

# Assassination Memories Linger After Two Years

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EVERY LIFE tracks a path as it moves—freeze all movement for a second and there is a pattern. That same pattern will never be formed again.

Two years ago, on Nov. 22, 1963, chance caused lives to converge in a fateful pattern dominated by assassination.

Roy Truly, superintendent of the Texas School Book Depository, a privately owned wholesale textbook market, had started to lunch when he remembered that the presidential motorcade was scheduled to go by at noon.

Across the street from the depository, Abraham Zapruder, a middle-aged manufacturer of women's wear, hadn't planned to watch the motorcade either, but his secretary, Lillian Rogers, had talked him into going home to get his movie camera to photograph the parade.

AT POLICE headquarters, Jerry Henslee had sent his dispatchers out to coffee early that day because he had plenty of reason to remember the presidential motorcade. He was in charge of the police dispatchers that day, which was to be the busiest of his life.

None of them—Mr. Truly, Mr. Zapruder or Sgt. Henslee—was a major figure in the drama of the day. Each, however, remembers it in vivid detail as if he had been a central character.

Roy Truly got to work about 8 a.m. as usual at the depository. The thin, brooding man he had hired a short time back never crossed his mind because he was just another employe of the big depository.

Mr. Truly hadn't planned to watch the motorcade because, since it was fall, everyone was plenty busy. "I started to lunch a little later than usual when I noticed the time and just decided to wait until the motorcade went by," he recalls.

"I WAS STANDING directly in front of the entrance when it happened," he says. The rest is history. He soon learned that it was Lee Harvey Oswald, whom he had given a job a short time before, who fired the shots that killed President John F. Kennedy and wounded Gov. John Connally.

Looking back, as he is reluctant to do, Mr. Truly says he probably would hire a man like Oswald again because he cannot think of anything that should have made him refuse to hire Oswald.

"I suppose I would hire him again under the same circumstances," Mr. Truly told a reporter. "Hindsight, of course, is a lot easier than foresight, and I have regretted ever hiring him. He impressed me as a man who needed a job and wanted to go to work."

He admits, however, that he does check applicants a little more carefully now.

The floor from which Oswald fired the infamous shots is still in use for storing stock. Visitors are not allowed because they would be in the way.

There have been some inquiries from people who want to buy the building, but none has been considered seriously.

He has neither the time nor the inclination to answer questions from strangers about the events of Nov. 22, 1963.

Mr. Truly's memories of Oswald are mostly good. "I still wonder how a person so quiet and orderly and so diligent on the job could be thinking of such a thing. It makes you wonder how many people have some tendencies in the back of their minds that no one could spot. It's hard to believe a person can have these thoughts and never let them show. I suppose there are lots of people that way who have some sick cell in their minds."

MR. TRULY has no doubts whatsoever that it was Lee Harvey Oswald and Lee Harvey Oswald acting alone who killed President Kennedy.

"Since they found the gun and the spent shells, I've had no doubts. I never believed there were any accomplices or any conspiracy. The Warren Commission did a real good job. I have no complaints. I was treated fairly, and we agree with the findings."

The offices of Jennifer Juniors, a line of women's fashions, are across the street from the depository at 501 Elm St., fourth floor.

Abraham Zapruder hadn't planned to watch the parade, but at his secretary's urging, he went home during the morning and got his 8-millimeter Bell and Howell movie camera, which was loaded with color film.

"I DON'T KNOW if it was meant to be, but I changed places about three times to get a better angle," he remembers. "It was like looking through opera glasses—I saw closer than I could see personally without the lens.

"When I saw it happen, I started screaming, 'They killed him.' I thought a conspiracy had decided to assassinate him. I just kept yelling, 'They killed him,' all the way back to the office."

Mr. Zapruder had automatically continued to operate his camera in a daze and the result was probably the most historic piece of movie film ever made.

"I knew he was dead when I saw it. Up to today, I don't refer to it too much, because I don't like to think about it. It's like a wound that may heal, but there is still pain there. It was a horrible thing to see happen before your eyes."

MR. ZAPRUDER went back to his office in a state of shock. He banged on his desk and kicked the furniture. He cried.

"I saw it, yet, in my mind, I couldn't imagine, 'How do you kill somebody in cold blood on the streets?'" he says now.

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He still can't say what possessed him to keep the camera going except that it was an unconscious reaction. History records that he gave the film to the Secret Service. When it was given back to him, he sold it to Life Magazine, reportedly for \$25,000.

"I don't even have a print of it. I just wanted to divest myself of it. People wanted to come watch it, but it was not something to be exhibited. I didn't want to exploit it."

Mr. Zapruder almost let his secretary go watch the motorcade instead of going himself. One of them had to remain in the office. He wishes now he had.

"I believe I still wish I wasn't there because it's an unpleasant memory.

**S**GT. G. D. HENSLEE, known to his fellow workers as Jerry, was remote from the scene, but he played out all its drama as though he had been center stage.

As the man in charge of the dispatcher's office at the Dallas police headquarters, Sgt. Henslee took over at 6:30 a.m. that fateful day and in effect was in command of police forces which moved to meet the situation and which captured the assassin within hours.

"I remember it as just another major police incident we had to take care of," recalls the veteran of 18 years on the force, 17 of it in the dispatcher's office.

Sgt. Henslee was on the radio directing police units at noon that day. He had told the nine people working in the office — taking calls and relaying information to the men on the radio — to get their coffee before 9 a.m. because it would be a busy day — a gross understatement considering what happened.

"**WE WERE ALL** just a little bit tense, because we didn't know what to expect," he says. "But we kind of felt like everything was going to proceed satisfactorily as the motorcade turned off Harwood onto Main and we began to relax just a little bit. We figured everything was going to be all right now."

Sgt. Henslee had just given a 12:30 time check to the squads on his radio network when he heard Police Chief Jesse Curry say, "Go to the hospital. Have Parkland stand by."

"I realized by the tone of his voice that something had happened," the sergeant remembers. "I sent an officer to the straight line to call Parkland and tell them to stand by, that something had happened to the President."

The sergeant asked the chief if he could give him any information. "It looks like the President has been hit," Chief Curry replied.

"**WE THOUGHT** somebody had thrown a bottle or something down from the underpass into the car. We still had no idea he'd been shot."

Next, an inspector gave Sgt. Henslee the description of a suspect. "I immediately surrounded the whole building and the whole area. I brought in practically everything but the outlying squads emergency code. I told them to search the railroad yards, the cars — everything that moved down there, actually."

It is standard operating procedure for the dispatcher to take command in an emergency situation until a command post can be set up at the scene and other officers take charge.

Sgt. Henslee thus took charge on Nov. 22.

"**THE FIRST INKLING** we had he was dead was when a motorcycle officer came on and said the President was dead, that his head had been blown off," the sergeant says. "It was unbelievable. We were awestruck. There was a certain amount of silence."

Such things are almost routine, however, for the dispatchers. "We have major accidents, shootings, cuttings, babies drowning, every day," Sgt. Henslee points out. "I handled the tornado in 1957 and the plane crash where 25 died at Love Field in 1949. We just can't afford to choke up."

Things had just begun to settle down a bit when a citizen came on the radio to report that an officer had been shot. The citizen had discovered Officer J. D. Tippit dead and had used his car radio to call in.

"He gave us a location and we asked him to give us a car number. One of my dispatchers, Patrolman M. J. Jackson, had been Tippit's partner and he recognized the car immediately. We knew it was Tippit who had been shot. Jackson was the only one who actually choked up—it was just a minute or two and he stayed on the radio the rest of the day."

**N**EXT CAME the chase and the subsequent capture of Oswald. "I pulled some squads from the triple underpass and saturated this area of Oak Cliff. Then I noticed the similarity in the descriptions from the assassination scene and the shooting scene. They were almost identical."

Then came the call from the cashier at the Texas Theater, saying a man had rushed in and hidden in the movie. Sgt. Henslee ordered all squads to the theater and Oswald was in the net.

Sgt. Henslee was off duty the Sunday Oswald was shot.

His memory of the aftermath of that concerns the teletype machine in the dispatcher's office. "The Monday after Oswald was shot, we got so many wires from all over the world that the teletype finally burned out. We had to call Western Union to change the tubes."

Another thing the sergeant remembers — when he went home on the night of Nov. 22, he had a terrific headache.

He was not alone.