

Secret Service

Checks in Vain

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Despite the extensive and painstaking steps taken by the vaunted Secret Service, tragedy struck in downtown Dallas.

The President's protectors had checked minutely over seemingly everything — the food the Kennedys were to eat, the flowers they would sniff and admire, the friends who would cheer, the opponents who would jeer, the roads they would travel and the newsmen who would report the story.

TRAGICALLY, ONE link was missing.

The quiet-spoken, raincoat wearing men of the Secret Service had been the marvel this week of local law enforcement officers and other observers for their thoroughness.

First, there were several sites proposed initially for Friday's luncheon. Secret Service men checked them all.

THE BALCONIES at the Trade Mart, the favorite of the local sponsors, made the security experts reluctant. But they studied and investigated some more and finally approved the Trade Mart site.

A list — by name — of known agitators in Dallas who might possibly be inclined to stir up trouble was obtained. Agents became familiar with them, their patterns.

A motorcade route was checked out next. Trouble spots were spotted both in traffic and possible crowd situations.

The decision on the Love Field arrangement was made. Agents gave the airport one of its most thorough checks, including what balconies, windows and vantage points were to look down on the President.

DETAILED SECURITY measures at the Trade Mart with its 14 different entrances to the main courtyard were set up. Uniformed guards with prohibitive ropes were arranged for each of the passageways and the entrances to the balconies.

A guest list was acquired. Secret Service agents planned to check the tickets of everyone who entered the Trade Mart.

Thursday morning agents probed through 5,000 yellow roses as they were being installed at the Trade Mart to ensure that no bombs or other damaging weapons were included with the fragrant odor.

THE ORDER was issued on the food. The President and his party would receive the same kind of steak as everyone else at the luncheon, his steak selected at random from all the others. The whole crowd would have to be poisoned that way to ensure the death of the President.

Employees of the Trade Mart and other personnel who were to be on hand in a working capacity on Friday were given the once-over as were those in the official greeting party at Love Field.

PRESS PASSES were issued Thursday according to name lists provided by news media executives. The passes are

numbered. The Secret Service had a list of every newsman and his pass number.

The planning, the checking was all done long before time for the President's plane to set down on the runway at Dallas Love Field. The mechanics of outwardly securing the presidential party would be done by 350 uniformed officers of the Dallas Police Department, the sheriff's office and the Department of Public Safety.

IT WOULD BE these officers' presence that the public would be aware of Friday. But the Secret Service men would be there, too, of course — standing near the President, riding with him and behind him and in front of him, ready for any and every eventuality.

The Secret Service men were easy to identify, too. They were the guys who always looked at the crowd while the crowd looked at the President.