

Robert MacNeil
~~544 East 50th Street~~
New York, N. Y. 10028

As from:

British Broadcasting Corp
Care: "Panorama,"
Lime Grove Studios,
London, W.12,
ENGLAND.

Mr. Harold Weisberg,
Coq d'OR Press,
Hyattstown, PMd,
20734.

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

Please excuse me for taking so long to reply but I left NBC two months ago to take a new job with the BBC in London. I am in fact at the moment on a ship sailing to England and your letter caught up with me just before I left. I will do my best to clarify for you what I can. Please excuse the mid-Ocean typing.

With regard to your first comment, everything regarding my movements was broadcast over NBC during the weekend of the assassination. I made a full statement to the FBI at that time but the Warren Commission, which had access to all the FBI material, did not contact me. Manchester came across my statement to the FBI in his re-examination of the Warren Commission source material and he contacted me. He interviewed me by telephone for about 30 minutes in July 1965.

Let me now tell you what happened as I recall it. I am not relying solely on memories nearly four years old but on a full account which I wrote for myself a few days after the assassination.

When the shots were fired I was in the first of two press buses about seven or eight cars behind the President's limousine. Our bus was just about to turn the corner to the left and was headed towards the Book Depository when the shots were fired. After a few seconds of doubting that they were shots, I ran to the front, asked the driver to stop and open the door. He did and I got out. The air was filled with the sound of many people screaming in unison. I ran around the corner so as to see the President but his car had disappeared under the underpass. I did not know he had been hit but supposed that some political extremist had merely wanted to stage a demonstration by firing a gun.

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Several people were running up the grassy knoll towards the railroad tracks on the overpass. I thought they must have seen the gunman and ran with them. We were joined by plain clothes police who pulled out pistols. We climbed the fence at the top of the knoll and found ourselves on the tracks. There was no gunman in sight. As those with me looked aimless, I felt I should report what I knew to NBC. I ran to look for a phone. The first building which looked as if it might have one was the Texas Book Depository. I ran in there and just inside the entrance found a young man who I remembered only vaguely. (You must realize that I had no reason to suspect that the shots had come from that building, I did not know the President had been assassinated, and I was totally concerned with finding a phone.) I asked the young man for one and he said: "You'd better ask him," pointing to another young man standing farther back in the ground floor room. I asked the second man and he pointed to a phone in a nearby office. I called NBC News collect and gave them what I knew...that shots had been fired as the Kennedy motorcade went through downtown Dallas. In the confusion, the collect charge was never formally accepted by the NBC operator and the Dallas ~~operating~~, *operator*, checking on the charge a few days later, gave NBC the time of the call as 12:34, ie., roughly four minutes after the shooting. I hung up and ran outside and met a motorcycle policeman just pulling up who told me that he had heard on his radio that Kennedy was badly wounded and being taken to Parkland hospital. At the same time a negro boy told the policeman he had seen the shots fired from an upstairs window in the Depository. Very ggitated that I might have missed the most important story (the condition of the President) by leaving the Press bus, I ran desperately looking for a taxi to get to the hospital. Traffic was jammed in all directions. Two streets away it was still moving, I ran in front of the first car that came along, made it stop, got in and gave the man \$10. to take me to the hospital. At my urging he ignored all red lights and traffic rules and we got to Parkland just as the Press bus was arriving. I was able to find a pay phone immediately there and kept it for the afternoon, reporting on what happened at the hospital.

Now, as for Manchester; I told him precisely what I have told you. I have not been able, even a few hours after the event, to form any detailed mental picture of either of the young men I accosted in the Depository. In general, you do not register details which are outside your field of attention at any moment. In the interview, Manchester pointed out to me, that included in the FBI report is a summarized account by

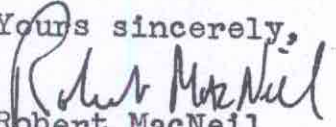
a Secret Service agent of one of the Oswald interrogation sessions in Dallas police headquarters. In it, Oswald said that as he left the depository a young man with a crew cut who he thought was a Secret Serviceman ran up to him, showed him SS identification and asked for a phone. He pointed out a pay phone and saw the man go to it. Manchester said he was 95% convinced, having been all over the ground, that I was the man Oswald meant,

You will notice some discrepancies: I do not have a "crew cut," I did not "show" any identification but was ~~wearing~~ wearing a fairly conspicuous badge saying "White House Press;" the phone I was shown was not a pay phone but an office phone.

Manchester evidently satisfied himself enough to purge the 5% uncertainty and, as you know, states flatly in the book that it was I. All I can say is that it could have been.

You are not the only person to wonder about it. I hope this account will be of some help. I would very much like to see anything you might publish about the episode.

Yours sincerely,


Robert MacNeil

PS. This is a borrowed portable and the spacing mechanism is lazy.

August 19, 1967.