

Assistant DA Has Vital Role in Clay Shaw Trial

But Public Knows Little About James Alcock

By PAUL ATKINSON

Sure, everyone knows Jim Garrison. But who really knows James L. Alcock?

Alcock is the ordinary-looking assistant district attorney who has been doing the bread-and-butter work during the 17 days of the Clay L. Shaw trial. Actually the State of Louisiana's case vs. Clay L. Shaw will rise or fall on Alcock's ability.

Yet when anyone mentions Alcock's name, it's really difficult to find out a lot about him.

Late Friday afternoon, Loyola University Law School assistant dean Clarence East recalled Alcock during his student days at the law school.

GRADES WERE GOOD

"All I can remember off hand," said Dean East, "is that he came to us from the Business Administration School. I recall his grades were quite good. He was a personable, intelligent young man."

Dean East said he had him for "two or three classes" and he was "an excellent student in class."

Earlier, Alcock himself had briefly filled in material on his background. He came to the district attorney's office Oct. 1, 1963, from Loyola, is a native of New York City, and has been here in New Orleans since 1951. He is 35, married a Houma girl, and has three children.

A national news magazine called Alcock "cool and capable."

'HARD WORKER'

Chief assistant district attorney Charles R. Ward said of Alcock, "He's a hard worker."

It is easy to see how Alcock could get almost lost in the tall shadow cast by the towering, almost overpowering Garrison. Where Garrison is long and lanky and smokes pipes, Alcock is short—no more than 5-8—and on the smallish side and smokes cigars.

Friday he was dressed much like any other businessman you might come across on Canal st.

He wore a large tie that prompted someone to remark, "Looks like one his wife gave him for Christmas." Alcock wears glasses, parts his hair on the right side and on this particular day had on a bluish grey business suit.

Generally, when Alcock is questioning any of the long parade of witnesses in the Shaw trial, he does it with a medium

voice. As the news magazine noted, mostly Alcock is "cool."

CAN SHOW ANGER

But he can get angry. Friday morning when Chief Defense Counsel F. Irvin Dymond objected to Judge Edward A. Haggerty about Alcock's line of questioning, Alcock exploded from his chair and circled over in front of the jury.

"Judge," said Alcock, "what the defense counsel is doing is trying to control the state's case. I assure you this testimony will link up."

For a moment, Judge Haggerty sided with the defense, but Alcock's persistency paid off and Judge Haggerty reversed himself.

Reporters, thinking back about Alcock since his entrance into the case, recall little spectacular about him. "The memory that sticks in my mind," said one, "is how he faithfully came to the DA's office on Saturdays during the early days of the Shaw case. He was pleasant, always talked with reporters, but left most to Garrison."

A reporter asked Ward if he could get some biographical information on Alcock to fill in the gaps. Ward went into the recesses of the district attorney's office and came back to report:

"Jim has said he doesn't want anything given out on himself."

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