

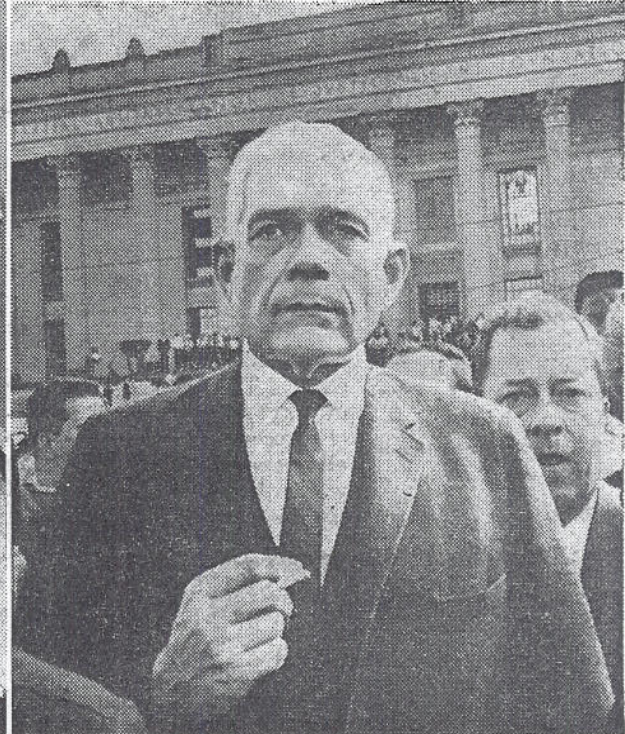
'JFK Plot' Uproar Grows



STRICT ATTORNEY GARRISON DRIVES AWAY
 reduced Mystery Witness to Back Up Plot Story



PERRY RUSSO
 Didn't Talk Before



CLAY SHAW LOOKS SHAKEN AFTER HEARING
 Accused of Plotting With Lee Harvey Oswald

—AP Wirephotos

Witness Links 3 to Oswald

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NEW ORLEANS—Some persistently annoying facts in the life of the Kennedy assassination probe's most startling witness today raised doubts as to the accuracy of his sensational testimony, but the witness stuck to his story.

Perry Russo, 25, of Baton Rouge, Tuesday told a three-judge panel that he overheard

Lee Harvey Oswald, Clay L. Shaw, and David W. Ferrie plot to kill President John F. Kennedy. He also said he later saw Oswald in Ferrie's apartment — and Oswald was cleaning a rifle.

Russo is District Attorney Jim Garrison's "bombshell" — the long-awaited top informant the flamboyant investigator said would prove his charge that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy hatched in New Orleans.

But these facts cast doubt on Russo and his statements:

—The most telling evidence of all to discredit Russo's testimony is the tape of an interview he had with New Orleans television station WDSU-TV two weeks ago, after Ferrie's death. Russo admitted knowing Ferrie, but denied ever meeting Oswald.

His actual words:

"I never heard of Oswald until on television — ahh — the assassination." Now he swears under oath that Oswald was at that "fateful party" with him.

—He said he heard the three plotters in September, 1963. Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963. Yet Russo waited until 1967

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before revealing a word of what he knew.

But in a newspaper interview on Feb. 24 in Louisiana, Russo did not mention the September meeting, although he said he once heard Ferrie threaten to "get" Kennedy.

—Nowhere in the National Archives in Washington, or anywhere in the pages of the voluminous Warren Commis-

sion Report does the name of Perry Russo appear. He was never questioned by any governmental police agency, including the FBI and the Secret Service.

The FBI declined comment on the case Tuesday.

These and other facts cast shadows over his testimony. Whatever, that testimony inflamed the minds of those connected with the investigation.

Russo, a man about 5 feet 9 inches tall, with close-cropped hair, in a brown Ivy League suit, pointed out Shaw in the courtroom as "Clem Bertrand," one of the three alleged conspirators, and identified Oswald and Ferrie from photographs as the others.

Russo said the plot involved "triangulation of crossfire," diversionary,

shooting, a possible flight to Cuba and the sacrificing of one man as a scapegoat to allow the others to escape.

Kennedy was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963—two months after the alleged meeting in Ferrie's cluttered apartment not far from New Orleans' elegant Garden district.

The Warren Commission said Oswald was the lone assassin, and there was no credible evidence of any conspiracy.

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OF THE THREE alleged conspirators, only Shaw is alive. Oswald was killed by Jack Ruby two days after the assassination, and Ferrie died in bed Feb. 22.

Shaw has denied taking part in any conspiracy to kill the President, and the attorney general in Washington said the FBI investigated Shaw late in 1963 and cleared him of any link to the assassination.

Russo, a part-time college student who lives with a young cousin near the campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, was described as "a nice young kid" by a neighbor. A fellow student at LSU said he was "a quiet type who is interested in politics."

Russo was first publicly connected with the Garrison probe on Feb. 24, when he told newsmen he knew Ferrie.

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UNDER THE questioning by Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison, Russo said Oswald was introduced to him as "Leon Oswald" and Shaw as "Clem Bertrand."

Shown a photograph by Garrison, Russo identified Leon as Lee Harvey

Oswald—the man the Warren Commission named as the assassin.

Asked if Clem Bertrand was in the courtroom, Russo pointed at Shaw. At Garrison's direction, he stepped from the witness chair, walked around the defense table and held his hand over Shaw's silvery white hair.

The 54-year-old Shaw, calmly smoking a cigarette, didn't move. Former managing director of the International Trade Mart here, he has denied any part in an assassination conspiracy.

President Kennedy was killed by high-powered rifle bullets in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963—some two months after the alleged meeting here.

Russo said that, after the party, he next saw Lee Harvey Oswald in Ferrie's apartment, and that Oswald was "wiping or cleaning a rifle, bolt action. It had a sight on it for hunting."

* * * *

GARRISON SHOWED Russo a rifle and asked if it had similarities to the one Oswald held in Ferrie's apartment.

Russo said: "The difference to my mind is that this end (front) was not nearly so bubble shaped." He said the weapon had the same bolt action, but a shinier stock, and its telescopic sight was larger than the one on the rifle Oswald had.