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Oswald Case Mystery: Why He Killed Tippit

DALLAS—District Attorney Jim Garrison's fast-breaking New Orleans contentions regarding President Kennedy's assassination are being watched—"hands off"—with intense interest by the Federal and local officials personally in command of the investigating teams that supplied the material here for the Warren Commission Report.

Aside from this, however, I find a fact that is utterly unfathomable to these knowing men. Straight across the board, they ask a question of themselves obscured in the Niagara of outside comment and books.

Why did Lee Harvey Oswald kill patrolman J. D. Tippit?

They pinpoint the moment at which Oswald's identifiable premeditation of the murder began as the moment he made the brown paper bag to carry the rifle to the Texas School Book Depository Building. Oswald's problem was his getaway.

Study the facts carefully, say the investigators here.

Oswald's temporary hole-in was at 1026 North Beckley Ave., a rooming house. He left the book building at 12:33, three minutes after the shots, and reached his rooming house about 12:59, totally unflustered. When he came in, housekeeper Earlene Roberts said only, "Oh, you are in a hurry," although Oswald did not respond.

He changed his clothes within three or four minutes and walked out zipping up a later-discarded jacket.

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SOME 22 minutes earlier Homicide Bureau Chief J. Will Fritz had radioed a Code 3 (emergency) order directing all downtown patrol cars to the Book Depository Building.

At 12:45 the radio dispatcher ordered Car 78—Tippit's plainly emblazoned police car—to "move into Central Oak Cliff area" to strengthen the assassin search there.

At 12:54 Tippit radioed that he was in place and cruising. Strangely, that was the last ever heard from Tippit. This trained and respected veteran of 11 years on the force did not report sighting any suspect, ask for any description clarifications, warn anybody that he was about to confront a possible killer, call other cars to stand by with him or express any suspicions whatever.

Now we come to 1:15. At least 12 witnesses saw what happened about eight blocks from where Tippit checked in at 12:54. Oswald was walking—walking—unobtrusively on the sidewalk, 100 feet beyond an intersection. Tippit had already passed beyond him, pulled to the curb and presumably called the walking man to him.

Oswald literally sauntered over to the car from the rear, leaned toward the right-side door in a casual way, put one or both hands on the window sill and was seen to exchange words with Tippit. Tippit got out on the far side and started to walk around the left front of the vehicle toward where Oswald stood.

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NOW for the moment of action by Tippit and Oswald that utterly baffles the top investigators here.

Tippit, out of his patrol car and coming to Oswald, had not drawn his gun. Oswald pulled out a revolver and four bullets killed Tippit instantly.

Nothing could have created a more public commotion, nothing could have more surely defeated Oswald's getaway from the 12:30 crime, and of course it resulted in Oswald's being seen and caught within minutes after he rushed through the bystanders and ran (eight uproared blocks) to the Texas Theater.

President Kennedy's assassination investigators, such as regional FBI chief Gordon Shanklin, Captain Fritz and the rest are used to, and fed up with, the many mysteries claimed by outsiders that they know are not mysteries at all. They simply shake their heads in amazement, frustration or disgust.

They find no answer to what happened at 1:15 that Friday, November 22.