

# Panel leaves question of imposters

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One of the more sinister questions about a conspiracy that the House Assassinations Committee has not answered is the identity of the men posing as Secret Service agents in Dealey Plaza shortly before and after the assassination.

G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel for the committee, was without an explanation Friday when a committee member, U.S. Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy, D-District of Columbia, asked him to comment about the Secret Service imposters.

Fauntroy was specifically referring to Gordon L. Arnold, who first told *The News* his story about a confrontation with a man who identified himself as a Secret Service agent.

Other people in Dealey Plaza when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated also stated they met men who identified themselves as Secret Service agents, but all were shortly after the shooting.

Arnold's meeting, however, was minutes before the shooting.

Also important is that it occurred behind the wooden fence stop the grassy knoll from where acoustics experts now place the second gunman who fired at the presidential limousine.

None of the 28 Secret Service agents protecting the president in Dallas was on foot at the scene shortly before or after the shooting, according to the Warren Commission report.

Arnold's Secret Service imposter, wearing a light-colored suit, "walked towards me and said that I shouldn't be up there" behind the wooden fence, Arnold told *The News*.

Arnold challenged the man's authority. The man then "showed me a badge and said he was with the Secret Service and that he didn't want anybody up there," Arnold said.

Shortly after Arnold retreated to the front of the fence to take movie film of the motorcade, he said he "felt" the first shot come from behind him, only inches over his left shoulder.

"I had just gotten out of basic training," said Arnold. "In my mind live ammunition was being fired. It was being fired over my head. And I hit the air."

No representative of the House Assassinations Committee has yet talked to Arnold, whose story was published Aug. 27 by *The News*.

Some assassination researchers said they doubted Arnold's story because they could not find him in photographs and movie film taken at the time of the assassination.

However, his presence on the grassy knoll was confirmed Saturday by former U.S. Sen. Ralph Yarborough of Texas, who was riding in the motorcade two cars behind the presidential limousine. He was a passenger in a car with Vice President Lyndon Johnson and Mrs. Johnson.

"Immediately on the firing of the first shot I saw the man you interviewed throw himself on the ground," Yarborough told *The News*. "He was down within a second of the time the shot was fired and I thought to myself, 'There's a combat veteran who knows how to act when weapons start firing.'"

At least four other people, including two policemen, met men who identified themselves as Secret Service agents in the parking lot behind the wooden fence or near the Texas School Book Depository building shortly after the shooting.

All but one of the counterfeit agents wore business suits. The one who didn't wore sports clothes and "had dirty looking hands or fingernails," said Dallas police patrolman Joe Marshall Smith.

Smith encountered his phantom agent in the parking lot behind the wooden fence and drew his pistol. Just as he put his gun in his holster, the man in sports clothes "showed me that he was a Secret Service agent," Smith said.

Arnold was walking toward the railroad underpass over Elm Street to aim his movie camera when he was stopped behind the wooden fence by the man who identified himself as Secret Service.

On the overpass, a railroad signal supervisor, S.M. Holland, was aiding two uniformed Dallas policemen in identifying railroad personnel on the bridge. Holland said he was under the impression that a plainclothes detective "or FBI agent or something like that" was helping the policemen in stopping people from going onto the bridge, but he didn't talk to him.

"If there was one (government agent) up there, we didn't know about it," said James C. White, one of the two policemen. "He wasn't on the bridge. I know that."

Holland, now dead, had told the Warren Commission he saw a puff of smoke near the wooden fence on the grassy knoll at the time of the shooting. He also saw many footprints in the mud behind the fence as though someone had been standing there a long time, he said.

Mrs. Jean Hill, now remarried, also encountered a phantom Secret Service

agent as she ran after a man who dashed into the parking lot immediately after the shooting. Mrs. Hill said the man in a business suit showed her Secret Service identification "but evidently he wanted me to keep from getting away" to pursue the man running through the parking lot.

She lost sight of the running man as he reached the railroad tracks near the point where they ran across the triple overpass.

On the other side of the tracks at about the same time, a man slid down the embankment, jumped into a dark car near the Elm Street underpass and drove west toward Industrial Boulevard, said Tom Tilson Jr.

Tilson, then an off-duty Dallas policeman, said he chased the speeding car in his own vehicle but lost it as it turned off Industrial onto the Fort Worth Turnpike.

Two men, then students in high school at Ferris, Texas, told *The News* recently they witnessed a speeding car being stopped on Interstate 45 in Ferris within an hour after the assassination.

When asked by the traffic officer for

identification, the driver of the dark car identified himself and at least two others in the car as Secret Service agents "in a hurry to get to New Orleans to investigate something in connection with the assassination," said Billy V. James, one of the students who witnessed the incident.

"They apparently were believed and allowed to go on," James said, "because they weren't ticketed. We were interested because at first we thought we may have been witnessing the arrest of the assassins."

None of the Secret Service agents who filed reports on their activities in Dallas on the day of the assassination stated they had rushed by car to New Orleans. A check of state highway patrol officers and Ferris policemen who may have stopped the car resulted in no one who could recall the incident.

The two students — James Witherspoon, who still lives in Ferris, and Ronnie Witherspoon, who lives in London, England — cannot remember what law enforcement agency may have pulled the car over.