

Historic Story Calling...

OLD PALS



dent I heard another fire-cracker noise and saw the shot hit the President about four inches down from the right shoulder" [it was actually higher]. Bennett said the third shot "hit the right rear high of the President's head."¹⁶ When he made his notes, it was not known that the President had been hit by a bullet in the rear neck/shoulder.

However, the Commission did not rely on these witnesses in resolving the issue of whether the first shot missed. Since there was also testimony from several witnesses who thought the second shot missed, the Commission refused to decide between them.

New Zapruder enhancements, however, confirm the ear-witness testimony that an early shot missed the President and the Governor. Beginning at frame 160, a young girl in a red skirt and white top who was running along the left side of the President's car, down Elm Street, began turning to her right. By frame 187, less than 1.5 seconds later, the enhancement clearly shows she had stopped, twisted completely away from the motorcade, and was staring back at the School Book Depository. That girl was ten-year-old Rosemary Willis. Some believe the girl's reaction was because her father, Phil Willis, standing only ten feet away, told her to stop and come back toward him.¹⁷ However, when Rosemary Willis was asked why she had stopped running with the President's car, she said, "I stopped when I heard the shot."¹⁸ The Zapruder film is the visual confirmation that provides the timing. "In that first split second, I thought it was a firecracker. But within maybe one tenth of a second, I knew it was a gunshot. . . . I think I probably turned to look toward the noise, toward the Book Depository."¹⁹

Just after Rosemary Willis slowed and started turning toward the Depository, the enhanced film shows that President Ken-

*Phil Willis was responsible for some of the clearest photographs of the presidential car near the time of the shots. He believes he had called out to his daughter and that is why she turned and stopped. However, the enhanced Zapruder film shows he was still taking photos of the motorcade, with his camera in front of his face, when Rosemary slowed and turned. He had not even looked at her by the time she was staring toward the Depository.

nedy, who was waving as the car had turned the corner, suddenly stopped waving. He looked to his right toward the crowd, and then back to his left to Jacqueline, as if to be reassured that everything was all right. As the President began waving again, Mrs. Kennedy's head abruptly twisted from her left to right, the general direction of the School Book Depository.

In addition to the reactions of the Willis girl, the President, and Mrs. Kennedy, Governor Connally's recollection and actions confirm a shot was fired before frame 166. The Governor has always been consistent in his testimony, and because he is a surviving participant, his perceptions must be given considerable weight. "We had just made the turn, well, when I heard what I thought was a shot," he told the Warren Commission. "I heard this noise which I immediately took to be a rifle shot. I instinctively turned to my right because the sound appeared to come from over my right shoulder . . ."²⁰

What does the Zapruder film show? The film reveals that the Governor's head turned from mid-left to far right in less than half a second, beginning at frame 162, when the Willis girl started turning around and the President stopped waving.²¹

The film also provides additional evidence of the moment of the first shot, but in an unusual way. Dubbed the "jiggle analysis," it was first postulated by Luis Alvarez, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist.²² He checked the film for evidence that when a shot was fired, the sharp noise made Zapruder jerk the camera, blurring the next frame or two. CBS, in research for a 1967 documentary, tested the theory. Two volunteers were told to hold a movie camera as steady as possible. Despite advance knowledge that shots would be fired, an advantage Zapruder did not have, the men were unable to hold the camera still. Motion was always detectable on the film during the rifle fire.²³ The presence of a jiggle or blur in the film, of course, could be caused by many other factors. However, while sudden movement of Zapruder's camera may not prove a shot was fired, its absence is good evidence there was no shot. Therefore, the question is whether Zapruder had the jerky reaction for an early, missed shot. The House Select Committee determined there were four such noticeable movements, any of which could be evidence of a shot. The first significant blur was at

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