

Editorial

The Importance of Roger Craig

One of the most important witnesses in the Kennedy assassination is Roger Dean Craig, a Deputy Sheriff in Dallas at the time the President was killed. Craig has been fired from his job; his testimony in the Warren Report has been altered; and an attempt has been made on his life. Yet he has not yielded an inch on what he saw, what he said and what he did on November 22, 1963.

Craig insisted from the day of the assassination that he saw Oswald race down the grassy area and get into a station wagon like the one owned by Mrs. Ruth Paine of Irving. He says Oswald entered the automobile not more than fifteen minutes after the assassination, and at that time Oswald and the person driving were the only people leaving the assassination area. (Everyone else was running to the area.) The driver of the station wagon, according to Craig, was a Latin who had been arrested minutes before and immediately released by a man posing as a Secret Service Agent. In October 1967 when Craig was shown a picture of Edgar Eugene Bradley he identified Bradley as the man who posed as a Secret Service Agent that day.

Most of us who read Craig's testimony felt that he was an honest witness, but Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker would never allow Craig to talk to newsmen after he testified. Newsmen from all over the world tried to get statements from Craig, and this seemed to make Decker suspicious.

After District Attorney Jim Garrison started his investigation, Sheriff Decker accused Craig of talking with Garrison. When Craig denied the charge, Decker answered: "Well, someone sure as hell has been talking."

Craig, now 31, was named Sheriff's Department Officer of the Year by the Dallas Traffic Commission in 1960. He received four promotions while he was Deputy Sheriff under Bill Decker, one resulted from his capture of an international criminal named Harry Day whom Craig had never seen. He recognized Day by recalling his picture. Decker fired Craig on July 4, 1967.

In October, 1967, Craig went to New Orleans to talk with Garrison. When he left the airport for Garrison's office, a "tight-tail" was put on him. This tailing continued in New Orleans and later in Dallas until November 1, 1967 when an attempt was made to shoot him. As Craig walked across a parking lot at the intersection of Carroll and Columbia in Dallas, a pistol bullet moved the hair

just above his left ear.

Craig has had very unusual difficulties finding an apartment in Dallas. He was unemployed for one month, but he now works as a guard at a discount house making \$1.60 per hour. He has a wife and two children to support.

Craig and Captain Will Fritz, head of homicide and robbery of the Dallas Police Department, left the School Book Depository together before the announcement of Oswald's arrest had been made. When Craig heard of Oswald's arrest over the police radio, he called Fritz and told him of the man he had seen running from the scene. After the description, Fritz said, "That sounds like the man we have in custody. Come down and see if you can identify him."

Fritz met Craig outside his office in the City Jail building. He looked through the glass and told Fritz that was the man he had seen escape the area of the killing. The two men entered the room where Oswald was and Fritz said, "This man saw you leave."

Oswald replied with agitation, "I told you people I did."

Fritz said, "Calm down, son, we are just trying to find out what happened. What about that CAR.?"*

Oswald answered, "That STATION WAGON* belongs to Mrs. Paine, don't try to get her involved in this."

Craig distinctly remembers that Fritz said "car" and Oswald replied "station wagon."

Just about this time Captain Fritz got a telephone call from Sheriff Decker requesting Fritz to come to talk with him. Fritz left the questioning of Oswald and retraced the 15 blocks from city hall to Decker's office which is less than a block from the School Book Depository. Apparently this was not only a personal conversation, it was something which could not be said over the telephone or police radio. The need for a personal conversation must have developed after the ride from Parkland Hospital to the School Book Depository, as Decker caught a ride with Fritz from Parkland.

After four and a half years, some of us are now speculating that knowledge of the assassination was on a "need to know" basis. When Oswald was not killed in the Texas Theater, and was now in the hands of Captain Will Fritz, did Fritz move into the circle of those who "needed to know?" To me it is unbelievable that a Captain of Police would question the most important prisoner in

* Emphasis ours.

our history for over twelve hours, yet "kept no notes."

Captain Fritz seems to have considerable difficulty denying to the Warren Commission that Craig was ever in Fritz' office. Part of that testimony is reprinted here:

MR. BALL. Did you ever know a man named Roger Craig, a deputy sheriff?

MR. FRITZ: Roger Craig, I might if I knew which one he was. Do we have it here?

BALL. He was a witness from whom you took a statement in your office or some of your men.

FRITZ. Some of my officers.

BALL. He is a deputy sheriff.

FRITZ. One deputy sheriff who started to talk to me but he was telling me some things that I knew wouldn't help us and I didn't talk to him but someone else took an

affidavit from him. His story that he was telling didn't fit with what we knew to be true.

BALL. Roger Craig stated that about 15 minutes after the shooting he saw a man, a white man, leave the Texas State Book Depository Building, run across a lawn, and get into a white Rambler driven by a colored man.

FRITZ. I don't think that is true.

BALL. I am stating this. You remember the witness now?

FRITZ. I remember the witness; yes, sir.

BALL. Did that man ever come into your office and talk to you in the presence of Oswald?

FRITZ. In the presence of Oswald?

BALL. Yes.

FRITZ. No, sir; I am sure he did not. I believe that man did come to my office in that little hallway, you know outside my office, and I believe I stepped outside the door and talked to him for a minute and I let someone else take an affidavit from him. We should have that affidavit from him if it would help.

BALL. Now this man states that, has stated, that he came to your office and Oswald was in your office, and you asked him to look at Oswald and tell you whether or not this was the man he saw, and he says that in your presence he identified Oswald as the man that he had seen run across this lawn and get into the white Rambler sedan. Do you remember that?

FRITZ. I think it was taken, I think it was one of my officers, and I think if he saw him he looked through that glass and saw him from the outside because I am sure of one thing that I didn't bring him in the office with Oswald.

BALL. You are sure you didn't?

FRITZ. I am sure of that. I feel positive of that. I would remember that I am sure.

BALL. He also says that in that office—

FRITZ. Yes, sir.

BALL. After he had said, "That is the man," that Oswald got up from his chair and slammed his hand on the table and said, "Now everybody will know who I am." Did that ever occur in your presence?

FRITZ. If it did I never saw anything like that; no, sir.

BALL. That didn't occur?

FRITZ. No, sir; it didn't. That man is not telling a true story if that is what he said. Do you have any— could I ask a question, is it all right if I ask a question?

MR. McCLOY. All right, go ahead.

BALL. Go ahead.

FRITZ. I was going to ask if we had any affidavits from any of our officers that would back that up? If they did I never heard of it.

BALL. If you are here tomorrow.

FRITZ. It is something I don't know anything about.

BALL. If you are here tomorrow I would like to show you the deposition of the man for you to read it.

FRITZ. I am sure I would know that. The only time I saw the man hit the desk was when Mr. Hosty talked to him and he really got upset about that.

Roger Craig did not testify before the Warren Commission. His statements were taken by Commission Attorney David W. Belin in Dallas. When Belin started outlining just what areas of questions he intended to ask, Craig interrupted him to say, "Just ask me the question, Counselor, and if I know the answer I will tell you." This seemingly angered Belin who then spent much of his time having Craig relate just where the City Police motorcycle

wheels were in relation to the President's automobile.

Even without his identification of Bradley, Craig's testimony was so devastating to the intentions of the Warren Commission that Craig's statements had to be changed. Craig has marked in my copy of Vol VI fourteen alterations which were made to his true testimony. The result of the changes is to make his statements more or less meaningless. He is one of the few witnesses who was not given the opportunity to have a copy of his testimony or to be allowed to read and make corrections of errors in his statements which might have been made by the court reporter.

Reprinted below is a short portion of the Craig testimony in which Craig points out four alterations.

MR. CRAIG. I saw a light-colored station wagon, driving real slow, coming west on Elm Street from Houston. Uh—actually, it was nearly in line with him. And the driver was leaning to his right looking up the hill at the man running down.

MR. BELIN. Uh-huh.

CRAIG. And the station wagon stopped almost directly across from me. And—uh—the man continued down the hill and got in the station wagon. And I attempted to cross the street. I wanted to talk to both of them. But the—uh—traffic was so heavy I couldn't get across the street. And—uh—they were gone before I could—

BELIN. Where did the station wagon head?

CRAIG. West on Elm Street.

BELIN. Under the triple underpass?

CRAIG. Yes.

BELIN. Could you describe the man that you saw running down toward the station wagon?

CRAIG. Oh, he was a white male in his twenties, five nine, five eight, something like that; about 140 to 150; had kind of medium brown sandy hair—you know, it was like it'd been blown—you know, he'd been in the wind or something—it was all wild-looking; had on—uh—blue trousers—

BELIN. What shade of blue? Dark blue, medium or light?

CRAIG. No; medium, probably; I'd say medium.

And, a—uh—light tan shirt, as I remember it.

Mr. Craig says his answer was light blue, faded.

BELIN. Anything else about him?

CRAIG. No; nothing except that he looked like he was in an awful hurry.

BELIN. What about the man who was driving the car?

CRAIG. Now, he struck me, at first, as being a colored male. He was very dark complected, had real dark short hair, and was wearing a thin white-looking jacket—uh, it looked like the short windbreaker type, you know, because it was real thin and had the collar that came out over the shoulder (indicating with hands) like that — just a short jacket.

Craig says he identified the jacket as tan.

BELIN. You say that he first struck you that way. Do you now think that he was a Negro?

CRAIG. Well, I don't—I didn't get a real good look at him. But my first glance at him—I was more interested in the man coming down the hill—but my first glance at him, he struck me as a Negro.

BELIN. Is that what your opinion is today?

CRAIG. Well, I—I couldn't say, because I didn't get a good enough look at him.

BELIN. What kind and what color station wagon was it?

CRAIG. It was light colored—almost—uh—it looked white to me.

Instead of white, Craig says his answer was light green.

BELIN. What model or make was it?

CRAIG. I thought it was a Nash.

BELIN. Why would you think it was a Nash?

CRAIG. Because it had a built-in luggage rack on the top. And—uh—at the time, this was the only type car I could fit with that type luggage rack.

BELIN. A Nash Rambler—is that what you're referring to?

CRAIG. Yes; with a rack on the back portion of the car, you know.

BELIN. Did it have a Texas license plate, or not?

CRAIG. It had the same color. I couldn't see the—uh—name with the numbers on it. I could just barely make them out. They were at an angle where I couldn't make the numbers of the—uh—any of the writing on it. But—uh—I'm sure it was a Texas plate.

Craig says he said it was not the same color as Texas plates.

BELIN. Anything else about this incident that you can recall?

CRAIG. No; not that—

BELIN. All right.

Then what did you do?

CRAIG. Well, then—uh, I went back up to the front of the School Book Depository—rather, I went up to it and noticed that it was sealed off. There was an officer standing guard in it with a shotgun in the doorway; several officers crowded around in front of it.

Roger Craig could singlehandedly defeat the entire Warren Commission Report before a Grand Jury or a Congressional investigation.

We predict further attempts will be made on the life of Roger Dean Craig in his hometown of Dallas.