

The Assassination Number 21

Reopen The Warren Commission

After the assassination, rumors circulated thick and fast out of Dallas. An early rumor was that Lieutenant George Butler would be one of the investigators for the Warren Commission. This writer wrote to Chief Justice Earl Warren, begging him to see that Butler was not on the side of the investigation. Certainly, we felt the Warren Commission was going to conduct an impartial investigation at that time.

This was one of the very last rumors to circulate out of the Police Department of Dallas. The clamps were really nailed down, and the police there continue to be very tight lipped.

This week we comment on the testimony concerning Lieutenant George Butler, a very interesting policeman. Butler is a speaker for the right-wing anti-communist fighters. He was formerly head of the Policeman's Union for Dallas, and it is common talk that he is in the good graces of H. L. Hunt which makes him immune to pressure from anyone.

During 1961, Butler made talks in Midlothian and on one such occasion he approached this writer in The Mirror offices and wanted to know if we would print a region wide KKK newspaper. While in The Mirror, Butler made two statements. He claimed we did not have to bid on a competitive basis, but simply tell him how much we wanted for printing the job. His second statement was that half of the police force in Dallas were members of the KKK.

We repeated this statement to an FBI investigator during 1965. The FBI representative said: "Ah, I believe he was lying." Our comment was: "After what has happened in Dallas since 1961, it appears you might say 'It may be true.'"

The Warren Commission did not see fit to answer my letter concerning Lt. Butler, and they did not see fit to call Lt. Butler as a witness.

The only information in the testimony concerning Lt. Butler is given by a newsman, Thayer Waldo from The Fort Worth Star Telegram. His testimony is terribly revealing. As he entered the hearing room where his testimony was to be given, the Commission lawyer looked at his watch and said: "Mr. Waldo, I have just 28 minutes to catch a plane. What do you have to say?"

Our comment is that Mr. Waldo made very good use of his allotted 28 minutes.

MR. HUBERT. State your full name, please?

MR. WALDO. Thayer Waldo. There is no middle initial.

HUBERT. Where do you live, sir?

WALDO. 200 Burnett Street in Fort Worth, Texas.

Some testimony omitted here.

WALDO. I am a newspaper reporter.

HUBERT. How long have you been such?

WALDO. You mean in the profession?

HUBERT. Yes?

WALDO. Approximately 24 years.

Some testimony omitted here.

Testimony begins with the events of Friday afternoon.

HUBERT. In any case, you observed Ruby about 10 minutes before you had any further contact with him?

WALDO. That's right.

HUBERT. Was there anything that called your

measures were used to start security as to the assembly room, as to who would go in it?

WALDO. None whatsoever that I observed. I myself walked down the stairs, which faced the elevators on the third floor, to the basement. The basement is also the site of the police booking office. People were being brought in or coming in to inquire about relatives, I presume. That seemed to be the general tenor of it, and were not being kept away, and peering curiously into this police assembly room where everything was being set up.

HUBERT. There were no guards at the entrance of the assembly room?

WALDO. None that I saw, sir; no.

HUBERT. So that everybody got into the assembly room who wanted to get in, and Oswald was brought down shortly thereafter?

WALDO. Yes.

HUBERT. I understand that the interview was of very short duration?

WALDO. It was, and it was preceded by a very stern warning from Chief Curry—that any undue movement to crowd in on the prisoner or shove cameras forward or to clamor on furniture, would immediately cause the interview to be cut short and he said, "The prisoner will be taken away and will not be brought back; is that clear?" He said, "I want everybody to stay where he is."

The interview was very brief. The thing that sticks most in my mind considering the fact that before Oswald was brought down District Attorney Wade had stated in some detail how Oswald was taken before a justice of the peace and formally charged with the assassination of President Kennedy, that when the prisoner in the assembly room was asked, "Why did you kill the President?" He replied, "I haven't killed anyone and no one has even mentioned to me anything about the President except you people."

HUBERT. Who was it asked him the question, "Why did you kill the President?"

WALDO. Gosh, I couldn't tell you.

HUBERT. It was some newsman?

WALDO. It was a newsman; yes.

HUBERT. You did not see Ruby in that group?

WALDO. I did not see Ruby that evening; no, sir. I do recall, but only because it was called to my attention afterward, that at the tail end of the interview, a man with a loud voice was calling to Wade to come over and say something in a microphone, and I do recall distinctly that this voice cut through the din with remarkable stentorian quality, and of course it has been testified at Jack Ruby's trial that this was he, acting for a friend at a radio station who wanted to put a statement by Wade on tape for subsequent broadcast.

HUBERT. That was while Oswald was still in the room?

WALDO. No, sir.

HUBERT. That was after Oswald had left?

WALDO. Yes.

HUBERT. What caused the end of the Oswald interview?

WALDO. As I recall it, following what could have been anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes of questions, Chief Curry stepped forward and said, "That's enough. Take him back."

HUBERT. Was there any violation of his regulation about crowding and so forth?

WALDO. Not seriously. There was a little sort of press forward, but not seriously.

HUBERT. I mean, did he indicate that's why he was ending the interview?

WALDO. No.

...indicates that you were standing on the outside of the building at the Commerce Street entrance?

WALDO: Yes, sir.

HUBERT: Along with a number of other newsmen when Lieutenant Butler invited the press people into the building?

WALDO: Yes, sir.

HUBERT: And you were standing on that side of the building?

WALDO: Yes, sir.

HUBERT: And you were standing on that side of the building when Lieutenant Butler and the other newsmen were standing on that side of the building?

WALDO: Yes, sir.

HUBERT. It was just that you had arrived at that time?

WALDO. Well, we had arrived some time earlier and had seen the preparations. I had gone upstairs and checked Chief Curry's office and had been told that it would be half to three-quarters of an hour yet before the prisoner would be removed. This was at the time that I arrived over there on Commerce Street from the hotel, and that everybody would be notified before there was any movement, so since it was a pleasant morning, we were standing out on the sidewalk—the three of us.

HUBERT. Were you told it was going to be by elevator down into the basement and then through the basement ramps out Commerce Street?

WALDO. Yes, sir.

HUBERT. Who told you that, sir?

WALDO. As I recall it, it was Lieutenant Butler himself, who was on the third floor at the time I went up, and I would like to for whatever it's worth, add something at this point. Lieutenant Butler was since, oh, probably 2:30 on the afternoon of the 22d of November, the man whom I had sought out on every occasion that I wanted to learn something about developments, whenever I could find him, because he was a man of remarkable equanimity, poise, and very cooperative within the authorization that he had, and the first thing—

HUBERT. You mean he would give you more news than anybody else?

WALDO. He was more able to understand what was wanted and he was always in on, apparently, on high-level information, and if it was for release, he would be the one who would have it and be most willing apparently to give it. This is a thing that happens in circumstances like this. A reporter picks out a man, tries him out, and if he finds that he's cooperative the first time, he tries to stick to him, because by that time the official recognizes his face.

HUBERT. Did you find that other officials were not so cooperative?

WALDO. I would say, yes, to that with reference to the 22d and part of the 23d. By Saturday afternoon, the 23d, everybody seemed to be pretty accessible and pretty willing to answer questions. What I wanted to say about Lieutenant Butler was that this almost solid poise, or perhaps phlegmatic poise is a better word, that I had noticed all through even the most hectic times of the 22d and the 23d, appeared to have deserted him completely on the morning of the 24th. He was an extremely nervous man, so nervous that when I was standing asking him a question after I had entered the ramp and gotten down to the basement area, just moments before Oswald was brought down, he was standing profile to me and I noticed his lips trembling as he listened and waited for my answer. It was simply a physical characteristic. I had by then spent enough hours talking to this man so that it struck me as something totally out of character. Now, he may merely have had a bad night.

HUBERT. At that time, had the movement of Oswald begun or was it known that he was coming?

WALDO. It was imminent at that time — it was imminent.

HUBERT. The words, "Here he comes"—those famous words—had not yet been uttered?

WALDO. No, sir.

HUBERT. How long prior to the time Oswald was brought down did Butler invite you into the basement?

WALDO. I'd say the time lapse there was 20 to 25 minutes.

HUBERT. Did he indicate to you that the time was

...ing imminent and that you must come in?

WALDO: That we could come in, that we should come

HUBERT: ... say to you? ... indicating

WALDO: ... he stuck his head out and

... the vehicle and looked to see who was there, he just

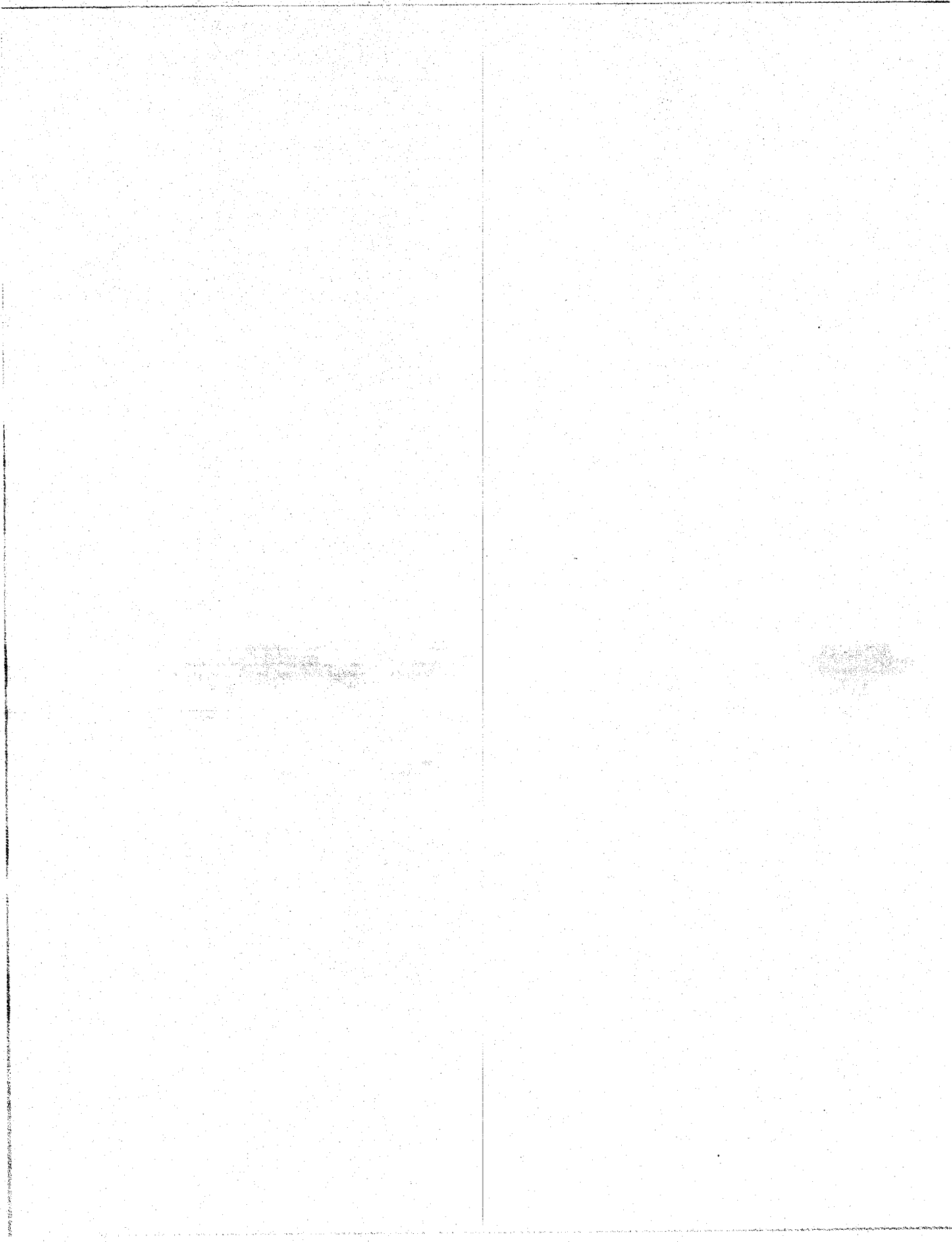
... "Come on down now"

HUBERT: He didn't say that it was imminent, but you

... it as such?

WALDO: Well, after we had passed the summit

... and he



at each end, there is nothing but blank wall on each side of the ramp. For the other half, the middle half, and on the —don't take this down and tell me the direction?

HUBERT. Well, if its pertinent we want it.

WALDO. Well, Main is north of Commerce—right?

HUBERT. It would be the east.

WALDO. Yes—but on the west side is the entrance to the building and the jail elevators and so on, and on the east side is a parking—a large submerged parking area, and it was 8 to 10 minutes after I had gotten downstairs when they began what appeared to be at first a quite confused movement—several detectives, plainclothes officers got into police cars parked down there and started to move them, with what appeared, and in fact I commented on this to a colleague, an unnecessary amount of jerking movement, lack of coordination so that one almost ran into the other and they were backing and filling and nobody could figure what they were doing with them, and meanwhile Butler, I believe it was, or someone was telling us all to get back out of the way, and finally they maneuvered these three cars into place one behind the other back of the armored vehicle.

HUBERT. How much time before the shooting did they back the armored car into the Commerce Street entrance?

WALDO. Oh, that would have been—lets see—I arrived over there about 9:30—10 or shortly thereafter it was that the car was brought in.

HUBERT. And then you went in at Butler's suggestion or invitation about 25 minutes prior to the shooting?

WALDO. That's correct.

HUBERT. And then the cars were moved in behind the armored car about 10 minutes before the shooting?

WALDO. Yes, sir.

HUBERT. Did you see a car go out the Main Street entrance about that time?

WALDO. No, sir; I did not. It could have happened and I didn't see it, but I certainly didn't.

Come to think of it, I don't believe it could have happened without my seeing it, considering the physical setup over there, however, that's not important.

Might I add that at the time that I entered the ramp area, the crowd of people standing along the south side of Commerce Street had grown to about 200. It was maybe 100 when I first arrived there, and this I took to be due to the fact that there appeared to be, from what I heard and cars passing stopped for traffic lights that had their radios on, broadcasting announcements every few minutes that Oswald was going to be moved soon.

HUBERT. Do you know if all those people had been moved over to the opposite side of Commerce Street by the police?

WALDO. I cannot testify to that. They were all on the opposite side when I arrived there.

HUBERT. You arrived about 9:30, you say?

WALDO. About 9:30; yes.

HUBERT. And of course you went upstairs and so forth in the interval before you went down into the basement?

WALDO. Yes; but I was not upstairs a matter of more than 10 to 15 minutes before I returned to the same.

HUBERT. And during the period between 9:30 and approximately 11 or shortly before 11, when you went down into the ramp and excepting the time when you were upstairs which you say was very slight, you were in the area of the Commerce Street entrance?

WALDO. Yes, sir.

HUBERT. Did you see Jack Ruby in that area at anytime?

WALDO. No.

HUBERT. Did you notice a large TV—the vans and

