

NYT

THE ASSASSINATION LIVES ON IN DALLAS

Some Now Feel Vindicated, Others Stress Damage to City Image

Special to The New York Times

DALLAS, Dec. 30 — Every day, at almost any hour, people can be seen standing near the corner of Elm and Houston at the west end of the downtown section of Dallas, staring at the red brick building with the dilapidated Hertz sign on top. They are staring at the sixth-floor window from which Lee Harvey Oswald fired in 1963.

In Dallas, the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy is a story that has never died, the subject of almost daily front-page headlines all this year. In a city that has changed enormously, the lingering memories and the fading stigmas are still virtually a daily fact of life.

"You know, I have spent 10 years in that end of town, simply because it's the part of town where lawyers do their work," said John Jordan, a lawyer who was a 19-year-old North Texas State University student when he watched the Kennedy motorcade on Nov. 22, 1963.

"And there's still this enormous sense of history that overwhelms you when you approach that spot," Mr. Jordan said. "I've always been puzzled by the lingering quality of the thing, its staying power."

Ex-Police Chief 'Surprised'

Now the findings of the House assassinations committee have lent the first official support to the theory that four shots were fired at Kennedy — not three, as indicated in the Warren Commission report — and have generally reinforced whatever preconceptions had become solidified through the years for most people here.

"I was a little surprised they came up with what they did," said Jesse Curry, who was the Dallas chief of police at the time of the assassination, "but I always

felt it was possible a shot came from behind that wall up on the knoll. We never had any proof until they came up with the circumstantial evidence they have now."

"But if it was possible," he went on, "for someone to have fired and then got away, because it was 10 minutes before we had the parking lot sealed off. But I still think that unless someone on their dying bed comes up with a confession, we'll never know for sure what happened."

Almost unanimously, the city's leadership, in political and business circles, considers the story's longevity a somewhat ghoulish exercise in futility that distorts the image of a radically changed city.

'Wish It Would Go Away'

"I think the majority of people just wish it would go away," said Steve Bartlett, a Dallas City Councilman. "I don't think the man on the street is nearly as interested as the media are. Dallas has changed and evolved into a different kind of city. We're much more cosmopolitan. We've got culture now. I think most people hope that after the Assassination Committee finishes its work they won't have to hear about it except in the history books."

There is also a good deal of skepticism in the city's Police Department, many of whose veterans clearly remember the events of that Friday afternoon.

"As far as I know, and I can't talk for anyone else," said Dallas Police Sgt. A.R. Brooks, "I think most people on the force think Oswald did the shooting by himself. Whether there was a conspiracy, most people are open to that."

"Other than that I don't know," he continues. "A lot of people are skeptical whether the motorcycle was downtown where the tape was supposed to have been made or out at the Apparel Mart."

Some Feeling Vindication

But a lot of people were feeling the glimmerings of vindication. The Dallas area has a closely knit collection of assassination theorists, many of whom write for a monthly newsletter, The Continuing Inquiry, that is published here.

"I like to think they now have the real solid evidence that a shot came from another direction," said J. Gary Shaw, an architect in the nearby suburb of Cleburne, who has done research on the assassination for the last 15 years.