

'Plot' Informer Talks of Oswald

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New Orleans

District Attorney Jim Garrison's star witness testified yesterday that he kept knowledge of an alleged plot to assassinate President Kennedy to himself for more than three years because he was "confused" about whether Lee Harvey Oswald was the man he knew as "Leon Oswald."

He said he had since become "absolutely sure" they were the same.

Perry R. Russo, 25, a Baton Rouge, La., insurance salesman, had testified on Tuesday that he witnessed New Orleans business leader Clay Shaw, 54, Oswald, and David Ferrie plotting Mr. Kennedy's death in New Orleans in September, 1963.

OSWALD

Under a slashing cross-examination by Shaw's attorney's yesterday, Russo said that when he saw Oswald in news pictures and on television after the assassination, he "could not be sure" he was Leon Oswald, the man he knew as one of the conspirators.

He had identified the presidential assassin from photographs on Tuesday as Leon Oswald.

Russo was on the stand the entire second day of Shaw's preliminary hearing on accusations that the former director of the New Orleans International Trade Mart conspired to kill Mr. Kennedy.

Defense attorneys introduced in evidence a recording of an interview Russo had with New Orleans station WDSU two weeks ago, in

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which he denied he had "ever heard" of Oswald before the assassination.

PARTY

Russo also testified that he could not remember the names of eight to ten persons who attended a party where the assassination plans were developed.

Russo, a dark-eyed handsome 25, also said he could not remember the approxi-

mate time he arrived with a group of friends at the party given at the apartment of the late David Ferrie — who supposedly masterminded the plot to assassinate the President.

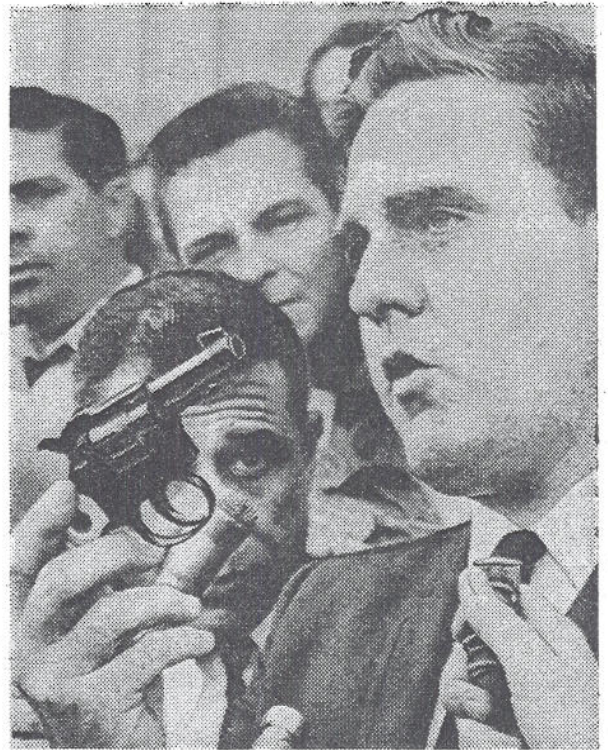
Russo's new testimony contrasted with what he said Tuesday when he described the party he had gone to with eight to ten persons. He had said after most of them had left he remained in Ferrie's apartment and Ferrie, "Leon Oswald" and "Clay Bertrand" plotted the assassination of Mr. Kennedy. Russo in Tuesday's testimony had given names, quotes, places and details of the alleged plot.

PICTURES

Russo said yesterday that he identified pictures of Oswald after the presidential assassination, and said he remembered the assassin as the man he had met in Ferrie's apartment along with Bertrand, whom Garrison has identified as being Shaw, accused of taking part in the conspiracy. Russo is Garrison's chief witness in a preliminary hearing that began Tuesday to determine if Garrison's investigation of the alleged plot should go to a jury trial. A three-judge panel is hearing the evidence.

Asked why he didn't reveal the details of the alleged plot after the assassination, Russo replied, "I decided it had to be left up to the professionals — the verdict was in."

He said the name Oswald passed through his mind several times after the assassination but he thought less and less of it because the FBI and the Warren Commission had stated that Oswald acted alone.



UPI Telephoto

Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff Louis Heyd showed newsmen a pistol found near Clay Shaw's parked car

FERRIE

Under further questioning, Russo was asked why, if Ferrie took part in the alleged plot, he had not identified him.

The witness said that when he first heard of Ferrie's death February 22, he did not think it was the same man he had met several years ago and who allegedly took part in the plot. He said he waited for a while and then when he saw pictures of Ferrie he decided he was the man he had met and became acquainted with in the early 1960s.

Russo said that on the night he heard plans of the alleged plot he had gone to Ferrie's home with a group of friends.

"Can't you remember at least one name of those who went with you to the party?" Defense Attorney Irvin Diamond asked Russo.

NAMES

"I recall going there, but just with a group of friends," Russo replied. When pressed, he gave two names: Sandra Moffett and "Lefty" Peterson, whom he said might have attended the party but he was not certain.

Shaw's attorneys spent most of the morning and much of the afternoon session trying to discredit Russo's testimony.

They began by questioning his religious background.

"Do you believe in God?" Russo was asked.

He replied: "That would depend on the definition."

OATH

Diamond attempted to show that Russo had only a superficial belief in God, if any, and that while he had sworn an oath to tell the truth in court, the oath might not mean much to him. But the tactic failed.

The attorney asked Russo: "In other words, your oath would have very little relation to your belief in any God at all?"

Russo replied quickly: "I don't understand the question," and Presiding Judge Bernard J. Bagert added loudly, "I don't understand it either. This is not a catechism class. Let's get on with it. . . ."

Russo, under questioning, said he had taken regular psychiatric treatments from about 1959 to the middle or late 1960s, and that he has since visited a psychiatrist after his mother's death in 1963.

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OVER

Police tightened security at the New Orleans criminal court building after it was revealed a pistol was found nearby Tuesday and a man had been arrested for a disturbance inside the building.

Officers said there was no apparent connection between the arrest and the discovery of the German-made pistol in a truck at a service station where Shaw and his attorney parked their car on Tuesday.

The man arrested was identified as James R. Liscombe, 30. Police said he has seen pushing newsmen and threatening to "make national headlines in New Orleans."

A 20-man force of deputies searched everyone entering the courtroom yesterday. City police were added to the security force.