

Was 'Hardly Surprised' by Decision--Garrison

Comment Follows Ruling
by Christenberry

Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison said Friday he was "hardly surprised" at the federal court decision blocking his prosecution of Clay Shaw because "we've been fighting the federal government for more than three years."

The district attorney's comments came following a decision Thursday by United States Dist. Court Judge Herbert W. Christenberry that forbade Garrison from trying Shaw on a charge that he lied during his trial of conspiring to kill President John F. Kennedy.

Shaw said he was "delighted" with the decision, but added that he was not convinced that his ordeal was over. Garrison still has the right to appeal, he pointed out.

'FEELS EMPATHY'

Garrison said he understood Shaw's feelings, saying that he felt "empathy" for the man he charged with conspiring to kill the former President.

"My initial reaction to the decision," Garrison said, "was that he (Shaw) was a human being who got a break. I didn't feel bad. I felt good," he said.

"I have never liked being in a position of hurting people and I have never gotten over my basic compassion for the defendant.

"I had to do something that I was not particularly happy about and my reaction was one of empathy for Shaw."

Garrison had charged Shaw with lying during his trial when he said that he did not know Lee Harvey Oswald, the man the Warren Commission said killed the President.

After all the years of prosecution, Shaw still contends that he is not bitter. "It's been a bad four years but it's getting better."

WRITING PLAY

To keep himself busy Shaw is writing a play, lecturing on the sensations felt in being a defendant in a presidential assassination trial and restoring buildings in the French Quarter.

Meanwhile, Garrison, who has suffered a severe spinal infection, is seldom seen in his office. He has written a book on the American political situation with the assassination of President Kennedy as the theme. He has a contract to write three more books.

Garrison book was mentioned. Judge Christenberry in his decision to block the prosecution of Shaw. "It is obvious that the sale of defendant's book may be promoted by the publicity resulting from the continued prosecution of Clay Shaw," the judge said.

Garrison said he is not sure whether an appeal of the judge's decision will be forthcoming. "You reach a point where pursuing a rabbit almost endlessly while the wolves involved in this matter are out beyond your jurisdiction, power and distance becomes a question of fairness. I could not go on forever just putting people in jail," Garrison said.

Of the ruling itself, Garrison said, "I don't want to get involved in the technicalities of the rulings. Judge Christenberry is one of the most experienced judges on the federal bench."