

what the grand jury knew is what Garrison told it. so did not have evidence to evaluate and recall on Garrison makes it it had no way of knowing. and

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This letter is actually of self justification

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YOUR OPINIONS | Letters

Grand juror speaks out about the Clay Shaw trial

New Orleans

I was a member of the Orleans Parish Grand Jury involved in the Kennedy assassination conspiracy probe in 1967. From that perspective, I take exception to what has been printed in The Times-Picayune recently about the Clay Shaw conspiracy trial.

This exception has to do with attorney F. Irvin Dymond's statement, "I don't think he (Garrison) had any case; I think he knew he didn't have any case. (The Times-Picayune, June 1).

On May 26, a column by Iris Kelso referred to how Oliver Stone was handling the movie version of the Kennedy assassination. She wrote, "But if Stone is going to make Garrison a hero and gloss over the fact that he may have put an innocent man on trial for the crime of the century with shoddy evidence or no evidence at all..."

Both of these statements about not having a case or shoddy or no evidence ignore certain facts about the Clay Shaw affair. They would seem to want us to believe that Garrison acted all alone, with no real evidence against

Shaw, that he deliberately concocted the prosecution of Shaw.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Their statements would seem to lead us to believe that a district attorney can do whatever he wants, that there are no protections for the innocent citizen.

Dymond and Kelso know Garrison did not act alone. Many important, respected people concurred with him that there was a case against Shaw.

On March 14, 1967, three Criminal Court judges heard Garrison's case in a preliminary hearing to determine if there was sufficient evidence against Shaw to hold him for trial. What did they conclude? That there was sufficient evidence.

Malcolm V. O'Hara, Bernard J. Bagert and Matthew S. Braniff heard evidence over a four-day period. Were they duped by Garrison? I think not.

Garrison then presented his evidence to a 12-member grand jury. We ruled that there was sufficient evidence to bring Shaw to trial. I believe we were impressed by the care with which Garrison

and his assistant district attorneys handled the evidence and its presentation to us. Were we duped by Garrison? I think not.

When remarks such as those of Dymond and Kelso are published, they tend to cloud the truth, they seem to impugn the intelligence and dedication of judges and grand jurors, two essential links in our criminal justice system. Garrison did not win the trial, true. But he had every right to go to trial. In fact, once the grand jury returned the indictment against Shaw, he had no choice but to go to trial.

Shaw was found innocent by a jury of his peers. No one quarrels with that outcome. It's the American way. It protects all of us. And Dymond did his usual fine job in defending Shaw.

But just that he won acquittal for Shaw does not mean there should not have been a trial. Neither does it mean there was no real evidence against Shaw.

It does mean that the entire legal system was played out to its fullest. That we should all respect.

Jay C. Albarado