

# Breach of Discipline Blamed On Agents for Drinking Nov. 22

Washington Bureau of The News

WASHINGTON — The Warren Commission said Sunday that nine Secret Service agents were guilty of "a breach of discipline" when they drank alcoholic beverages in Fort Worth during the early morning hours of Nov. 22.

The commission told President Johnson in its report:

"It is conceivable that those men who had little sleep and who had consumed alcoholic beverages, even in limited quantities, might have been more alert in the Dallas motorcade if they had retired promptly in Fort Worth.

"However, there is no evidence that these men failed to take any action in Dallas within their power that would have averted the tragedy . . . the instantaneous and heroic response to the assassination by some of the agents concerned was in the finest tradition of government service."

The commission said nine off-duty agents went to the Fort Worth Press Club for meals after President Kennedy reached Hotel

Texas in Downtown Fort Worth the night of Nov. 21.

All of the agents remained at the Press Club "for a drink of beer or, in several cases, a mixed drink" after learning food was not available, the commission said.

The commission said Fort Worth newspapermen supported affidavits in which the agents said that none drank more than three glasses of beer or 1½ mixed drinks and that none was intoxicated.

Then, the commission related, seven of these agents went to the Cellar, a beatnik-style coffee house, about 1:30 a.m. It said most of them stayed there until about 2:45 or 3 a.m., but one remained until 5 a.m.

All of these agents had duty assignments "beginning no later than 8 a.m.," the commission said. It noted that four had "key responsibilities as members of the complement of the followup car in the motorcade" through Dallas and four others had assignments at the Trade Mart, where President Kennedy was scheduled to speak in Dallas.

In addition, the commission said, three agents went to the Cellar during their 30-minute breaks while guarding President Kennedy in his Fort Worth hotel. The commission said Chief James Rowley of the Secret Service told it that agents usually remain in the buildings which they are guarding during their relief periods, but there was no rule requiring them to do so.

The commission said it found no evidence that any agent drank intoxicants in the Cellar, which is a short distance from the hotel.

It noted the manager described the Cellar as "a unique show place with continuous light entertainment all night serving only coffee, fruit juices and no hard liquors or beer."

The commission said drinking of alcoholic beverages violated a Secret Service regulation against the use of beer, wine or other intoxicants by agents assigned to guard the president.

The report said Rowley testified that he would have taken disciplinary action under ordinary circumstances against the nine agents who went to the Press Club, but did not do so in this case because "he felt that any disciplinary action might have given rise to an inference that the violation of the regulation had contributed to the tragic events of Nov. 22."

The commission said it recognizes that agents work long hours and under a great strain while guarding the president. But, it said, their work 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."

It said the nation has the right to expect that they will give "the maximum resources of mind and body" to their task and they cannot do this if they "remain out during the early morning hours and lose the opportunity to get a reasonable amount of sleep."