



Twenty-five years ago, in sun-bright midday, President John F. Kennedy was struck down by rifle-fire as he rode in a Texas motorcade. The echoes of those fateful shots—and the dark questions they invoked—still resound in the hearts and minds of millions of Americans.

Destiny in Dallas

by Edward Oxford

NOVEMBER 22, 1963. The big Hertz sign atop the red-brick Texas School Book Depository in downtown Dallas, Texas. Crowds, waving to President John F. Kennedy in his open limousine as the motorcade makes a sharp left turn onto Elm Street. The president, bareheaded in the crisp air, smiling and waving. The electric numerals on the big sign, flashing out 12:30, Dallas time.

And then . . .

The images, even after twenty-five years, are with the world still—vivid, deeply-etched, unforgettable. The sight of Kennedy struck by rifle fire . . . Jacqueline Kennedy crouching over her slumped husband . . . Texas Governor John Connally contorting with the pain of sudden wounds . . . a Secret Service agent leaping onto the back of the big Lincoln convertible . . . the limousine roaring away from the scene . . . terror-stricken on-lookers staring, running, clutching the ground . . . pigeons, startled, winging in circles over Dealey Plaza.

Even now, controversy continues as to what “really” happened in Dallas—and why. Various polls, for example, have shown that four of five Americans believe that some sort of conspiracy led to Kennedy’s assassination.

Four major government inquiries have studied the matter in wide scope and in minute detail.

The first, the “Texas investigation,” comprised the efforts by Dallas law enforcement agencies to gather evidence during the hours and days that followed the assassination.

The second was the massive and intensive Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) search into the matter, waged during the next

ten months. This probe included twenty-five thousand interviews.

The third and best-known inquiry was that carried out by the Warren Commission, headed by Chief Justice of the United States Earl Warren. President Johnson, a week after the assassination, had created the Commission. Its task: to delve into the assassination's many complex aspects and, hopefully, to draw final, clarifying, and authoritative conclusions.

The Warren Commission, which relied heavily on the FBI's field findings, presented its 888-page, 250,000-word report on September 27, 1964. It concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, had fired three bullets, killing Kennedy and wounding Connally. The Commission also held that Oswald had killed Dallas police officer J.D. Tippit. It found no meaningful "evidence of a conspiracy." It could not make "any definitive determination of Oswald's motives."

Two months later the Commission published its twenty-six supporting volumes of hearings, exhibits, and other evidence, totaling some ten million words.

In time, the Warren Report—which at first was accepted as a definitive statement on the assassination—was found to be flawed. Critics were able to show discrepancies, omissions, and even distortions in the Commission's findings.

Growing doubts about the validity of the Warren Report, intensified by the assassinations in 1968 of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, helped lead to a fourth full-scale inquiry into the Kennedy assassination—the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

In 1979, following more than two years of investigation, the Committee set forth its findings on Kennedy's assassination.* In a nearly seven-hundred-page report, it concluded that the President had indeed been killed by Oswald—but also that there probably had been a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. Oswald had *not* acted alone.

The House report was soon followed by fourteen volumes of evidence and hearings. But the committee members did not feel that they had proven the case for conspiracy beyond a shadow of a doubt. They recommended that the Justice Department look into the matter anew.

In March 1988, the Justice Department advised Congress that it could find no evidence of conspiracy. But no official announcement of this finding was ever made to the American people.

Meanwhile, numerous other governmental investigations have probed critical questions concerning the assassination—examining, for example, the highly controversial autopsy of Kennedy's body, and the possibility that foreign powers, American intelligence agents, and/or members of organized crime may have had some part in the assassination.

*The Committee also investigated the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., on which it issued a report and supporting volumes.

The official investigations brought forth revelations, half-revelations, and seeming concealments that tantalized, rather than satisfied, those who sought a "final" answer. Many still await such an answer.

AS EARLY AS June 1963, Kennedy had spoken with Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson and Governor Connally regarding a political visit by the President to Texas. The first tentative date was to have the trip timed to Johnson's August 27 birthday, but that was dismissed as being too close to Labor Day. Kennedy's schedule subsequently prevented him from going to Texas any sooner than Thursday, November 21, which was the date finally set.

On that day Kennedy and his wife left the White House by helicopter for Andrews Air Force Base. From there they took off for Texas in the presidential plane, "Air Force One."

The President appeared in San Antonio and Houston that afternoon. Late in the evening the presidential party flew on to Fort Worth. On the morning of Friday, November 22, Kennedy addressed a Chamber of Commerce breakfast there.

In a casual conversation with his wife and aide Kenneth O'Donnell that morning, Kennedy matter-of-factly remarked: "If anybody really wanted to shoot me from a window with a rifle, nobody can stop it."

At 11:25 A.M. "Air Force One" began its thirteen-minute flight to Dallas.

Bob Fenley, then a reporter for the *Dallas Times Herald*, was assigned that day to cover Kennedy's arrival at Love Field, five miles northwest of downtown Dallas. Fenley's name, like that of every other newsman at the scene, was on a Secret Service list. He wore a numbered press badge.

Fenley, now a public relations specialist in Dallas, recalls with clarity the sense of excitement that swept the airport crowds as they awaited the arrival of "Air Force One." The blue-and-silver Boeing 707 jet touched down at about 11:40 A.M. The President followed the First Lady down the steps. Vice President and Mrs. Johnson were in the receiving line to greet them.

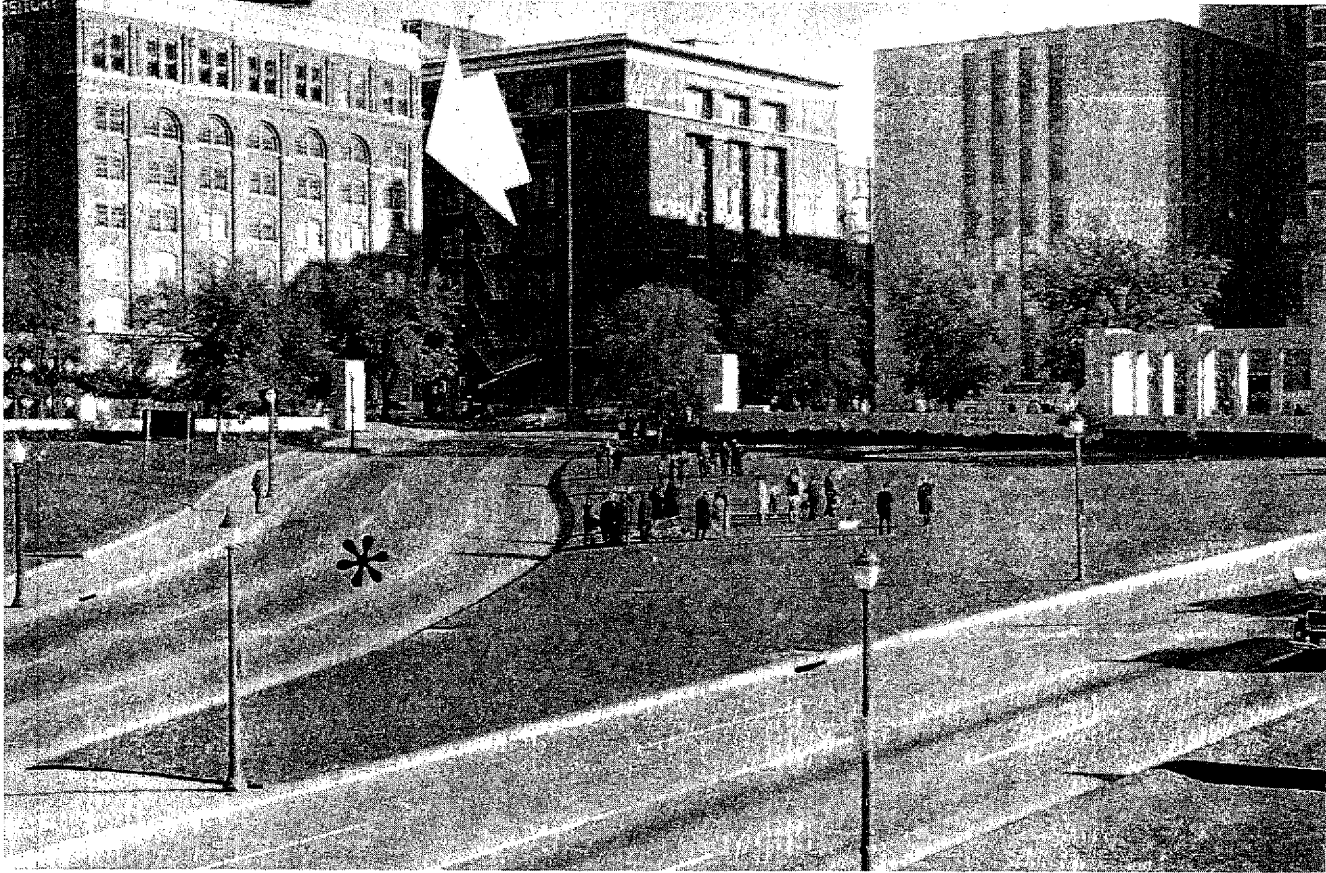
"Kennedy walked along a chain-link fence, reaching in and shaking hands with people," recalls Fenley.* "His wife was right with him. They both looked vibrant. They had warm personalities.

"The Secret Service seemed a bit uneasy as Kennedy kept shaking hands. The people responded well to him. He wanted to see the people, and wanted the people to see him. A little before noon the motorcade formed up and started toward downtown Dallas.

"The President had gotten off to a wonderful start. I called in my report and stood by at the airport. I was supposed to cover his departure later that day from the airport. But it didn't work out that way."

*The author interviewed Mr. Fenley and most of the thirty witnesses quoted in this article during a visit to the Dallas area in July and August 1988.

“As we made our turn, there was this building. I was facing it. The Texas School Book Depository. In a while I heard a shot. I looked up and thought I saw something up there in a window.”



THERE HAD BEEN a slight shower earlier on Friday, but now the sky turned clear and the sun came out. The protective glass bubbletop was kept off the President's limousine.

The Secret Service had laid out the security plan for the motorcade through Dallas, and agents had gone over the route ahead of time. They had taken into account vantage points that might put the President in harm's way, and had instructed the Dallas Police to assign extra manpower to every railroad and traffic overpass along the route as well as at each point where the motorcade would slow for a turn.

The motorcade, whose route had previously been published in newspapers, was bound for the mammoth Trade Mart on the northwestern edge of downtown Dallas. Here the President was to address a luncheon gathering of business and civic leaders. Secret Service agents had carefully searched through the Mart's complex of entrances and balconies; they even probed the yellow roses that were set about the Mart.

Weeks before, Secret Service agents had checked through their Protective Research Section files for

names of individuals in the Dallas-Fort Worth region who were deemed to be a potential danger to the President; none were listed.

The President's cavalcade—eighteen cars and three buses—moved along its announced route, escorted by a score of Dallas policemen on motorcycles.

The third car in the motorcade carried President Kennedy and his wife, along with Governor and Mrs. Connally. Kennedy sat in the right rear of the Lincoln limousine, Jacqueline to his left. The Connallys occupied collapsible jump seats just ahead of them.

Vice President and Mrs. Johnson rode in the fifth car in the motorcade.

The seventh car bore Dallas Mayor Earle Cabell and his wife Elizabeth. Today, Mrs. Cabell, now widowed, lives in an apartment near a boulevard along which the presidential motorcade had made its way. In a soft, wavering voice she tells of that November day:

“We were moving along, street after street, and the crowds were waving to us. We were coming along slowly to the end of Main Street. Where Dealey Plaza is. It would only be five minutes more to the Trade Mart.

Then came the turn onto Houston Street.

"As we made our turn, there was this building. I was facing it. The Texas School Book Depository. In a while I heard a shot. I looked up and thought I saw something up there in a high window. I thought I saw something out of that window—a projection. 'Earle,' I said to my husband, 'it is a shot.' Just then came two shots. People went running up the grassy knoll. The motorcade came to a standstill. I thought I smelled gunpowder. Time left me that day. It was hard to sense the passing of time."

SCORES OF PEOPLE had been standing along the streets and in front of buildings in and around Dealey Plaza. Each saw and heard what was happening from his or her unique vantage point. Some thought gunshots had come from the grassy knoll overlooking Elm Street. Others perceived that the shots originated from a triple underpass a few dozen yards farther along the route. Still others felt certain they came from the Texas School Book Depository. And there were those who had no idea at all where the firing came from.

As for the number of shots fired, many heard three. Some heard fewer. Others more.

W.W. Mabra, then a bailiff with the county sheriff's office, recalls that he was on the corner of Main and Houston, "so close to the President that I could almost have reached out and touched him. Then I heard the first shot. I thought it was a backfire. People ran toward the knoll. Some said they saw smoke there. I thought at first the shot may have come from there."

Malcolm Summers, another bystander that day, relates that "I was on the terrace that looks down onto Elm Street. The President's car came by right in front of me. Then I heard shots and saw him slump forward. I hit the ground. In a few seconds everybody was running toward the railroad tracks behind the knoll. My truck was parked back near there. I was sure they had somebody trapped up there."

Jim Willmon, then an ad salesman for the *Dallas Morning News*, was on Houston Street. "Jackie Kennedy was holding her hat in the breeze," he remembers. "The car turned down Elm Street. A car backfired. Or so I thought. I said to my buddy, 'The Secret Service is going to have a heart attack!' But it wasn't a backfire. It was shots. The people ran toward the grassy knoll. No one seemed to look up at the Book Depository."

Later, a forty-five-year-old steamfitter was to say that he saw a man fire a weapon from a sixth-story window in the Depository. A fifteen-year-old student stated he saw a man shoot from the fifth floor. At first he said it was a black man; in his second telling it was a white man. A news photographer, in a press car some eight or nine cars from the front of the motorcade, said that right after the shots were fired he glimpsed what looked like a rifle being drawn back into an upper window. Three Book Depository employees were on the fifth floor of the building at that time, watching the motorcade. They thought the shots came from somewhere in the building, perhaps from the floor above them.

Witnesses have sharply contrasting recollections. Carolyn Walther, for example, disagrees with the "lone gunman" theory. She had been an office worker in the Dal-Tex building, just across the street from the Depository. Today, retired, she lives in a Dallas suburb. She remembers:

"I had gone out on the street at about twenty after twelve to get a look at the President when he came by. While I waited, I glanced up at the Depository building. There were two men in the corner window on the fourth or fifth floor. One man was wearing a white shirt and had blond or light brown hair. This man had the window open. His hands were extended outside the window. He held a rifle with the barrel pointed downward. I thought he was some kind of guard. In the same window, right near him, was a man in a brown suit coat.

"Then the President's car came by. I heard a gunshot. People ran. Like a fool, I just stood there. I saw people down. I walked toward them, with the thought they maybe were hurt and I could help them. People were running toward the grassy knoll. A woman cried out: 'They shot him!' In all, I heard four shots."

Jean Lollis Hill had accompanied her friend, Mary Moorman, to Dealey Plaza that day. Mary had brought along her Polaroid camera. Jean, today a school teacher in Dallas, remembers: "We stood right next to the curb on Elm Street. As the President's car turned the bend, it veered into the lane that was closer to us. Kennedy was turned the other way, waving to people. So I stepped out into the street, to get real close to the car. It was going slow.

"I called out, 'Hey, Mister President, look this way! We want to take a picture!' I think he heard me. He started to turn around toward me. At that moment a shot rang out. And then more shots. Mary was taking a picture just in the midst of it.

"Of all the people in Dealey Plaza, I guess I was just about the nearest to the President. Part of his head blew off.

"There was a flash of light from that grassy knoll. I thought it was the good guys and the bad guys. Shots from the back. Then, shooting from the front. I believe I heard four to six shots in all.

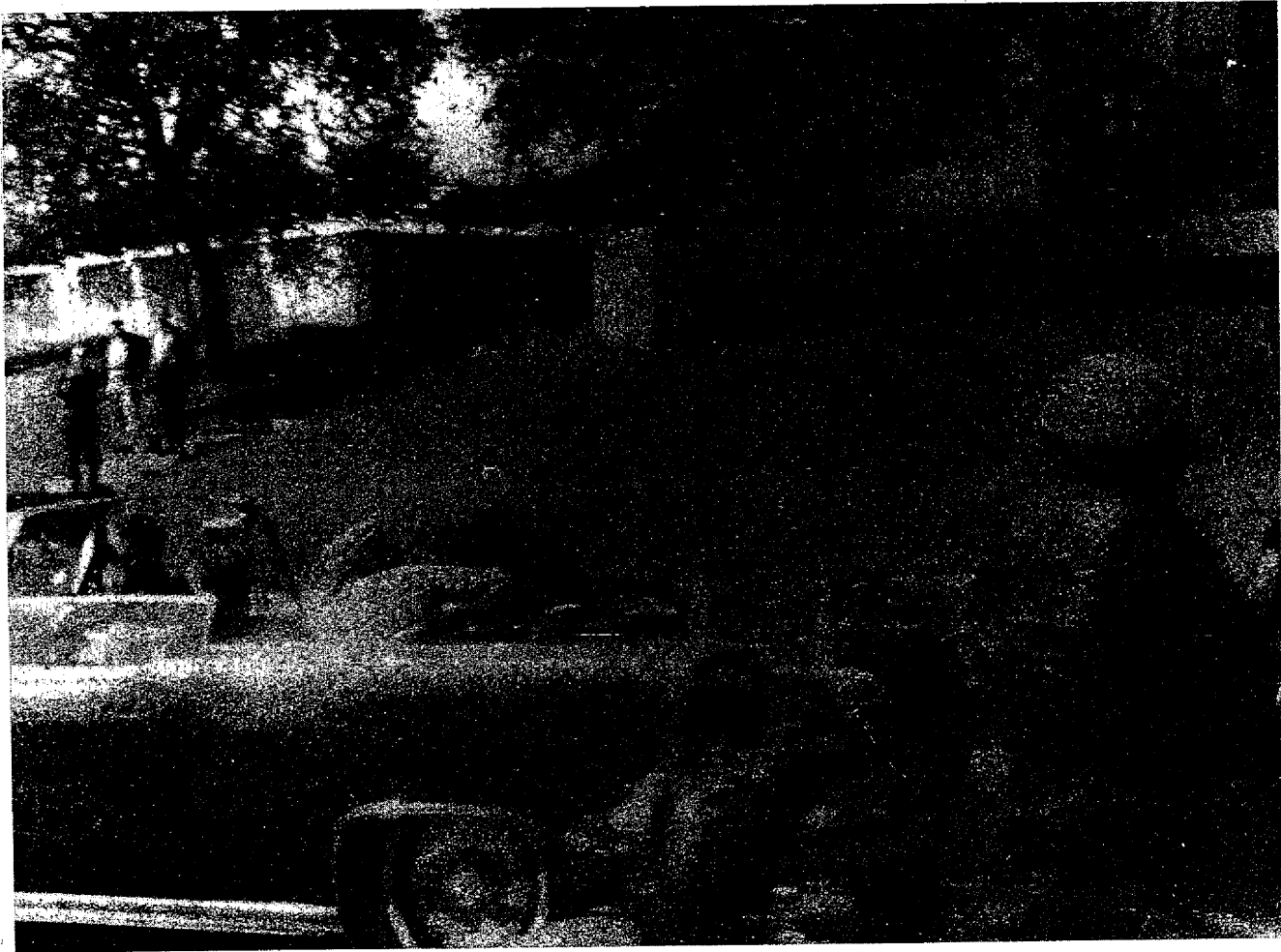
"Mary tried to pull me to the ground. I stood there. I wanted to find out what was happening. People seemed frozen at first. Then I noticed one man, though, moving from the front of the Depository building, hurrying toward that parking lot behind the grassy knoll. He had on a hat and an overcoat.

"I went back there, looking for him. Then a guy in plain clothes came up to me and flashed some I.D. on me. He said he was with the Secret Service. He said, 'You need to come with me'—and took me over to the Sheriff's office to question me."

B.J. Martin, who today works for a sheriff's office, was a Dallas motorcycle policeman assigned to the police escort that accompanied the President's motorcade. He recalls:

"I was riding along at the right rear wheel of the lim-

“I called out, ‘Hey Mister President, look this way. We want to take a picture!’ He started to turn around toward me. At that moment a shot rang out. And then more shots.”



ousine, right near President Kennedy. We were not supposed to ride directly at his side, but back a little, so the people could see him. Then there were shots. He had been hit. I was so close to President Kennedy that his blood and tissue from his head splattered over my windshield. I spun my bike around, looked in a circle, trying to figure out where that firing was coming from.

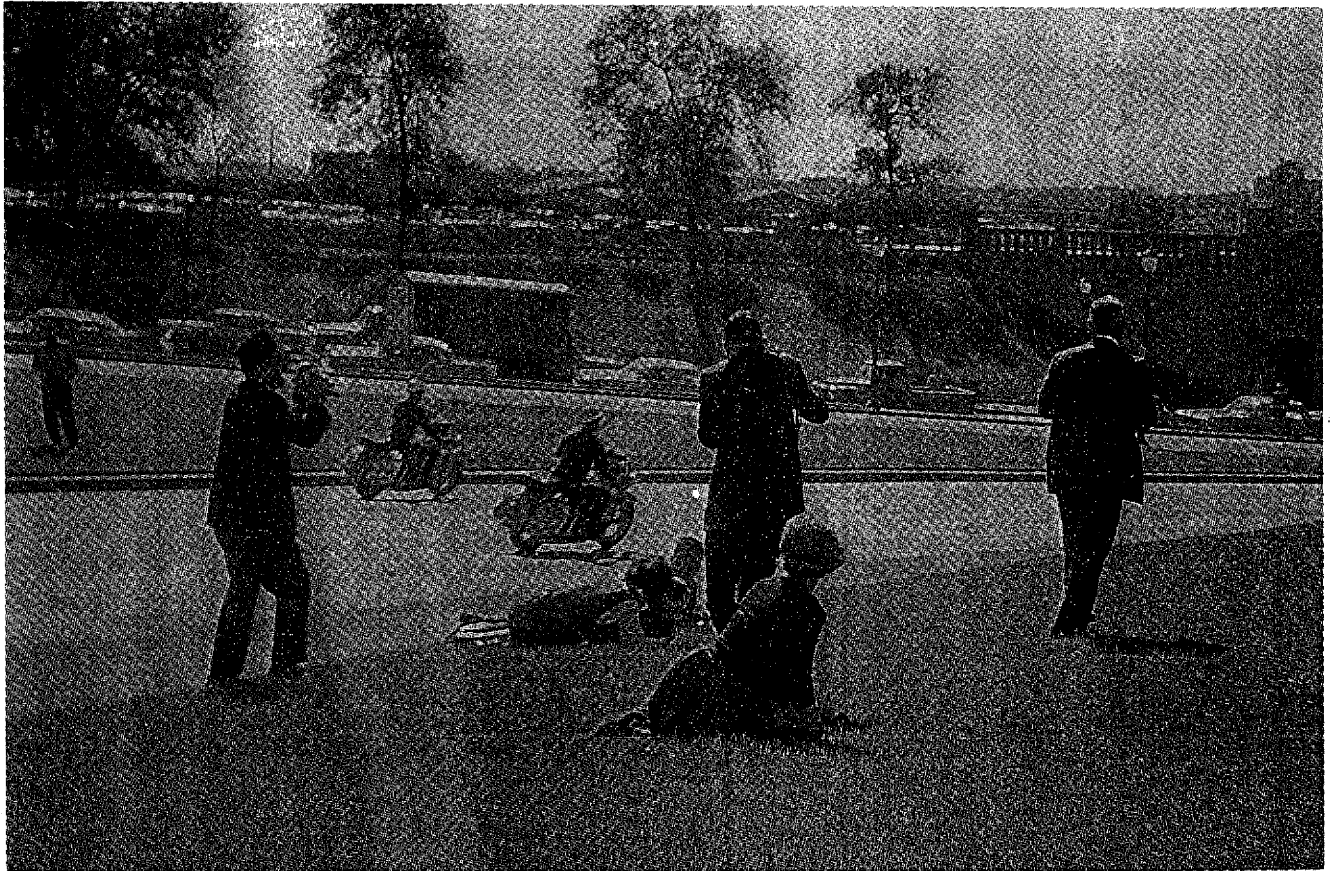
“But I didn’t stay in Dealey Plaza but for a few seconds. Our orders were to stick with the President’s car. It took off, headed for Parkland Hospital. I rode right along with it all the way. The thing was, everything had been going just right that day. But then this.”

THE ASSASSINATION would, in a piecemeal manner, be recorded by numerous still and motion picture cameras that through happenstance had been focused on the President’s car as it moved through Dealey Plaza. In all, more than forty persons took photographs of the motorcade just before, during, and after those nerve-shattering moments of rifle-fire.

Some of these photographs played an important if ambiguous part in subsequent analyses of the assassination. The most famous pictures—brief footage from the motion picture camera held by Dallas businessman Abraham Zapruder—recorded the impact of bullets upon President Kennedy. A film sequence taken by Orville Nix seemed to indicate a possible gunman near the grassy knoll. Footage by bystander Robert Hughes appeared to show two men, one with a weapon, on an upper floor of the Depository. And the Polaroid photo taken by Mary Moorman suggested a shape behind the picket fence on the knoll—a figure some were to interpret as possibly being that of a second gunman.

James Altgens was a photographer for the Associated Press that day in Dallas, assigned to cover the Kennedy motorcade. He had first tried to take position atop the triple underpass overlooking Elm Street, but policemen refused to let him stay there. So he took pictures of the motorcade as it moved down Main Street, then quickly walked across the grass to Elm Street.

“I heard a gunshot. People ran. Like a fool, I just stood there. I saw people down. . . . People were running toward the grassy knoll. . . . In all, I heard four shots.”



“I had my lens right on the presidential car,” remembers Altgens. The Depository was in the background. Just as I took the photograph I heard a sound that I thought was a firecracker. It sounded like it was coming from behind the car. My photograph, when it came out, showed Kennedy just as he was hit.

“But I didn’t get the next instant. The next hit. I was refocused to fifteen feet because I wanted a good close-up of the President. I had my camera about to my eye. It seemed a shot came as I was looking at him. It caused him to move a bit forward. Flesh particles flew out of the side of his head. The left side of his head. The sight so stunned me I couldn’t take that second picture.

“The first picture, the one I did get, became famous. But it also became very troubling. The Associated Press put out a cropped version of it. Some said the uncropped version shows Lee Harvey Oswald, at the instant the first shot was fired, standing in the doorway of the Depository building. But the man was said to be another employee who resembled him. And Oswald’s mother later came to me and pointed out to me in the picture, near the Depository building, a man in a dark hat. She said he was Jack Ruby.”

CONFUSION TOOK HOLD of the crowd in Dealey Plaza. No one knew for sure what was happening—much less how and why it was happening. Among the first to consider the situation with clear-mindedness were the Dallas policemen assigned to the motorcade. Violence, unannounced and of anonymous origin, came with their profession.

Marrion Baker was a motorcycle policeman in the cavalcade, riding near one of the press cars. “As I turned the corner toward the Book Depository,” he recalls, “I heard a shot. Bang! Pigeons began flying around. Then two more shots. Bang! Bang! I looked up toward the Depository. I revved up my motorcycle and went there and parked. There was a woman on the corner screaming, ‘Oh, they have shot that man, they have shot that man!’ The President’s car had moved on. I didn’t know who had been shot.

“I heard Chief of Police Jesse Curry say on the radio, ‘Get some men over on the railroad tracks.’ A lot of people thought the shots had come from the railroad tracks. But I thought I was in a good position to know. I thought it was either the Depository or the Dal-Tex building.

"I entered the Depository lobby. With Roy Truly, the building manager, I ran to get the freight elevator door. He hollered for it. I said, 'Let's take the stairs.' My intention was to go all the way to the top, where I thought the shots came from.

"As I got to the second floor I kind of glimpsed this man walking away from me, into a lunchroom. I said, 'Come here.' He turned and walked straight back to me. I had my gun on him. He didn't change his expression one bit. He was not out of breath. Mr. Truly said that he knew the man, that he worked there. I went up the stairs. Later on the man was identified as being Lee Harvey Oswald."

By some accounts, Oswald walked away from Baker, then got a Coke from a soda machine. He is said to have then walked through an office, down the stairs, and out of the building.

FORMER TEXAS GOVERNOR John Connally, now active in business affairs in Houston, remembers the presidential limousine making the left turn from Houston Street onto Elm Street and going about one hundred and fifty or two hundred feet.*

"I was looking to my right," he says, "and then I heard a shot. It was a rifle-shot. I knew the sound of a rifle-shot because I had done a good amount of hunting. This was not a backfire or a firecracker.

"Right away, the thought came to me that this was an assassination attempt. I started to turn toward my left to look back at President Kennedy. I was sure that the shot had not hit me. I heard it, but I did not sense being hit by it.

"As I turned, I felt like someone had doubled up his fist and hit me hard just below the right shoulder blade. I knew I had been hit by a second shot. Those shots had come so fast I thought maybe someone was working an automatic weapon, or maybe two or three people were shooting.

"I looked down and saw blood all over me. I said, 'My God, they're going to kill us all!' I nearly doubled up. I fell over into my wife's lap.

"Then I heard the third shot. It hit the President hard. It made a loud noise as it hit. I couldn't see the President. But I knew he was hit. His brain tissues had been blown out onto me."

The bullet that struck Connally hit him in the shoulder, ripped through his chest, went through his wrist, then wounded him in the thigh. (According to later official reports, the same bullet had already passed through President Kennedy. But to this day, Connally insists he was struck by a separate bullet.

The presidential limousine, which had been moving at about eleven miles an hour, momentarily slowed as a Secret Service man from the next car scrambled aboard over the trunk, then accelerated out of Dealey Plaza. Police motorcycles led the way to the Parkland Hospi-

tal, four miles from the Texas School Book Depository, at speeds of up to seventy or eighty miles an hour. They arrived at the emergency entrance at about 12:36 P.M.

As the limousine pulled to a stop, Connally tried to get to his feet to make way for the stricken President. He almost got upright, then collapsed. He was put on a stretcher. Then, after a Secret Service agent took off his suit coat and placed it over the grievously wounded President's head to shield it from view, Kennedy was taken from his wife's arms and lifted from the car.

Inside the hospital, two hastily mobilized teams of doctors fought to save the wounded men.

Dr. Paul Peters was one of about a dozen doctors who worked on Kennedy in Trauma Room No. 1. Recently, in an office not far from that room, the surgeon told of the desperate struggle to revive the President.

"When I hurried into the double doors, the effort had already begun. My first thought was, 'My God, he is dead.' He had a large wound in his head. Dr. Malcolm Perry ordered a tracheotomy. Dr. Charles Carrico had tried to put in chest tubes, but couldn't pass a tube through his mouth because the trachea was torn by a wound. We decided to put the airway in by enlarging the hole, the wound at the front of his neck. We cut his clothes away to look for other wounds.

"Admiral George Burkley, the President's personal physician, was in the room. He urged the doctors, 'Give him steroids! Give him steroids!' He knew that Kennedy had Addison's disease, of which very few people were aware. The medical team had already given him steroids.

"Dr. Perry was giving external chest massage. There was a little pulse. But the heart reading was a straight line.

"I looked at the President's head. A considerable portion of the skull, of the brain, was gone. It looked like a wound we just could not salvage. We kept working feverishly."

So involved were the doctors in their struggle to save Kennedy that they did not turn him over to examine the back of his body. They did not observe another bullet wound in his back.

As the doctors continued their furious efforts in Trauma Room No. 1, the second medical team tended Connally in Trauma Room No. 2, just across a corridor. The large wound in Connally's chest caused him extreme pain and difficulty in breathing. He was moved to the operating room for surgery.

Secret Service agents guarded Vice President and Mrs. Johnson in Booth No. 13, halfway down the corridor from Trauma Room No. 1.

Mrs. Kennedy walked in and out of Trauma Room No. 1, watching the doctors wage their efforts to save her husband.

BACK IN DEALEY PLAZA, shock and confusion still reigned. Police officers in front of the Texas School Book Depository began to gather eyewitness accounts. Witnesses were taken to the Criminal Courts

*The author interviewed Mr. Connally by telephone on September 19, 1988.

“I looked up toward the Depository. There was a woman on the corner screaming, ‘Oh, they have shot that man, they have shot that man!’ I revved up my motorcycle and went there and parked.”



Building nearby, where they were asked to give depositions.

Pedestrians stood in silence. Some wandered across the grassy knoll. Traffic backed up.

Cecil McWatters, then a bus driver, had been making his regular run through downtown Dallas toward the neighboring Oak Cliff section. “I figured the motorcade would be out of town by then,” he recalls. “It was something like twenty minutes to one. But the traffic had me bogged down a few blocks from the Book Depository.

“At Field Street, that’s six blocks or so from the Depository, this fellow gets on the bus. I was just sitting there, the bus not moving. Later on, from the transfer I gave him, they found out it was Lee Harvey Oswald. He just sat down. There were only a few people on the bus.

“We didn’t get but two blocks. A man stepped out of his car in front of the bus. He came over to me and said, ‘I heard on my radio the President’s been shot.’ I turned and told the passengers. A lady got up and asked for a transfer. Then that last fellow I picked up said, ‘Give me a transfer’ and he got off the bus. He was on my bus just a few minutes.”

Oswald then apparently walked about two blocks to the Greyhound bus terminal. There he found a taxi. He asked to be taken to Oak Cliff, roughly two-and-a-half miles from the terminal. For reasons unknown, he got out of the cab about a quarter of a mile from the rooming house where he lived, at 1026 North Beckley Avenue.

At about 12:40 P.M. police had ordered the Book Depository sealed.

Five minutes later, ostensibly based on information given by the steamfitter eyewitness, a description of the suspect—“an unknown white male approximately thirty, slender build, five-feet-six, weight one hundred sixty-five pounds”—went out on the police radio system.

By a little after one o’clock, at a roll call of Book Depository employees, building manager Roy Truly discovered that three or four employees, including warehouseman Lee Harvey Oswald, could not be accounted for. Their addresses were turned over to the police.

Meanwhile, Officer J.D. Tippit, age thirty-eight, was cruising the area near Oak Cliff in his police car. Presumably he had received by radio the suspect’s description. At 12:54 P.M., according to police accounts, Tippit was ordered to “be at large for any emergency that comes in.” A short while after receiving the “at large” order, he called in his location in Oak Cliff.

By about 1:00 P.M. Oswald had reached his rooming house. The housekeeper, Earlene Roberts, said she saw him hurry into his room. Using the name O.H. Lee, he had rented the tiny room a few weeks previous for eight dollars a week.

Oswald put on a jacket. He may have picked up a pistol. Within minutes he ran out. Roberts said, “My, you’re sure in a hurry.” She last saw Oswald standing at a corner bus stop. No one saw him walk away.

AT PARKLAND HOSPITAL, the doctors continued their desperate fight for Kennedy's life. Dr. Peters recounts: "After thirty minutes or so of all-out effort to revive him, we knew it was over. We had done everything that we could do. I had been unaware that Mrs. Kennedy had been standing right near me for much of the time I worked on the President.

"A Catholic priest came in and rendered last rites. At about one o'clock the President was declared dead. Mrs. Kennedy slipped the ring off her finger and put it on the President's finger."

Kennedy was forty-six years old.

Elizabeth Cabell, whose car had rushed to Parkland, saw Mrs. Kennedy outside Trauma Room No. 1: "Secret Service men were near her. But she was sitting alone. I said, 'Mrs. Kennedy, I am Elizabeth Cabell. I wish there was something that I could do to help.' She said, 'I remember you gave me the roses.' She looked in a daze. And she said, 'I would like a cigarette.' And I gave her a cigarette and lighted it for her.

"By then, I knew, she had learned of the death of her husband."

Dallas police and other officials had begun to search the Texas School Book Depository. Among them was Duke Mooney, then a Dallas County deputy sheriff.

"I got up to the sixth floor—to search around," recalls Mooney. "Then up to the seventh, kind of the attic. Then back to the sixth. I wasn't sure who or what I was looking for. The place was a storage area, piled head-high with cartons of books. A couple of other officers were looking around in there, too.

"I wound around through passageways between the stacks of cartons. Looking and looking. After a while I worked my way to the southeast corner of the building. Packing cartons were stacked high. I squeezed between two stacks, near a window.

"There, on the floor, near the window, were three spent shells. The window was part-way open. Two or three boxes were set so they looked like they could have made a rest for a weapon. There was a crease in the top carton, maybe made by the recoil, at the same angle the shots could have been fired from.

"Looking out from that window, it didn't seem to me such a long distance to where the President's car had been. I leaned out the window, looked down, and saw Captain Will Fritz [head of the Homicide Bureau]. I hollered down to send up the crime lab people.

"After they secured the area, I went on searching around. I was looking on the ledges and the joists, just looking everywhere. Then Deputy Sheriff Eugene Boone, he called out. I was just ten or fifteen steps from him. He hollered: 'Here is the gun!'

"The rifle was squeezed in between stacks of cartons in an upright position. The scope was up. The rifle was not on the floor, but held up by the cartons. The rifle was all the way across the storage area from the window, right close to the stairway. We were staring at the rifle when word came that the President had died. You could have heard a pin drop in that sixth floor."

IN OAK CLIFF, a little less than a mile from Oswald's rooming house, Officer Tippit noticed a man walking along the sidewalk. The time was about 1:15 P.M.

Helen Markham Grant was a waitress on her way to work that afternoon. She still lives just a block from the scene of the events that took place near the corner of 10th Street and Patton Avenue.

"It was a little after one o'clock, my time to go to my job," she remembers. "Before leaving the house, I had heard that the President had been shot. I headed toward the bus stop. A man was walking along 10th Street, across the way from me. A police car was moving along slowly behind the man.

"The police car pulled up near to him and stopped. The man stopped. He walked over to the passenger side of the police car. The car window was down. The man leaned in the window. The two seemed to talk. Then the man slowly stepped back from the car.

"The policeman got out of the car on the driver's side. He started toward the front of the car. The man took out a gun and, across the hood of the car, shot the policeman. He fired a few times.

"I didn't know what was happening in front of my eyes. I was frightened. The man who had done the shooting headed near me. He turned, he started to walk along. I was afraid he was fixing to kill me. He just went across a vacant lot.

"I went to the policeman. He was lying in the street. I tried to stop the bleeding. I tried to talk with him. Not knowing what the Lord I was doing, I got into the police car and tried to work his radio to call for help."

Another passerby then reached into the patrol car and succeeded in alerting the radio dispatcher. The dispatcher called out: "Signal 19 [a shooting] involving a police officer." An ambulance arrived, then rushed Tippit to nearby Methodist Hospital. At 1:30 P.M. he was pronounced dead on arrival. Police swarmed into Oak Cliff searching for the man who shot Tippit.

Two women saw a man with a revolver cut across their lawn. One later said he was emptying his gun and "shaking it." A used car salesman claimed he saw a man with a revolver in his hand running near his lot.

William Alexander, then Dallas assistant district attorney, joined police as they scoured the Oak Cliff streets and alleys. "We were getting sightings on the police radio," recalls Alexander. "The man had shed his jacket near a service station. Then some police got word there was a man hiding in a church and they went there. We had a report that someone had run into the library, but he wasn't the man. Whoever our man was, whatever he had in mind for an escape, he wasn't going anywhere on us. Running wouldn't help him. We would get him."

NOT LONG AFTER the Tippit murder, police sirens sounded along Jefferson Boulevard, several blocks from the site of the shooting. The manager of a shoe store had heard on the radio that the President had been shot and that, in Oak Cliff, a patrolman had been shot. He heard the sirens, then noticed a man suddenly

duck into the entranceway to the store.

Then the man turned and walked toward the nearby Texas Theatre. Ticket taker Julia Postal heard the sirens and then saw a man enter the theater's outer lobby. Attracted by the sirens, she stepped out to the curb. The shoe store manager asked whether the man had bought a ticket. She said, "No, by golly, he didn't." She called the police.

Squad cars closed in on the theater from all directions. Policemen entered at the box office. One officer went in through the rear exit doors.

Warren Burroughs ran the popcorn counter that day. He recalls that the movie *War is Hell* had just begun to play on the screen. Today he still works at the Texas Theatre.

"I was at my counter," says Burroughs. "I had my transistor radio. It told about the President being hit. And Governor Connally being shot. And then, you know, Tippit being shot—right there in Oak Cliff.

"The first show at the Texas Theatre would start just about one o'clock. It couldn't have been more than a few minutes after one when that man came in. Nobody saw him come in. There was a partition next to my counter. I couldn't see him come in. But he would have had to pass me to sit downstairs. He didn't. He went up to the balcony.

"When the police came in looking for him, they went up to the balcony. The man came down to the main floor and sat down there. The picture stopped and the lights came on. There were just a few people in the place."

A police officer entered the theater from the curtains next to the screen, then walked down the aisle. As he neared the back, a man stood up and said "This is it!" He and the officer began to scuffle.

The man was Oswald. He and the policeman struck out at one another. Then Oswald reached into his belt and drew out a pistol that had been hidden under his shirt. The officer dived at Oswald and seized him around the waist. They fell into a row of seats.

According to police accounts, Oswald pointed the pistol at the officer and squeezed the trigger. The hammer clicked, but the weapon failed to fire. Policemen came running from throughout the theater. They subdued Oswald, finally disarming and handcuffing him.

Burroughs notes: "The seat, the one toward the back where Oswald was sitting, that's been painted black since then. To kind of mark it."

Oswald was led from the theater in handcuffs, surrounded by a score of policemen and detectives. He bore facial scratches and a cut around his left eye, inflicted during the struggle. A crowd looked on as he was placed in a squad car. The time was about 1:50 P.M. The car carried the manacled prisoner directly to City Hall and police headquarters. Oswald was taken to the Homicide Bureau on the third floor.

Gus Rose was a detective then working in the Homicide Bureau. "I was interviewing witnesses to the assassination that afternoon," Rose recalls. "Word came

that Tippit had been shot. In a while I looked up and they brought in this fellow with his hands cuffed behind him.

"I took the man to an interrogation office. I removed his handcuffs. I asked him to identify himself. He refused. In his pockets I found two pieces of identification. One card was for Lee Harvey Oswald. The other was for Alek Hidell. I said, 'Which are you?' He said, 'You're the cop. You figure it out.' He told me a lot of lies.

"Captain Will Fritz called me out at sometime near two-twenty. He said that the employees of the Texas School Book Depository were accounted for—except one. He told me to get some men together and get out to this address in Irving. I asked what the man's name was. He said, 'Lee Harvey Oswald.' I was stunned. 'Captain,' I said, 'I think this is Oswald, right in there.'"

OF ALL who witnessed the bewildering scene in Dealey Plaza, few would bear more troubling memories than those who worked in the Texas School Book Depository, toward which authorities had turned their attention as the source of the killing gunshots.

Ruth Dean worked on the third floor of the building. Now retired, she still lives in Dallas. "I had only seen Oswald once," she recalls. "I didn't know him at all. I had come out on the front steps of the Depository, like so many other employees, to see the President go by.

"Kennedy was the second President I had ever seen. His car made the bend right in front of us. Off went what I thought was a firecracker and I thought someone would be in trouble for that. Then another went off. My boss, standing next to me, said: 'That was gunfire!' It was bedlam. People running every which way. Complete confusion."

Mary Hollies, then a recent Canadian immigrant to the United States, worked in the Depository. She recently told of that day, breaking a twenty-five-year silence: "I was afraid of what would happen to me. I didn't say anything. I didn't want trouble. But I say it now.

"Oswald was, well, someone you left to himself. I used to see him on the bus a lot.

"I came up in the elevator that morning with a couple of other women workers and there was Oswald. He had a package wrapped in brown paper. One of my friends said, 'What do you have in the package?' He said, 'Fishing rods.'

"Around the time of the motorcade, our employees were told to go outside. Instead, another woman and I decided to go upstairs to the fourth floor—to get a better view.

"We rang for the freight elevator. It was the open-gate kind you could see into. Oswald was on it. He didn't stop for us. He went on up to the sixth floor. We kept ringing for it, but it didn't come down. So we just walked up the stairway to the fifth floor.

"As the President's car went down Elm Street we heard three shots. We thought they were cannon fire.

We looked down to see where the cannon was. The President had slumped over.

"We ran to get the elevator back to the fourth floor. We pressed for it. It came down, with Oswald in it. He went right past us. He did not stop for us. I think the elevator went all the way to the ground floor.

"A couple of the employees who went to Washington to tell what they really knew, didn't. They just wanted a trip. They told what the people there wanted to hear. I didn't tell what I knew at the time. Not even to the FBI. I was afraid of being deported."

Danny Arce had been putting in new flooring on the sixth floor of the Depository that morning: "We all used to have lunch in this little room," he remembers. "We'd play dominoes. Oswald, he didn't mix in much. He would read the newspaper.

"I saw Oswald quite a few times Friday morning. He was filling orders. Around five to twelve, I headed down to the first floor. Oswald, he was on the fifth or sixth floor. He said, 'You all close the door on the elevator, I'll be down.' I didn't pay much attention.

"I was right on the front steps of the Texas School Book Depository when the motorcade came along. Just after the President's car passed, I heard a shot. Then two more shots. It seemed to me the shots came from the grassy knoll. I went over there. A lot of people ran there, I wanted to know who was doing the shooting.

"When Oswald was arrested, I didn't see how he could be the right man. I thought the police made a mistake. Oswald could have been a perfect guy to hang this on."

OSWALD WAS QUESTIONED by authorities for seven hours on Friday, three hours on Saturday, and somewhat less than two hours on Sunday. The interrogation, which took place in Room 317, the Homicide Bureau office, was later described by Dallas Chief of Police Jesse Curry as "a three-ring circus."

Captain Fritz did most of the questioning. As was his custom, he kept few notes. There were no stenographic records, no tape recordings. The suspect had no lawyer present.

Occasionally, FBI and Secret Service agents took part in the questioning. Oswald denied any knowledge of the assassination. He also denied shooting Tippit.

Meanwhile, at Parkland Hospital, aides to the deceased President had tried to persuade Mrs. Kennedy to leave the area. At first she refused, insisting on remaining with her husband. Her pink suit still bore blood stains.

A casket was obtained and the President's body readied for removal from the hospital.

Dr. Peters recalls: "Dr. Earl Rose, a forensic pathologist, tried to take command of the President's body. He said to the Secret Service men and the Kennedy aides who were moving the casket to the doorway, 'This is a homicide that took place in Dallas County. It is under the authority of the county. I propose to do the autopsy.' An agent replied, 'Please step out of the way,

"Packing cartons were stacked high. I squeezed between two stacks, near a window. There, on the floor . . . were three spent shells."



doctor, or we will run over you. This is the President of the United States and we are taking his body back to Washington, D.C.”

At about 2:15 P.M. the casket was loaded onto the rear of “Air Force One.”

Federal Judge Sarah T. Hughes hurried to the plane to administer the presidential oath to Lyndon B. Johnson. Members of the presidential and vice-presidential parties crowded into the central compartment of the plane to witness the swearing-in. At 2:38 P.M., Johnson took the oath of office as the thirty-sixth President of the United States. His wife and Mrs. Kennedy stood at his side.

Nine minutes later, “Air Force One” departed from Love Field, headed for Washington, D.C.

THAT AFTERNOON Detective Gus Rose, along with two deputy sheriffs and two detectives, drove to the home of Michael and Ruth Paine in Irving, about twelve miles northwest of Dallas. Oswald’s wife Marina, age twenty-two, and their two children—June, nearly two years old, and Rachael, five weeks old—lived with the Paines. Oswald generally went to Irving on weekends. During the week he usually stayed at the rooming house in Oak Cliff.

“We got out there, not knowing what to expect,” remembers Rose. “We parked the police car a little away from the Paines’ house, not right in front. I just about got to the front door when a woman opened it. She had seen us drive up. I didn’t know who she was. She said she was Ruth Paine.

“Ruth brought me to Marina Oswald. I hadn’t known Marina was from Russia. I tried to say something to her, but she didn’t understand me. Ruth had heard about the assassination on television. They had been watching television about it when our car drove up.

“I asked Marina whether Lee had a rifle. She said he had, that it was in the garage. I followed her to the garage. She pointed to a rolled-up blanket. I picked it up. It unraveled. There was no rifle in it. I heard a gasp from Marina. I looked at her. She was wide-eyed, staring at the blanket I held.”

Police drove the Paines, Marina Oswald, her two small daughters—and the blanket—to City Hall. Later that day, police and detectives searched Oswald’s room at Beckley Avenue. They took as evidence just about everything they found there—personal effects, clothing, a radio, pamphlets, a holster, maps. During that afternoon and early evening, Oswald was put in three line-ups in the basement.

Hundreds of television reporters and newsmen swarmed all over City Hall.

Henry Wade was Dallas district attorney. In fact, he eventually served as district attorney there for thirty-seven years, becoming something of a legend. Today he practices law in an office overlooking Dealey Plaza.

“Barefoot Sanders, the Federal judge, told me there was no federal law against killing the President of the

United States,” recalls Wade. “Technically, the only federal charge that could be brought against the accused would be assault on a federal officer—the President. That carried a maximum penalty of five years in prison. Of course, by Dallas law, an act of murder—which is what this was—could be given the death penalty. We were going to try it by local law as a case of murder.

“Cliff Carter, President Johnson’s aide, called me three times from the White House that Friday night. He said that President Johnson felt any word of a conspiracy—some plot by foreign nations—to kill President Kennedy would shake our nation to its foundation. President Johnson was worried about some conspiracy on the part of the Russians. Oswald had all sorts of connections and affection toward Castro’s Cuba. It might be possible to prove a conspiracy with Cuba. But it would be very hard to prove a conspiracy with Russia.

“Washington’s word to me was that it would hurt foreign relations if I alleged a conspiracy—whether I could prove it or not. I would just charge Oswald with plain murder and go for the death penalty.

“So, I went down to the police department at City Hall to see Captain Fritz—to make sure the Dallas Police didn’t involve any foreign country in the assassination.”

Wade could barely fight his way through the reporters to reach Fritz’s office on the third floor.

“Fritz,” he says, “was the best person I ever knew for finding out ‘who did it’ in a murder case. He was also the worst person for getting together the evidence. He worked by talking with suspects. Didn’t take notes. Same with Oswald. To Fritz, this was basically another murder case. Which, in a way, it was.”

At a midnight press conference, reporters asked Wade whether Oswald was motivated by the Soviets. Wade answered that Oswald had some pamphlets from “some committee.” Then a man called out from the crowd of newsmen: “Fair Play for Cuba Committee, Henry.” Later the man came up to Wade and said, “Henry, I’m Jack Ruby.”

TO THE DISMAY of the Dallas police, the press continued to overrun the corridors and offices of the police department. Elgin Crull, Dallas city manager, had made it clear to Curry that the police should “bend over backward” to accommodate the press—to show the world that Oswald was being handled without brutality. The police, as a consequence, were barely able to move Oswald from his cell to Fritz’s office for questioning.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, a bitter struggle over possession of evidence in the assassination inquiry had begun between the Dallas police and the FBI.

In mid-afternoon, Dallas police had been startled to learn that the FBI had had Oswald under investigation for weeks before the assassination. FBI agent James Hosty advised them that he had been assigned to watch Oswald. Word of this had never before reached the Dallas police. Nor, apparently, had the Secret Service been told.

At 2:38 P.M., Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of office as the thirty-sixth president of the United States. His wife and Mrs. Kennedy stood at his side.



Curry mentioned to the press that the FBI had a file on Oswald. An FBI official gave Curry "thirty minutes" to retract his statement. Curry refused.

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, according to District Attorney Wade, was "burning" at Wade, the Dallas police, and particularly agent Hosty.

Hosty's phone number was later found among Oswald's personal papers, leading to speculation that Oswald may have been an FBI informant.

A little after seven o'clock Friday evening Oswald was brought before Justice of the Peace David Johnston in Fritz's office and charged with Tippit's murder.

Meanwhile, Wade and Alexander, who had been reviewing the evidence against Oswald in the assassination of Kennedy, decided that sufficient proof had been gathered for an arraignment. Although some accounts say that Oswald was never formally charged with Kennedy's murder, according to other sources he was brought before Johnston and arraigned at about 1:30 Saturday morning. These latter accounts claim that Oswald's response to the charges was "I don't know what you're talking about."

Oswald was beginning to emerge as something of an enigma. He was twenty-four years of age. He had worked at the Texas School Book Depository for about a month, for \$1.25 an hour.

A former U.S. Marine, he had seemingly defected to Russia in 1959, professed to renounce his American citizenship, married a Russian woman, then returned to the United States in 1962. He was a self-proclaimed "Marxist."

No witness who actually saw Lee Harvey Oswald shoot Kennedy was ever found.

H.D. Holmes was a U.S. Postal Inspector at the time of the assassination. Using high-powered binoculars, he had watched the presidential motorcade from his office window overlooking Dealey Plaza and had seen Kennedy being shot.

"By early Saturday morning," Holmes recalls, "the FBI had worked out where the rifle used in the Kennedy killing had come from. Klein's Sporting Goods in Chicago. The rifle had cost \$19.95. It had been bought in March 1963."

The FBI asked Holmes to find out whether the rifle



“We were heading for the car . . . with Oswald between us. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Ruby step out of the crowd. He was crouched. He had a pistol. He took a couple of steps and pulled that trigger.”

had been paid for with a U.S. postal money order. For about two hours postal teams searched through money order stubs, trying to locate one issued for \$19.95 sometime in March. They couldn't find one.

“Then,” Holmes says, “I had an idea. I had my secretary go out and buy up all the outdoor-type magazines she could find. Sure enough, in the *Field and Stream* of November 1963 I found a full-page ad for Klein's sporting items. And there I spotted a picture of the type of Italian carbine that the FBI had talked about. The ad said, with the scope it cost \$19.95. But there was another \$1.50 charge for postage and handling. That would make it \$21.45 for the money order, not \$19.95.

“So our search teams went right back to looking at stubs. In a matter of minutes the stub was found that had the amount \$21.45. I called the stub number into the money order center in Washington, D.C. Later that afternoon, they found the original money order.

“The rifle had been ordered by an A.J. Hidell and shipped to P.O. Box 2915 at the main post office in downtown Dallas. The post office box had been rented by Lee Harvey Oswald in October 1962 and closed May 1963. The name A.J. Hidell was listed as one of the persons entitled to receive mail at that box. Turns out Hidell was an alias used by Oswald.”

GORGE SENATOR, now seventy-five and living in subsidized housing in Dallas, first met Jack Ruby, a nightclub owner, in 1955. Ruby later put Senator up at his Oak Cliff apartment. “Jack Ruby was always good in feeding somebody if they were down and out,” says Senator. “He had a fold-out bed at the Carousel Club that he let me sleep on once in a while.

“He was keeping me up, see, giving me a place to stay. I had to do something. So I would help him at the club.

“It's around four or five in the morning on Saturday,” Senator recalls of November 23, 1963. “He's holering at me in the apartment and shaking me up. He says—and he's not drunk, Jack doesn't drink—‘Gee, his children and Mrs. Kennedy, what a thing to happen!’ That weekend in the apartment Jack was crying. About the President. He was upset. You know, Jack was an excitable guy.”

In Dallas, after a person was charged with a felony, the county sheriff ordinarily took custody and transported the prisoner to the county jail, located about twelve blocks from City Hall and within sight of the Texas School Book Depository.

Saturday night Chief Curry announced to the hordes of press people that Oswald would be transferred to the county jail on Sunday morning. “If you are at the police

station by 10:00 A.M. Sunday,” he told them, “you will not miss anything of interest.”

Early Sunday morning the FBI received a call threatening that “about a hundred men are going to take the prisoner Oswald and we don't want any policemen to be hurt.” FBI Director Hoover urged that Oswald's transfer be made in secret.

At about nine o'clock Sunday morning Curry looked over the basement of City Hall. The transfer, as he had planned it, would take place there. Television cameras and news reporters would be allowed into part of the basement. Curry called the county sheriff to say he would soon be ready to turn over the prisoner. The sheriff replied: “We are ready; bring him on.” Curry said, “I thought you were coming after him.”

Curry, who had a large contingent of manpower, then agreed that the Dallas police would take Oswald to the county jail. Curry had an armored truck brought to the exit ramp at City Hall. Oswald would be transported, under guard, in the truck. A convoy of several police and detective cars would follow.

Homicide detectives James Leavelle and L.C. Graves had been assigned to bring Oswald down to the basement at the appointed time. They were to ride with him in the armored car. Leavelle and Graves, both now retired from the Dallas Police Department, still recall that Sunday morning vividly.

Neither detective liked the idea of using the armored car. There had been rumors that a plot was afoot to overturn the car and set it afire once it was on its way with Oswald.

“At around eight o'clock Sunday morning,” says Leavelle, “I talked with Chief Curry and Captain Fritz. I said there wasn't a soul on the first floor. ‘Let's take him out on the first floor—right out on Main Street, and drive him away in an unmarked car. Everybody will be looking for him to come out on Commerce Street—the exit.’”

But, recalls Leavelle, “Chief Curry said ‘We are obligated to the press to let them see Oswald. I gave my word to them.’”

“At about 9:30 Captain Fritz told me to get Oswald. I brought him to Fritz's office. Fritz and the Secret Service and the FBI kept questioning him. Oswald was asked if he had shot President Kennedy and Officer Tippit. He denied shooting either one.”

“They kept questioning him,” says Graves, “and it ran past ten o'clock. Elgin Crull, he called in and wanted to find out why we were falling behind schedule. The press had been told ten o'clock.”

Then the plan to use the armored truck began to fall

Continued on page 46

over his throbbing forehead as the train lurched along. It would not reach the capital until 1:10 the next morning.

Just before their arrival, Wayne MacVeagh, a member of the presidential party, walked back to tell Lincoln he had reconsidered the impact of the Gettysburg speech. Apparently he had criticized it earlier, but now MacVeagh declared: "I can only say that the words you spoke will live in the world's language." A weary, bilious Lincoln waved him away: "You are the only person who has such a misconception of what I said."

But later the same day Lincoln received a compliment from another person—none other than Edward Everett. "Permit me . . . to express my great admiration of the thoughts expressed by you, with such eloquent simplicity & appropriateness," the nation's most famous orator wrote, adding, "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

Lincoln replied: "In our respective parts yesterday, you could not have been excused to make a short address, nor I a long one. I am pleased to know that, in your judgment, the little I did say was not entirely a failure."

Indeed, he would soon know otherwise. Admirers, among them the respected historian George Bancroft, would besiege the President with flattering requests for copies of the address—some to be sold to raise funds for the war wounded.

Newspaper approval followed quickly (along with typical partisan criticism). In the opinion of the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*: "Thousands who would not read the long, elaborate oration of Mr. Everett will read the President's few words, and many will not do it without a moistening of the eye and a swelling of the heart." As *Harper's Weekly* put it, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was nothing less than "the most perfect piece of American eloquence." "A perfect thing in every respect," echoed the *Cincinnati Gazette*.

Reading such tributes, Lincoln may have recalled one of the many brief stops his train had made en route to Gettysburg. The father of a soldier killed at the battle had come aboard to shake the President's hand, and Lincoln had confessed to him: "When I think of the sacrifices yet to be offered . . . my heart is like lead within me, and I feel at times like hiding in deep darkness." Hours later, speaking at the soldiers' cemetery, Lincoln had opened his heart to call for "increased devotion," and had illuminated "a new birth of freedom" for his unhappy, divided country.

"The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here," he had predicted.

Those may have been the only false words he spoke.

The world *has* long remembered. ★

Harold Holzer, co-author of The Lincoln Image (1984), was awarded this year's Lincoln Diploma of Honor by Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee.

Destiny in Dallas *Continued from page 27*

apart. Officials discovered that the truck would not fit through the passageway into the basement. A new plan was hastily devised. The truck would still be part of the convoy. But rather than carry Oswald, Leavelle, and Graves, it would act as a decoy. Along the way, an unmarked detectives' car carrying the three would swing away from the convoy and take a different route to the county jail.

MEANWHILE, at his apartment in Oak Cliff, fifty-two-year-old Jack Ruby had made himself coffee and scrambled eggs. His roommate, George Senator, remembers: "Jack was upset. Mumbling. His lips were going. What he was jabbering I don't know. He kept pacing the floor.

"Jack, he got a telephone call. From a woman, a dancer in the club. She was in Fort Worth. She needed some rent money. He said to her he was going downtown anyway and that he would send her money from the Western Union office there.

"Me, I went downstairs to the washeteria to do laundry. Just around eleven o'clock, Jack gets into the car. He said he was going to the Carousel Club to feed the dogs he kept there."

Jack Ruby drove through downtown Dallas. According to his later testimony, he passed Dealey Plaza and

saw the scattered wreaths to Kennedy's memory that people had put there. He parked his car near the Western Union office. He carried two thousand dollars in cash, a revolver, and no personal identification.

Ruby entered the Western Union office and wired twenty-five dollars to the dancer in Fort Worth. The time-stamp on the telegram read 11:17 A.M.

Ruby then walked to City Hall, less than a block from the telegraph office.

Police Officer Roy Vaughn had been assigned that morning to guard the Main Street entrance ramp to the City Hall basement. Today Vaughn is chief of police for a community twenty miles south of Dallas.

"The convoy was going to head out from the other side of the ramp, the exit side, and go on up Commerce Street," recalls Vaughn. "Trouble was, a call came in and a police car had to get out of the basement to cover it. The car couldn't get out the regular way. The armored truck had that blocked off.

"So, the police car was sent out my way. I had to step aside for a little while to stop traffic out on Main Street. Then I led the car out from the entrance end of the City Hall ramp."

As Vaughn cleared the way for the police car, Ruby, unnoticed, slipped into the basement, either down the ramp or through a side door.

Up on the third floor, as Graves recalls, "they finished the interrogation, finally. Something like quarter after eleven Jim Leavelle and I went to get Oswald. We signed a 'down-and-out' for him. He was turned over to us in a room to bring downstairs. He asked for his black sweater. We got it for him."

"I put one pair of handcuffs on Oswald," says Leavelle. "Then I handcuffed his right wrist to my left arm with another set of cuffs. We went down the elevator to the basement. An unmarked car was supposed to be right there for us. It wasn't. It was a few feet from where it was supposed to be. There was a pack of newsmen right close to us."

"We were heading for the car, L.C. and I, with Oswald between us. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Ruby step out from the crowd. He was crouched. He had a pistol. He took a couple of steps and pulled that trigger. Ruby was aiming dead center at Oswald."

"I had a grip on the top of Oswald's trousers. When I saw Ruby, I tried to jerk Oswald aside to get him out of the way. I succeeded in turning him. The bullet hit him in the side rather than straight into the stomach."

Leavelle shoved Oswald to the basement floor. Graves grabbed Ruby. "By the time Ruby got that shot off," Graves says, "why I had him down. His hand was still flexing. I was saying to him, 'Turn it loose! Turn it loose!' I pried his finger off that trigger. He was still trying to work it. Empty the gun into Oswald, I expect, if he could. Officers were jumping on Ruby to get him onto the floor."

"Oswald said 'Owww!' and fell back. That was the last thing he ever said."

GRAVES and other detectives handcuffed Ruby. Oswald's handcuffs were unlocked. He was placed in an ambulance and rushed toward Parkland Hospital.

Leavelle rode with Oswald. An intern administered to the wounded prisoner. About a quarter of a mile from the hospital, Oswald stretched his arms wide and heaved a sigh.

Dr. Robert McClelland was on duty at Parkland Hospital when Oswald was brought into a trauma room. "I had worked on President Kennedy on Friday," says McClelland. "Now, on Sunday, here I was working on Lee Harvey Oswald. He was far, far gone when we got him, but less so than was Kennedy. It was no more than twenty-two minutes from the time he was shot when we were inside his abdomen."

"The bullet had gone through several major organs. Oswald was given eighteen pints of blood. The heart began to fade, because there had been so much loss of blood. We opened his chest and massaged his heart. It didn't do any good."

Lee Harvey Oswald died at 1:07 P.M. Sunday, November 24.

Senator heard on the radio what had happened to Oswald. "I didn't think Jack could have done it," he says. "I couldn't dream that. After the thing, I didn't know what was happening anymore. I didn't know if someone

would come after me. I moved away after that—from one place to another. It was on my mind that I would be killed."

Jack Ruby was indicted for Oswald's murder that same day.

Ruby was placed on trial in Dallas. He did not take the stand in his own defense. On March 14, 1964, the jury deliberated for less than three hours and found him guilty of "murder with malice." The jury directed that Ruby's punishment be death.

Three months later, he was questioned by Chief Justice Earl Warren, chairman of the Warren Commission. Ruby asked to be removed from Dallas to Washington, D.C. "I want to tell the truth, and can't tell it here," he said. His testimony was heard in Dallas.

On a video tape, filmed while he was in custody in March 1965, Ruby made another plea to be removed to federal jurisdiction. He uttered the words: "complete conspiracy . . . and the assassination too . . . if you knew the facts you would be amazed."

Ruby's conviction was reversed by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. A new trial was to be held at a new venue—Wichita Falls, 120 miles from Dallas.

The trial never took place. Jack Ruby was found to be stricken with cancer. He died at Parkland Hospital on January 3, 1967.

KENNEDY. TIPPIT. OSWALD. RUBY. Who can say for certain why their paths crossed?

Even after twenty-five years, questions concerning the Kennedy assassination are far easier to pose than to answer.

Some still hold to the notion that a lone assassin—perhaps alienated, driven by passions not yet clear to others—brought down the President of the United States. Others are now convinced that some kind of conspiracy—malevolent action by individuals unknown joined in whatever common purpose—struck him down.

A few months after Kennedy was killed, the United States Information Agency presented a film documenting his life and his philosophy. It was entitled "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums."

One passage of the film's narration reminded:

"In seeing that respected man, who had everything pass from life in a single unsuspecting instant, there was the thought of each person's own mortality, their own straight lines that began with birth, that would end with death and the length between so unknown. The President, who was able to have so much under control, was not master of the length of that line. And perhaps his message to the world was exactly that." ★

Free-lance writer Edward Oxford works out of New York City. His narrative of Orson Welles's War of the Worlds radio broadcast appeared in the October issue of this publication.

An article examining some of the lingering questions and contradictions relating to the Kennedy assassination will appear in the January 1989 issue.