mae Brussel's basis for believing Clay Shaw to be a 'proven agent' is also my basis for dismissing her as incompetent.")

Ms. Brussel was in Boston for The Assassination Information Bureau convention in late January and I

twice asked her her source for this "Shaw-C.I.A." story. Both times she merely referred me to a reference to Shaw made in Marks and Marchetti's book, *The C.I.A. and the Cult of Intelligence*, which turns out not to reveal much. Consequently, it was with much interest and some relief that I came across more information on this story in a column by Ed Sanders in an April issue of *Win Magazine*. Sanders is a sensible writer who's got the talent and curiosity to get at the truth behind stories and blast off the bullshit. In his column "Domestic Intelligence," Sanders writes that he caught up with Marchetti at a Yale Conference on the C.I.A. and the assassinations. He asked him about the Shaw connexion. Marchetti said: "I was Deputy Director's assistant...I asked somebody, I believe it was the Director's [Holmes] assistant, 'I said, 'What's this concern about the trial down in New Orleans?' And he said, 'Oh, a long time ago Clay Shaw had been in contact with the Agency. You know, he was in the export-import business. He knew people coming and going from areas in which we were interested. So he would put the Domestic Contact Services in touch with people so they could be debriefed. Now that was a very overt-type Agency activity. These guys come in and identify themselves. It's one of the more legitimate activities of the C.I.A.' Then he said that the contact [with Shaw] had been broken off long ago, but they just don't want it to come up at this point in time because a guy like Garrison would distort it, the public would misunderstand it." Which is exactly what Mae Brussel did. If she's willing to hang a Presidential Assassination on a vague scrap of "Complicity" like that, she shouldn't be working this vein. Lacking specific information, some people will conjecture just about anything.

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Too, I write about Clay Shaw because even as this story first broke eight years ago and pictures and news about Shaw hit the stands, I immediately felt him to be *simpatico*. I sensed right off that he was being monstrously wronged. I had an attraction to Shaw as well: 6'4", barrel-chested, blue eyes, dark complexion, silver-white hair, sensitive yet tough. I think I was won over by a photo in *Time*. It's strange but there's a quality of comradeship which reaches out across space and connects people who've never met. Just seeing pictures of Shaw and watching his nightmare unfold in those years sparked in me a rare mixture of compassion and desire that not often finds expression. Apparently I was not alone in this response. Tom Dawson told me that many young men were attracted to Shaw. "Clay once told me that he sometimes got

tired of playing the Moses role," which is, I suppose, how I among others saw him and a role for which he was keenly suited.

And so, especially after reading Kirkwood's book, I knew: here's a man I must meet someday. Shaw was in his late 50's then, I figured there was plenty of time to allow for eventual communication. When I came across his obituary last August, I was pained. I had waited too long to contact this man. I had missed a chance to befriend him. This hurt came back again as I spoke with Gail Baumgartner: "I toward the end Clay would say, 'There aren't many people close to me. This isn't any way to end a life...'"

Shaw had developed cancer of the lung (he was a heavy smoker). He was treated for it, but even so the malignancy spread to his brain and then all parts of his body. He was 61 years old when he died. It's a dumb and maudlin and obvious thing to say, but the urgency of making contact is never more apparent than when it's too late. We must never assume there'll be time later to get in touch with people we must know and support, for there're people and groups and organizations out there with plans to disrupt our lives. This loss of never meeting Clay Shaw personally and offering him my friendship and support is perhaps what's made the memory of him (such as I have come to "know" him) so present and real to me.

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So let us press on and expose corruption and cover-ups. I'm all in favor of shedding light on the evil practices of those in public office and among private powers. I'm always eager to find out who killed whom and why. But, please, let us go gently and consider the damage a reckless pursuit of obsession can do. Let us never separate means from ends. For I'd rather let one evil in the past slip by unattributed than create new evil by uncovering and rooting out the old. Let us always remember to tend to the needs and heed the rights of the living before mobilizing to right an injustice to the dead. Perhaps I'm more set off by the hunt for causes, motives and perpetrators than I should be, but what happened to Clay Shaw is enough of an example for me of how this search can easily slip out of control and start its own destruction.

And to me it's such a typically American story, even the "good" people can't undertake their noble endeavor but they make a mess of it, ruin people's lives, wind up endorsing injustice, then run off and leave the consequences of their actions like some sloop on the floor for someone else to come along and clean up.