

SHAW FRENCH QUARTER TALE

Trial Jolted—So Is Witness

By HAYNES JOHNSON

Star Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Charles Spiesel, a small, balding New Yorker with a set slight smile, had a brief glorious moment on the stand. For a while, it seemed as if here, finally, was a dramatic never-before-told story of the prelude to a conspiracy that culminated in the murder of John F. Kennedy.

When he finally stepped from the stand yesterday not only had his story vanished but so had a major portion of Jim Garrison's conspiracy case against Clay L. Shaw.

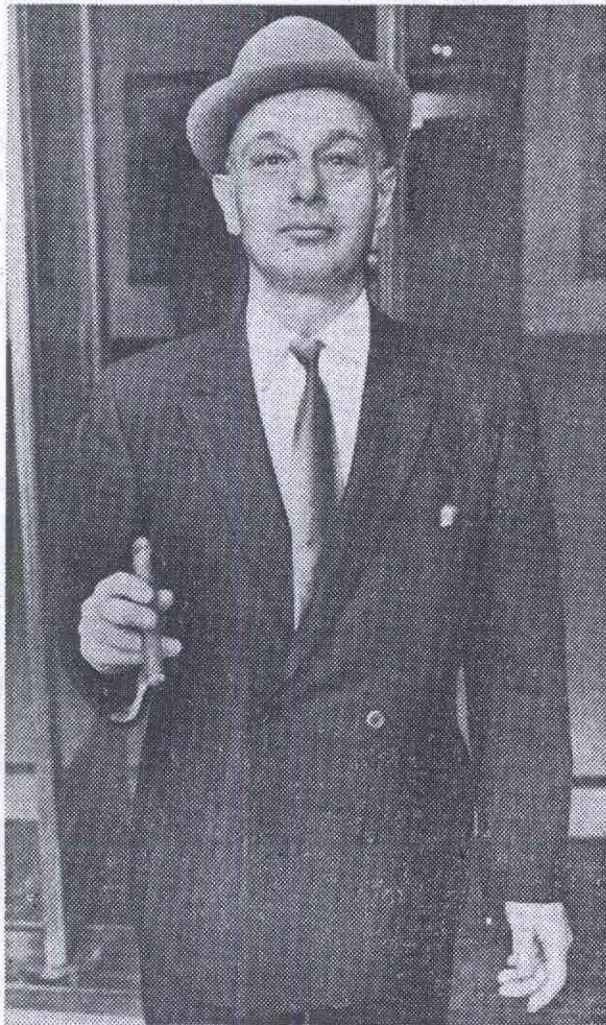
Spiesel was called by Garrison, the theatrical New Orleans district attorney who claims to have "solved" the Kennedy assassination, as a witness for the state late yesterday afternoon.

He told an involved story that held the courtroom spectators rapt.

Spiesel, 49, said he had come to New Orleans in the spring of 1963 and, in a chance encounter, met David W. Ferrie in a Bourbon Street bar. He had spoken to Ferrie, one of Garrison's alleged conspirators in the Shaw case, because he thought, mistakenly, they had known each other in World War II.

The conversation led to a few drinks and then Ferrie invited Spiesel to a private party. They drove to an apartment in the French Quarter, walked up two flights of stairs, and were admitted to a party. There, Spiesel

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—Associated Press

CHARLES I. SPIESEL

Shaw: Witness, Trial Jolted

Continued From Page A-1 testified, Ferrie introduced him to Clay Shaw as the host.

Later, Shaw, Ferrie, Spiesel and about 10 other men sat around a table in the dining room having drinks, said Spiesel. The conversation turned to President Kennedy. The conversation grew critical, and then hostile.

Spiesel said he remembered someone saying, "Somebody ought to kill the son of a bitch."

Next, he testified, a young man with a beard, about 5 feet 9, and 160 pounds, said, "Yes, I would like to do it. But how would you do it?"

Everybody at the table began talking about how to kill the President, Spiesel went on before an intense room full of courtroom spectators. The consensus of those at the party was that "it would have to be done by somebody with a high-powered rifle with a telescopic sight and he would have to be about a mile away."

Spiesel testified that Shaw "seemed amused" by the con-

versation. He also said Shaw and Ferrie discussed the possibility of flying out the would-be assassin after the murder was committed.

The party broke up not long after, and Spiesel left, never to see Shaw again, he said. He did see Ferrie, a former airline pilot who is now dead, two or three times casually afterward.

He said he contacted Jim Garrison's office after Shaw was arrested on a charge of conspiring with Lee Harvey Oswald, Ferrie, "and others" to kill the President. He had recognized Shaw's picture in the paper, he said.

That was where his story stood until F. Irvin Dymond, Shaw's chief counsel, began lengthy cross-examination.

Point by point, Dymond tore Spiesel's testimony apart.

He got him to concede first, that he had "demanded" a \$2,000 payment to tell his story on a television program in New York. He drew from him a description of Ferrie that did not resemble the late pilot at all.

His most telling points were scored when he asked Spiesel why he had sold out his private accounting business in New York. Spiesel answered he had done so because the business was "not going well."

"Isn't it a fact you claimed the New York police had hypnotized you and tortured you and forced you to get out of New York?" Dymond asked.

After some verbal sparring, Spiesel finally admitted that he filed suit in New York claiming the police had done just that.

It also developed that Spiesel had filed suits against a psychiatrist and others in New York claiming they had hypnotized him to get "confidential information" from him.

Spiesel then said there were a number of people who had "conspired" against him. He said his father had done "undercover work for the FBI involving Russia." He did not deny that he believed that his phone was tapped, that he was being followed, and that he was being subjected to a "Communist conspiracy."

He also conceded, under further cross-examination, that he believed he had been kept under a "hypnotic spell" off and on during 1963, 1964, and 1965.

When he stepped from the stand, not only had his credibility been virtually destroyed, but so had a key part of Garrison's contentions in the case.

When court resumed today, Spiesel underwent further cross-examination. Among other things he said in response to Dymond's questioning was that he thought he had been hypnotized about 50 or 60 times in recent years.

He also acknowledged, under more questions, that 15 suits had

been filed against him in New York for bad debts, and that he had finally declared bankruptcy.

To Tour Vieux Carre

At the conclusion of his examination, still one more bizarre twist was added to Spiesel's role in this case. Dymond asked the court if Spiesel would be permitted to go into the French Quarter and see if he could point out the building in which the alleged party had taken place six years ago.

Asst. Dist. Atty. James Alcock objected, saying it would be improbable if not impossible for him to find the same building after all that time. Shaw's lawyer persisted, however, and Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. ruled that Spiesel and the 14 jurors be taken in a bus to drive through the Quarter to see if they could find the apartment building.

Thursday, when Shaw's trial finally opened nearly two years after he had been arrested, Garrison told the jury of 12 men that "the evidence will further show that in June 1963, the defendant, Clay Shaw, was present at a party given in an apartment in the French Quarter of this city."

Garrison also said that testimony would be introduced to show that Shaw, Ferrie and others were present at that party and that "the comment was made that President Kennedy should be killed and that the job could best be done by a rifle. At this point, the defendant, Clay Shaw, suggested that the man doing the shooting would probably be killed before he could make his escape."

Garrison obviously had been setting the stage for a star witness, with dramatic eyewitness testimony. That witness turned out to be Charles Spiesel of New York.