

Russo Is Pressed On Identity of Shaw

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By Don McKee

NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 11 (AP) — Star prosecution witness Perry Raymond Russo testified today that he told a police sergeant in 1967 he could not say truthfully whether Clay Shaw was one of a trio he said he heard in 1963 plotting President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

Russo's testimony at a 1967 preliminary hearing about that talk has been the core of Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's conspiracy investigation. Russo testified then, and again at Shaw's trial this week, that he heard Shaw, Lee Harvey Oswald and David W. Ferrie plotting to kill Kennedy.

"It was hard to tell if he was there or if he wasn't," Russo said today, after earlier pointing out Shaw as a participant in a conversation dealing with Kennedy murder plans.

Russo's statement came on cross-examination at Shaw's trial on a charge of conspiring with Oswald and Ferrie to kill Kennedy. Asst. Dist. Atty. James A. Alcock had conducted direct examination Monday.

Russo testified earlier today he was "100 per cent sure" that Shaw was among the group in Ferrie's apartment in mid-September 1963.

Russo was asked by F. Irvin Dymond, Shaw's counsel, about a June, 1967, interview with Sgt. Edward O'Donnell of the New Orleans Police Department. He was asked if he told O'Donnell, in response to a question as to whether Shaw was at the party. "Do you want to know the truth—I don't know."

Asked if he said that, Russo testified today: "With some explanation, yes."

Russo said he discussed with O'Donnell the great pressures he was under and then made the remark that it was hard to tell if Shaw was or wasn't at the Ferrie party.

Dymond asked if Russo told

O'Donnell that if he had to give a yes or no answer as to whether Shaw was at the party, he would have to say no.

Russo testified: "Probably not in those exact words. But in essence, yes."

See SHAW, A10, Col. 1

SHAW, From A1

Q. When he asked you whether this conversation sounded like a legitimate plot to kill Kennedy, you said, "No it did not?"

A. Right.

Russo testified he had been placed under hypnosis three times by arrangement of Garrison who initiated the conspiracy investigation and charged Shaw in March, 1967. Shaw, 55, retired managing director of International Trade Mart has denied knowledge of any conspiracy and said he never knew Oswald or Ferrie, both dead.

Psychiatric Treatment

Russo also testified that in 1959 he was under psychiatric treatment "on a consultation basis" and this continued for 12 to 18 months.

He denied attempting suicide in 1962.

Russo testified that his house and telephone were bugged by Garrison in 1967 to record interviews with a writer investigating the conspiracy case.

"They were interested in how far he would go," Russo said. He did not explain what was meant by "how far he would go." He said Garrison set up bugging devices for Russo's interviews with Jim Phelan, author of a Saturday Evening Post article critical of the conspiracy investigation.

Russo testified that he had told Phelan if he went along

with Phelan's suggestion to weaken in his identification of Shaw as one of an assassination-plot trio, "Garrison would clobber me over the head."

Russo testified earlier today that he wanted to meet Shaw two years ago to be "1000 per cent sure" that Shaw was one of the alleged trio.

"I was 100 per cent sure. But in a case like this you want to be 1000 per cent sure," he said.

Russo said he never heard Shaw, Oswald or Ferrie actually "agree" or make a pact to kill Kennedy. He said also he did not consider the assassination talk important enough to report it to authorities.

Monday Testimony

When asked if he had wanted to be surer than he was, Russo said: "I saw the defendant . . . I saw him at David Ferrie's apartment and heard him shoot the breeze about killing the President. Of that I'm sure."

Russo concluded: "The point is, you can never be too sure."

He told Monday of going to a mid-September, 1963, party at Ferrie's apartment and hearing Shaw, Ferrie and Oswald talk over details of how to assassinate Kennedy with a crossfire and a diversionary shot.

Russo was asked if he once told an interviewer, "I'm not really sure whether they were plotting against Castro (Fidel Castro of Cuba) or Kennedy."

"Well," Russo said cautiously. "I say yes."

He said this "plotting" would include Ferrie's obsessive assassination talk in the summer of 1963 and also the alleged meeting of Ferrie, Oswald and Shaw.

Russo had testified earlier he said nothing to the authorities about what he knew until the time of Ferrie's death in 1967 during Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's probe because he thought the Warren Commission had solved the case. The Commission said it found no credible evidence of a conspiracy.

After the assassination, Russo testified, he saw Ferrie several times, but they never discussed Kennedy's murder. There was this exchange by defense attorney Dymond and Russo:

Q. You didn't see fit to ask him if he killed President Kennedy.

A. I didn't see fit to ask him anything . . .

Q. And to the best of your recollection the assassination was never discussed?

A. No.

Jury Sent Out

When Dymond asked if Ferrie ever appealed for Russo to "keep quiet" about what he'd heard, Alcock objected, the jury was sent out and Russo was permitted to answer for the record in the event of an appeal.

"No," was his answer.

When the questioning turned to Russo's failure to report the alleged conversation between Shaw, Oswald and Ferrie, Dymond asked Russo if his loyalty to Ferrie would have prevented him from reporting it to authorities.

'Not A Serious Threat'

"I have no loyalty to David Ferrie," Russo replied.

Q. Was there anything else at any time to have prevented you from reporting the conversation to legal authorities?

A. For a while, no.

Q. Would I be fair in reporting your reasons for not reporting it as being you did not think it was a serious threat?

A. You just didn't know with Ferrie. He always said such fantastic things, such as invading Cuba. I didn't know what to believe.

Q. I take it that you didn't consider the bull session about the shooting important enough to report?

A. Right.