

PHILLIP H. GUARISCO



RUSSO & COURTHOUSE SPECTATOR
Case of the shakes.

Dallas Revisited

In New Orleans last week, judge, jury and court relived the murder of John F. Kennedy. District Attorney Jim Garrison and his staff flashed onto a portable screen the color film of the assassination in Dallas that had been taken by Businessman Abraham Zapruder.

The prosecution hoped the film would convincingly demonstrate that at least one of the bullets that struck the President came from the front. Assistant District Attorney James Alcock argued: "If the state can prove that the President was shot from more than one direction, the state in effect has proved a conspiracy." One sequence—which was shown in slow motion and frame by frame—clearly shows the President falling backward in his seat, an unlikely occurrence if he were being struck by bullets from the rear. However, the Warren Commission Report has already met this objection by noting that Kennedy fell backward because his chauffeur had speeded up the car when the shooting began.

As the jurors leaned forward intently, Businessman Clay Shaw, accused of having conspired to commit the murder, stood next to the jury box, chain smoking, his face impassive.

Truth Serum. The state's key witness, Book Salesman Perry Russo, was severely handled by Defense Counsel Irvin Dymond. On cross-examination, Dymond led Russo carefully through the events of the party at which he said that he had heard Shaw, Lee Oswald

and David Ferrie, a former airlines pilot, discuss ways of killing the President. After two days of contradiction-riddled testimony, Russo made the state's case as shaky as Jell-O. He also displayed considerable antagonism toward Garrison and his staff, who had extracted depositions from him under hyp-

TIME, FEBRUARY 21, 1969

notism and the influence of Sodium Pentothal, a so-called truth serum. Russo admitted that he never heard either Shaw or Oswald agree to murder Kennedy—only Ferrie actually said he would do so. He added that Ferrie indulged in such talk so often that Russo considered the conversation more of a "bull session" than a conspiracy.

The state did make one possibly significant point. Russo has insisted that Shaw was introduced to him as "Clem Bertrand." A veteran mailman, James Hardiman, swore that he had delivered letters addressed both to Clay Shaw and to Clem Bertrand at the French Quarter home of Jeff Biddison, a close friend of Shaw. Even so, that did not make Shaw a member of a conspiracy.

At week's end another of Garrison's witnesses backfired. Special FBI Agent Lyndal Shaneyfelt testified that he had minutely examined the Zapruder film, as well as enlarged prints of the fatal shot that shattered Kennedy's head. Asked Defense Attorney Dymond: "Based on your examination, have you found any photographic evidence to indicate that the shots that hit President Kennedy came from any direction other than his right rear?" Replied Shaneyfelt: "I did not."