

Ex-Dallas Chief Curry

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By DAN CARMICHAEL

DALLAS (UPI) — The clouds had just parted, clearing the sky for a crisp, sunny Texas afternoon.

The president waved and smiled as his motorcade moved past the fringes of excited admirers.

Police Chief Jesse Curry, in the lead car and worried about an attempt to "embarrass" John Fitzgerald Kennedy,

said to himself "Well, we've got it made now. The hard part's over."

The motorcade was just a few hundred feet from safety — just past the skyscrapers of downtown Dallas and heading toward the security of a freeway.

Crack!

"What's that?" Curry asked, thinking the sound was either a firecracker or a

"railroad torpedo" used to signal train engineers.

Crack! Crack!

Before the sound of a third rifle shot had stopped echoing off the tall buildings. Curry realized the truth. Someone was shooting into the motorcade.

Someone in the presidential car shouted, "Let's get out of here."

Horrified, his face contorted, Curry



Jesse Curry lives quietly now but follows assassination controversy closely.

UPI Telephoto

Now Suspects JFK Plot

grabbed his microphone and ordered: "Get men on top of the underpass, see what happened up there . . ."

As the motorcade lurched forward at high speed, Curry asked a motorcycle outrider, "What has happened in the presidential car — has someone been hit?"

"Yes," replied the officer — and Curry had little doubt about who had been hit. His fear was confirmed as the cars screeched to a halt at the emergency ramp of Parkland Hospital.

That was 13 years ago. Since then, things have changed. And so has Jesse Curry.

Retired, he follows the controversy surrounding Kennedy's murder through the media, occasionally speaking to assassination researchers.

Thirteen years ago, Curry gave little credence to any suggestion of a conspiracy. But today, he's not so sure. He does not believe accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was acting on his own initiative, even if he was — or wasn't — the lone gunman.

He says the Dallas Police Department protected Kennedy as best it could under the circumstances. He wonders why the FBI, which Oswald had contacted prior to the assassination, did not relay information to either his department or the Secret Service.

Curry says the route Kennedy's car followed was chosen for political purposes, not security. Had the Dallas Police Department chosen the motorcade's path, he says, Kennedy might be alive today.

"I don't accept the idea that Oswald was alone," says Curry. "I'm not saying someone was there in the window helping him shoot. But he was influenced by other persons. Someone convinced him the president should be assassinated. I don't know who these people are."

Curry says the police department's investigation showed "no evidence of two gunmen. If there was another person, he sure got out of there (the Texas School Book Depository) fast."

In retrospect, Curry concedes some aspects of the investigation of the murder should have been handled differently.

Critics note not a single interrogation of Oswald was recorded, and that a Dallas policeman made an incorrect identification of the rifle found on the sixth floor of the School Book Depository.

Curry said the Police Department had sought funds from the city for a "recording room" but the request was

rejected.

"It was a matter of economics," he said. "We didn't have recording facilities and I guess nobody asked that it be recorded. The office wasn't equipped for it. And frankly, it didn't occur to me or to anyone to record it. Maybe it was stupid, looking at it now."

He said Oswald was "a very arrogant and surly type of individual. He didn't seem to be frightened by all the commotion that was going on. He seemed unperturbed, unconcerned. I think he had some training in interrogation methods."

Initially, a Dallas officer identified the rifle found in the School Book Depository as a German Mauser. But the gun which was to be used as evidence against Oswald was an Italian Mannlicher-Carcano.

"There was a mixup," conceded Curry. "I think the deputy sheriff didn't carefully examine the gun at first. It was a human mistake."

Shortly after Kennedy's death, Dallas FBI agent James Hosty spoke with Dallas Police Lt. Jack Revill. He said Oswald "is in our Communist file" had been in touch with "two known foreign subversive agents" within two

weeks of the assassination and agents "had information that this man was capable . . . of committing the assassination."

Curry immediately repeated the conversation to reporters. He said he soon got a call from Gordon Shanklin, chief of the Dallas FBI Bureau.

Curry said he was told by Shanklin: "If you don't retract that statement immediately, I'm finished."

Wanting to help a friend, Curry agreed to tell reporters, "I can't attest to the conversation of my own personal knowledge."

Now an attorney, Shanklin told UPI, "I never asked him to retract anything. As I recall, I just gave him the facts." Shanklin would not comment on why FBI information on Oswald was withheld from other agencies. "I did not make policy," he said.

Curry explained the circumstances of his retraction in a registered letter

to the official Warren Commission investigating the murder. It remained secret until September, 1975.

Oswald, while in custody two days after the assassination, was shot and killed by Jack Ruby. Ruby was admitted to the basement of City Hall, said Curry, by "an act of God."

Curry said the basement had been properly sealed off, but an officer disobeyed orders and left the ramp area for a few seconds and Ruby slipped in.

But speaking of a possible conspiracy, he says "I just don't know. I wouldn't say that he (Oswald) was part of one or that he wasn't. I would think Castro could have been behind it. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he told his people 'do what you can to get Kennedy' because of U.S. attempts to kill Castro."

"That's human nature, to react that way. To retaliate in kind."