

Front Page Photo Tells Grim Story

(Veteran Dallas News staff photographer Jack Beers watched the fatal shooting of accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald through the view finder of his camera in the police basement of the City Hall. Beers' camera captured the sensational photograph shown on Page 1. The following is the photographer's eyewitness account.)

By JACK BEERS

There was a screaming curse, a shot and then bedlam as police swarmed over Jack Ruby—who shot down Lee Harvey Oswald—and immobilized the newsmen and photographers crowding around.

This happened Sunday in the basement of the Dallas Municipal Building where the press had gathered to cover the story of the removal of the accused Kennedy assassin, Oswald, from the city jail to the Dallas County jail.

The shot that killed Oswald rang out at 11:21 a.m. I had gone to the basement at 9 a.m. joining other photographers, television cameramen and newspaper reporters.

Police were moving all automobiles, except police cars, from the basement. They made a thorough search of each police automobile. Officers stationed at the entrance and exit to the basement ramp looked inside each police car as it was driven in, to make sure some assailant intending to harm Oswald was not hidden inside and holding a gun on the officer. Each car was searched in this way at least twice.

Sgt. James A. Putnam found a rifle in a car, took it upstairs but returned with it later, explaining that the gun belonged to an officer. Some 30 to 40 uniformed officers were in the security detail in the basement.

A TELEPHONE service man, running through the basement, did not stop immediately when police hailed him. He underwent considerable questioning before he was allowed to proceed to his

job.

Then, officers measured the driveway outside the jail office door in the basement with a ruler. This was the first indication to us that some vehicle other than a squad car or paddy wagon would be used to transport Oswald the 15 blocks to the county jail. We learned later that an armored car was to be used.

But it was too tall to be parked adjacent to the jail office door. Instead, it was backed partly down the exit ramp on the Commerce Street side of the city hall.

Police inspected it after opening the rear doors through which Oswald would be loaded into the vehicle.

Although there was calm among the police and newsmen, a tenseness was apparent. Once, a glass bottle rolled out the back door of the armored car and shattered on the pavement. It startled the spectators.

Shortly before Oswald was to be brought down from his city police jail, representatives of the news media were asked to move into an area which would be on the left of the accused young man as he was brought out. This placed the members of the press in an "L" shaped line. The area through which he was to be taken is about 15 by 30 feet in size.

I found a perch on a pipe railing, alongside the television cameras, which were on a lower level and behind the railing. I had a clear view of the path Oswald would take. I held that perch, balancing myself against a post and holding my camera in readiness.

WE WERE alerted by movements at the jail office door that Oswald was being brought into the basement. He came out of the office door, walking close between two plainclothes

officers, with each holding one of his arms above the elbow. The three looked straight ahead.

I put my twin-lens reflex camera to my eye, looking through an open viewfinder. I followed Oswald and his guards in that way, waiting for a clear and closer view of him. Police officers were at stations all along the hallway route. Oswald and the guards were walking at a normal pace.

Just as he came into an area which gave me an unobstructed view from my higher position, I saw a rather sudden movement below me and to my right. My eye was glued to the viewfinder.

My impulsive first thought was that it was a cameraman moving out into a position which might obstruct my view. He was probably six feet away, to my right and below me.

The man ran across an area that was open along the railing where two television cameras were taking pictures through the railing.

Just in that fraction of a second, the second I had observed

the man's movement, I tripped the shutter of my camera. I had started to take a picture an instant before that, but the distraction of the man's movements caused me to delay a fraction of a second. In that same second a man's false voice screamed, "You son of a bitch!"

I made the picture, with the thought foremost in my mind to get my picture before my view was obstructed. I had no idea the man was going to shoot Oswald.

I was still looking into the viewfinder when the curse ended and the shot rang out, like putting a period quickly at the

end of a sentence.

It was now obvious to me that this man was firing the shot.

The man had never quailed and didn't seem to be afraid.

His face and hat were the same as Oswald's face when he was shot.

Immediately after the shot was made, the man disappeared.

I am certain that I never saw the man again.

He had to look down at the ground he didn't stop looking ahead.

As the shot was fired, there was a tremendous roar.

Voices made sounds of closeness of the crowd.

It looked like a man had been grabbed by the neck.

People were running on the floor by others trying to get to the actual shooting.

It looked to me like the man was trying to get away from the area around Oswald.

A 10-foot area around Oswald was to keep people from running away.

Everything was done by being pushed away by the officers.

They drove Oswald to the automatic firing.

A whole mass of people.

In less than a minute a mass of people had gathered.

Customary and Oswald's drag was made.

The car office door.

A police officer.

Low one caution sign to the press.

Where you are.

Through out all.

On the same point.

More pictures.

Two changes.

Exit and entrance.

Sealed off.

Active area.

The message.

Credentialed.

It was all over.

I don't think anyone thought that there might be further shooting.

Officers had decided on the shot when the man ran by him.

But it was not by him.