

Kennedy witness sought by panel

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A man photographed opening and closing an umbrella in Dealey Plaza when President Kennedy was assassinated Nov. 22, 1963, has aroused interest in recent years among assassination researchers, who speculate the movements of the umbrella could have been a signal.

Saturday, a man who said he was a former co-worker of the umbrella man identified him as L. Steven Witt, and said Witt in 1965 recalled, seemingly "with a sense of accomplishment," his use of an umbrella as a "protest" during Kennedy's ill-fated Dallas motorcade.

There is no evidence the so-called "umbrella man" was involved in an illegal activity, but members of the House Assassinations Committee still want to talk to the man.

Witt, now a warehouse foreman for Supreme Equipment and Systems Corp., refused Saturday night at his home to confirm whether or not he was the mysterious man.

He said he had no appointment to talk with investigators for the House Assassinations Committee, adding, "I don't know anything. All I know is what I've read in the paper. If you try to take a picture, you'll lose your camera," he said.

The worker, who requested anonymity but said he was employed with Witt at the now-defunct Rio Grande National Life Insurance Co. from 1966 to 1969, said Witt told fellow workers "on three or four occasions about going down there with his umbrella and making a point."

"I couldn't understand the signifi-

cance of an umbrella ... But it was like he was boasting ... and I got the significant impression that he had the feeling he had accomplished something down there," said the worker.

"I couldn't understand the significance of his umbrella, and I don't think anyone else did either. I didn't follow it up because it seemed stupid to me," the worker said.

"I just remember him saying it had to do something with Joseph Kennedy and with how the Kennedy fortune came to be made," the worker said.

"It was like if John Kennedy would see it, he would know what he was talking about," the worker said.

Joseph Kennedy, the late President's father, was U.S. ambassador to England during the years Neville Chamberlain was prime minister. Chamberlain was

sometimes criticized for not taking a tougher stand against Nazi Germany. And as Chamberlain often carried an umbrella, his opponents used the umbrella as a symbol of his appeasement policy toward the Nazis.

Investigators for the assassination committee reportedly are interested in questioning Witt, who this week said he would cooperate in the probe.

The panel July 30 distributed a photograph of the umbrella man, sitting on a curb on Elm Street adjacent to the site where Kennedy was assassinated on a sunshiny day at 12:30 p.m. It was one of five photographs or drawings of unidentified persons the committee wants to question.

In the photograph the umbrella man can be seen sitting on the curb next to a still-unidentified, dark-skinned man.