

TRAFFIC HELD UP BUS

Oswald Planned to Ride by Scene

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Lee Harvey Oswald planned to ride a Dallas Transit bus past the scene of his infamous crime just 20 minutes after he assassinated President John F. Kennedy.

But traffic was congested on streets around the Texas School Book Depository. He caught a bus—seven blocks east of the building he used for his ambush—and rode it less than a block. Impatient with the delay, he scampered to the Greyhound Bus Station and took a taxi.

"Take me to 500 North Beckley," he ordered.

For the past two days, we have retraced Oswald's escape route. We have pieced it together, for the first time here, from actual interviews with the men and women whose testimony has been relayed to officials. Sometimes, as the careful reader will note, the information apparently was garbled in its transmission to reporters.

A POLICE OFFICER detained Oswald temporarily in the lunchroom of the School Book Depository building. But the detention was short. The building superintendent, R. S. Truly, identified Oswald as an employee, and the assassin was allowed to leave the building.

Less than 10 minutes after he had fired the fatal shots, the 24-year-old killer was walking into a crowd that was surging untroubled toward him. He worked his way a lone block south to Pacific Street, turned right and hurried east on Beckley for . . .

APPARENTLY, he had found a way through to rejoin the crowd.

He turned right one block and made his way back to Elm, near the old Blue Front Restaurant, where he tapped on the door of a Marsale bus.

"It couldn't have been later than 12:40 p.m.," said 45-year-old C. J. (Mac) McWatters, a cigar-smoking bus driver of 2523 Blyth Drive.

"I was driving down Elm and had reached Old Griffin. The run originated in Lakewood, and I was on schedule at the checkpoint on St. Paul Street—12:36 p.m. There weren't more than five or six passengers . . .

Then this young man knocked on the door of the bus—there is no regular bus stop at Old Griffin—and I let him in. He took the third chair back, on the right . . .

FROM THAT seat, Oswald

would have had a window view of crowds when the bus would turn onto the foot of Elm Street, seven blocks further west, and turn at Houston Street.

Contrary to sketchy reports released by law enforcement sources earlier, Oswald said nothing about the assassination, the veteran bus driver said.

By the time we had gone to the middle block of Poydras and Elm, traffic was held up. We were stalled there in the traffic. A man about 55, and dressed in working clothes, got out of his car in front us and walked toward the bus. I know I hadn't done anything to offend him.



Bill Whaley . . . "If you can call a nickel a tip, I guess he tipped me."

THERE WAS no reaction from Oswald when the working man told the driver "The President has been shot—that's why traffic is blocked . . ."

The bus driver said "A lady behind me had been giving me a hard time—she wanted to catch a train at the depot. She wanted off so she could make . . ."

And Lee Harvey Oswald, also, wanted off.

"Give me a transfer," he said.

THE TRANSFER that he got

was punched with McWatters' own mark. Each driver has a different kind of punchmark. FBI agents, about midnight 10 hours later, would trace that transfer to McWatters' bus and learn the intriguing story of Oswald's first moments after the shooting.

The time is now approximately 12:42 to 12:45 p.m. Oswald hurries south across Elm to Lamar Street, then two blocks south to the Greyhound Bus Terminal on the corner of Lamar and Commerce.

"CAN I TAKE this cab?" he shouts to the driver, 58-year-old William Wayne "Chief" Whaley. Whaley—top man in seniority of the entire taxi system, a squat, burr-haired ex-Navy gunner and Navy Cross winner over two times—said Oswald took the taxi to 500 North Beckley, the slender passenger said.

"I didn't notice anything particularly unusual," the driver declared. "I've hauled a lot of wins in my time."

Whaley whipped his cab around to the right on Jackson Street, drove one block to Austin and turned left to Wood. The cab went past the Dallas Hotel to Houston Street.

MORE THAN 30 minutes had elapsed since the assassination. Oswald still was only four blocks

away from the scene of his crime.

The driver, a resident of Lewisville, tried to make conversation with Oswald.

"What the hell you think happened out there?" he recalled asking Oswald as an opener.

Oswald hasn't answered him yet.

"I just thought to myself here's a guy who wants to be left alone," Whaley said. "So I left him alone."

The cab went across the Houston Street viaduct and turned left on Beckley, not far across the bridge.

WHEN THE CAB made that turn it was almost directly in front of the mottled brown rooming house where Oswald roomed for \$6-a-week at 1026 North Beckley. The taxi hurtled on for five more blocks and Oswald snapped. "This is fine, right here."

"I pulled over to the curb

and he got out, didn't say anything," Whaley said.

The fare was 95c. Oswald wasn't too gracious. He handed Whaley a dollar bill and got out.

DID HE LEAVE a tip? Whaley was asked.

"Well, if you can call that nickel a tip, I guess he did," the burly cabbie replied.

Whaley's logbook shows that he had gone to the Greyhound Bus Station with a passenger he had picked up at Methodist Hospital about 15 minutes before he picked up Oswald.

Why did he take a zig-zag route to Oak Cliff?

I miss two stoplights that way.

TSE LOGBOOK shows he had 13 calls that day, 8 pickups—and 29 passengers in all. The notation that recalls the ride with the assassin is marked "12:30 to 12:45."

"That's understandable," Whaley said. "I always mark 'em down in 15 minutes intervals."

The next we know of Oswald's whereabouts is only minutes later.

Mrs. Earlene Roberts, housekeeper at the 17-room boarding house where Oswald had spent most of his nights except weekends in a 5x12-foot bedroom cubicle, was watching television.

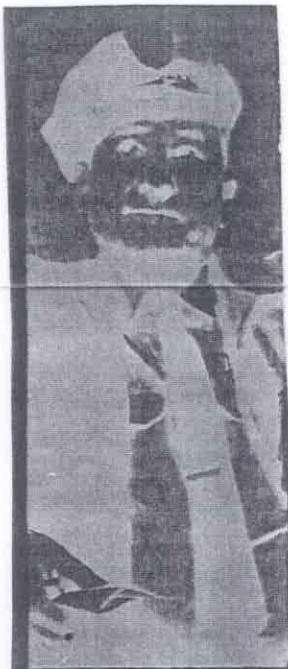
"A FRIEND HAD called and said the President had been shot," said Mrs. Roberts. "I said 'You're pulling my leg,' but I turned the set on. She was right."

"And then Mr. Lee (Oswald) came in, in an awful hurry. He was in a hurry, and he didn't say anything—just rushed through the living room to his room, there through that door . . ."

It was there that Oswald changed coats. He discarded the dark jacket that fitted the police descriptions of the assassin and changed into a light tan jacket.

HE MAY HAVE grabbed a pistol, too. For taxi driver Whaley said he would have noticed a "bulge" if Oswald had been wearing a pistol in his cab.

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Dallas News Staff Photo.

C. J. McWatters, he didn't know Oswald was his passenger until the FBI traced a yellow transfer slip to him 12 hours after the President's death.

Still in Mrs. Roberts' possession is the black covered loose-leaf notebook that she uses as a registry for her tenants. In Oswald's hand, the name O. H. Tippit is painted boldly.

That is the name of the man who was shot on the day before he started work as a \$50-a-week employe at the book depository. "I asked him for next-of-kin in case something happened. He said, 'It's not important, forget it.' So I forgot it . . ."

"NO, HE NEVER was out much that I noticed. He was gone on weekends. Never got any mail that I recall—I put the mail out, all that comes in. Never made much noise. He never spoke any English on the telephone, some foreign language . . ."

"His alarm clock always went off at 7 in the morning.

"Yes, I did remember seeing a Humble filling station map of Dallas, all folded up, and I never disturbed anything that was his. Just dusted around it . . ."

THE MAP IS among the evidence that officials say they have, with markings on it, to prove Oswald's premeditation of the assassination.

Mrs. Roberts noticed Oswald stand momentarily at a bus stop on North Beckley after he left the house. She could see him there, through the front

window, as she watched TV from the oval couch in the front room.

But Oswald didn't wait long. He bolted to his left and hurried south, on Beckley—the last time Mrs. Roberts saw him until his image appeared on the TV screen an hour later.

SHORTLY BEFORE 1:45 p.m., Oswald was walking be-

tween Denver and Patton Streets on East 10th—this is east of Beckley, and, oddly enough, almost in a direct line and halfway between his own room and the 223 S. Ewing apartment of the man who would later be his assassin—Jack Ruby.

Three witnesses say Oswald was ordered to stop, midway in the block, by Dallas police officer J. D. Tippit.

Tippit was cruising alone in Car 10, in front of 404 E. 10th,

when he signaled the limo figure to halt.

AS TIPPIT JUMPED from his patrol car to check the man who fitted the all-points bulletin he had received just minutes before, Oswald fired three shots into the heroic police veteran.

The three witnesses told police Oswald ran off—changing his course—toward the business portion of Oak Cliff. Others came up with other reports of "a racing maniac."

Oswald was reported in a used furniture store that occupies a tall, weather-beaten green frame building at 414 E. Jefferson. About the same time, spectators at a service station further west up the street saw him run into a vacant lot, where police say the killer discarded his newly acquired jacket and three pistol shells.

THEN FOLLOWED a chase in and out of alleyways in the Jefferson - Beckley - Cumberland-Zang area.

About 1:45 p.m., Julie Postal, cashier at the Texas Theater at 231 W. Jefferson saw a hurrying stranger run past her into the theater.

To the driver, she didn't know whether she had a ticket.

"I was so upset listening to the radio about the President and all," she said.

FIVE MINUTES or more elapsed before Johnny Brewer, manager of a shoe store a few doors away, ran to Mrs. Postal and said he thought he had seen "somebody running from the police" duck into the theater.

The cashier immediately called police—who had just sped en masse to a false alarm at the Dallas Library branch on Jefferson, further to the east. The police sirens waited again.

Oddly enough, it was at the library that McWatters—the bus driver who, unknowingly, had Oswald as a passenger earlier—had his second brush with fate. His bus pulled up at the intersection as a swarm of 10 or 15 police cars zeroed in on the library.

"I COULDN'T imagine what was going on," McWatters said. "I didn't know."

Police went in the Texas Theater to the machine-gunning clatter of a movie called "War Is Hell." They found their man—hiding in a middle-section seat.

Three officers dragged him to a waiting unmarked car where two others had the motor gunning.

Fifteen minutes later, the assassin of President Kennedy was safe in a jail cell.

Safe for a few more hours.

The next day, he was killed by Jack Ruby.