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Rankin Pope  
Box 18  
April 10, 1964

F.291

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

SUBJECT: Interview of Forrest Sorrels, SAIC, Dallas Office, Secret Service

I interviewed Mr. Sorrels on April 9, 1964, as a preliminary to his testimony before the Commission.

Sorrels was born in 1901, graduated from high school, worked from 1922-23 for the Bureau of Narcotics, and in July 1923 joined the Secret Service, at first as clerk, and became Operative in 1926. He was in charge of the El Paso office until 1935 when he was transferred to Dallas. From 1936-1941 he was a Regional Supervisor based in New Orleans; in about 1943 he became SAIC of Dallas and has held that position ever since.

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He has had much experience in Presidential protection working at the inaugurations of Truman and Kennedy, on trips to Mexico City for Franklin D. Roosevelt and Truman, FDR trips to New Orleans and Mississippi, many FDR trips to Fort Worth, the 1936 FDR tour of Texas, Eisenhower's trip to dedicate Falcon Dam in Texas, many Texas trips of Vice President Johnson, John F. Kennedy's informal visit to Dallas in 1961 to visit Speaker Rayburn at the hospital, and JFK's later trip to Bonham, Texas for Rayburn's funeral.

He works very closely with the Police Department on advance arrangements for a trip, and has always found the Dallas Police Department entirely cooperative. It is his usual practice to wait to contact the police until plans for a particular trip are pretty well set and the local committees have had an opportunity to participate in fixing the schedule.

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On President Kennedy's trip to Dallas, he and Lawson paid a duty call on Chief Curry soon after Lawson's arrival in Dallas.

We discussed the selection of the Trade Mart, which is as explained in Sorrels' memorandum, Commission Document #3, Exhibit 12, item 8.

We discussed the selection of the motorcade route. All parades in Dallas use the Main Street route. The only question to be resolved, once the time for the motorcade was established, was whether to use the expressway or Harwood Street to get to Main Street. Harwood Street was selected because it was easier to control traffic and because more people could see the President on Harwood Street.

We discussed advance PRS activities. Sorrels had the Stevenson incident of October very much in mind. Accordingly, SA Howlett was sent to Denton, Texas to interview an informant who could identify persons who had participated in that incident. Sorrels was not particularly surprised that PRS had no active subjects in the Dallas area. There had been PRS subjects in prior years in his territory. The local police have always been very cooperative in advising Secret Service of any potential danger to the President. Sorrels regularly instructs at all local police schools on Secret Service activities, especially including Presidential protection and the need for close liaison in this field. Mr. Sorrels had no complaint about his relations with the local FBI office. He said that they had never refused to comply with a request for information and that they did regularly report overt threats to the President. The FBI had not been

asked to participate in any way in the protection measures on the day of the visit, nor had IRS or any other federal law enforcement agency in Dallas. Sorrels has always relied on the local police forces for assistance he needs during such a visit. Part of the Dallas police force which participated in protection of the motorcade route on November 22, were members of the Reserve Police, a volunteer group which received police training and worked on special occasions, wearing uniforms but not being armed. Sorrels believes that these auxiliaries are competent at crowd handling.

Other aspects of the advance preparations are as described in Sorrels' memorandum.

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Sorrels was riding in the rear seat of the lead car. He recalls remarking on the number of people hanging out of the windows along the motorcade route. As the TSHD building came into view, he noticed several open windows and several people at the windows. A few of the people he saw were negroes. He saw no unusual motions; he has no recollection of seeing Oswald.

He heard a total of three shots. There was twice as much time between the first and second shots as there was between the second and third shots. He believes that the overall time for all three shots was something like six seconds. The shots sounded like gun-fire. They seemed to come more from the north slope of the bank of Elm Street than from the

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TSBD building. All shots sounded like they came from behind and to the right of the lead car. Sorrels saw several people on the first overpass, including specifically one or two policemen. He did not observe any unusual movement on the overpass.

After helping with the stretchers at Parkland Hospital, he did not go into the hospital but returned as quickly as possible to the TSBD building, which had been identified on police broadcasts as the probable source of the shots. The White House Detail personnel were at the hospital to guard the President and Vice President, and Sorrels thought he could accomplish more at the scene. (At the time of the shots, he had thought about getting out at the scene but his car was moving too fast to do so.) He got a ride back to the TSBD in a police car and believes that he returned within 20-25 minutes of the firing of the shots. He walked in the back door of the TSBD building. No one was guarding that door at that time and he was not asked to identify himself by anyone nor did he see any Dallas police in the building. As he entered the building, he came upon a negro janitor who said that he had not seen anyone leave through that door. Sorrels asked for the manager and was shown to Mr. Truly. Sorrels asked that a list be prepared of the names and addresses of all the employees of the TSBD. Sorrels was at this point looking for potential witnesses, and had no basis for suspecting an employee.

He then went into the street in front of the TSBD building looking for witnesses and came upon Brennan and Ewings. Brennan told him that the shots had come from the sixth floor which was the first hard information Sorrels had that the shots had come from the building. Sorrels took Brennan and Ewings to the nearby sheriff's office and left them there to

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have their statements taken. Sorrels then interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Rowland and had them taken to the sheriff's office to give their statements.

A reporter named McCormick of the Dallas News then introduced Sorrels to Mr. Zapruder, who told him he had photographed the shooting. Sorrels obtained a police car and took Zapruder to the Dallas News and finally to the local laboratories of Eastman Kodak to have the film developed. He telephoned his office from Kodak and was told that Capt. Fritz had a suspect in custody. He obtained a ride in a police car to Fritz' office.

Fritz was in the course of interviewing Oswald. Sorrels did not interrupt but waited outside until the interview was finished, and then asked for and obtained permission to talk to Oswald. He spent only a few minutes with Oswald. At first he did not tell Oswald who he was and Oswald refused to speak to him until he identified himself. He then showed Oswald his credentials.

Oswald asked what he was charged with and asked what his rights were, particularly with respect to obtaining counsel. Oswald asked whether Sorrels was not supposed to obtain a lawyer for him. Sorrels explained that Oswald had the right to select his own attorney and could contact him, but that he did not believe an attorney would automatically be appointed for him. Oswald seemed to him very animated and surly at first, but did respond to questions about his background and work at the TSBD. In response to Sorrels' question he said that he was living at 1026 Beckley, but regarded Mrs. Paine's home in Irving, where his family was