

BUT GUARDS ABSOLVED

Drinking Violations Bared

WASHINGTON (AP)—Four Secret Service men riding behind President John F. Kennedy's car when he was killed had taken a few drinks in violation of rules in the early hours of that day, the Warren Commission said Sunday.

But the commission emphasized that the men did all they humanly could when the fatal bullets struck. The response of some of them "was in the finest tradition of government service," it said in its report on the assassination.

The commission gave this account:

Nine agents went off duty about midnight Nov. 21 in Fort Worth. Hoping for a bite to eat, they stopped in at the Worth Press Club. No food was available, but they stayed at the club for periods varying from 30 minutes to an hour and a half. Some drank beer—but no more than three glasses—and some drank mixed drinks — but no more than 1½ drinks each. No agent was intoxicated or acting improperly, according to others who were present.

TWO RETIRE

At 2 a.m., two of the nine retired, the other seven proceeding to the Cellar Coffee House—de-

scribed by some as a "beatnik place" that serves no alcoholic beverages. Some agents left by 3 a.m.; one remained until 5 a.m. The commission report did not name any of the nine.

All involved had duty assignments to guard Kennedy, beginning no later than 3 a.m. that day. Of the nine, four were assigned to the Secret Service backup car behind the President's limousine in the motorcade—three on the running board, ready to dart forward at every stop and in emergencies, the fourth inside the open-top car.

Another agent was assigned to Love Field, where Kennedy's plane landed, and four more were assigned to the Trade Mart, where Kennedy was headed for a speaking date when he was slain.

The commission quoted a service regulation prohibiting drinking by agents of the White House detail while on the road with the President. Violation is cause for removal.

NO ACTION TAKEN

But Secret Service Chief James J. Rowley said he felt disciplinary action in this case "might have given rise to an inference that the violation of the regulation had contributed to the tragic events

of No. 22. Since he was convinced that this was not the case, he testified, it would be unfair to the agents and their families to take explicit disciplinary measures. He felt that each agent recognized the seriousness of the infraction and that there was no danger of a repetition.

The commission acknowledged that members of the White House detail work long, hard hours "under very great strain."

It said: "It might seem harsh to circumscribe their opportunities for relaxation. Yet their role of protecting the President is so important to the well-being of the country that it is reasonable to expect them to meet very high standards of personal conduct, so that nothing can interfere with their bringing to their task the finest qualities and maximum resources of mind and body."

While the men might have been made alert in Dallas had they gone to bed early in Fort Worth, the commission said, "There is no evidence that these men failed to take any action in Dallas which their power that would have averted the tragedy."