

Dallas Chief Now Doubts That Oswald Acted Alone

By DAN CARMICHAEL

Dallas — (UPI) — The clouds had just parted, producing the makings of a crisp, sunny Texas afternoon. The handsome young dignitary waved and smiled as his motorcade moved past excited admirers.

Police Chief Jesse Curry, in the lead car while 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 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."

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

Changed His Mind

Thirteen years ago, Curry gave little credence to any suggestion of a conspiracy. But today, he's retired and 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.

In retrospect, Curry concedes some

aspects of the investigation should have been handled differently.

Critics note that 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.

Didn't Have Funds

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 used as evidence 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."

A Negligent Guard

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 was properly sealed off, but an officer disobeyed orders and left the ramp area for a few seconds and Ruby slipped in. Had the officer been there, said Curry, he wouldn't have allowed Ruby admittance — and Oswald would have stood trial.

Curry generally stays at home now, and reflects on the incident and the whirlwind of events that engulfed him.

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 to 'do what you can to get Kennedy' " because of attempts to kill Castro.

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

He said he's more inclined now to believe a conspiracy was involved than he was 13 years ago.

If there is a new congressional investigation, he said, "I hope they can answer some of the questions that have since been raised."