

Stone answers critics of Jim Garrison

At a luncheon lecture at the National Press Club on Jan. 15, Oliver Stone responded to a questioner who charged that Jim Garrison had undertaken the prosecution of Clay Shaw for conspiracy in the assassination of Kennedy, as a public relations stunt to win the Louisiana governorship:

Why anyone would in 1967 seek to be a governor of a state by going against the CIA and the entire government by suggesting they killed a President is beyond me. Jim's political life was over the moment he brought those charges. He was taking on the establishment in a major way and he paid the price.

As for the case itself, I just want to remind you that he has been vilified and trashed over and over and over again in the press, and he has now become a non-person, in the sense that Stalin's opponents became non-people. There are no specifics ever brought up. It has become a media mantra, a buzz-word, a credo. The journalists cite each other to substitute for critical analysis.

Jim had an interesting history. He was an FBI man, he was a war hero, he was elected three times DA of New Orleans. Why? Because he was popular. He was unpopular in the press, in the *Times-Picayune*. He was unpopular with Clay Shaw's friends. He was unpopular with the establishment of New Orleans. But he was elected three times. Since then he has become an appellate judge.

He had a case. There were two evidentiary hearings. It went to a three-judge panel. He presented his facts. Those three judges in 1967 said "go to trial." He went to a grand jury of 12 jurors and they said "go to trial." It was hardly the frolic described. It was no whim. He had witnesses and evidence. Three major witnesses, however, died before he could get to trial. Obviously, Oswald; obviously, Ruby. And we have Guy Bannister. And we have David Ferrie, who was the key witness to the possible connection of Shaw, Bannister, and Ferrie. We have found since the trial significant new evidence that Shaw knew Oswald; not only through Perry Russo, but through the Clinton witnesses. In Clinton, Louisiana, 10 people—8 of them black—pointed to Shaw being in Clinton with Lee Harvey Oswald at a CORE rally. Dean Andrews pointed to a man called Clay Bertrand, who Jim found out to be Clay Shaw.

That testimony was thrown out of court by the judge. . . .

The jury came back and said that Clay Shaw was not guilty, but they were polled after the trial and they said



Director Oliver Stone on the set of "JFK."

Jim Garrison had convinced them there was a conspiracy to kill Kennedy, but they just couldn't make the links to Clay Shaw. . . .

After Clay Shaw died, Judge Haggerty, who presided over the case, and in a sense hurt Jim's case by refusing to take the Clay Bertrand testimony, said in a television interview: "I do believe to this day that the jury should have found Clay Shaw guilty. I do not believe Clay Shaw told the truth at the trial."

After the trial, they found a picture that showed that Clay Shaw and David Ferrie were at a party together. I think that Shaw perjured himself time and again, denying he knew Oswald, denying he knew Ferrie, and denying he was a member of the CIA—that we found out he was. He has a history with the CIA that was pointed out by Richard Helms. Finally, under oath, he told the truth. Victor Marchetti supports that theory, saying that during the trial, Mr. Helms was very concerned with the fate of Clay Shaw and offered all the help he could.

In addition to that, we now know that Mr. Shaw was on the board of directors of Perminindex, a fascist organization in Italy that was thrown out of Italy for illegal activities, among them, promoting financial transactions in the attempted assassination of Charles de Gaulle, the President of France. So, don't think, here we have this innocent businessman pictured by the press.

I think we have a serious case that was brought and lost and failed, and that is as it is; but there is something more than meets the eye. I liken Jim Garrison's case somewhat to the Lawrence Walsh case in the 1980s, when he tried to bring that same covert arm of the government to light of day.