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# Former police chief Curry

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Jesse E. Curry's tenure as police chief was a stormy one that included the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the nationally televised shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald and a call for his resignation over a rising crime rate.

His death was a quiet one.

Curry, 66, took two of his granddaughters for ice cream cones Sunday evening, returned to his Lakewood home to take a nap and died in his sleep.

Fire department paramedics were summoned to Curry's home at 2508 Loving when his wife, Bee, couldn't rouse him from his nap, according to Curry's daughter, Cathey Tresp.

Curry was taken to Baylor Medical

Center, where he was pronounced dead on arrival shortly after 10 p.m.

He apparently died of a heart attack, relatives said.

Mrs. Tresp said her father, who served as police chief from 1960 to 1966, had complained of "feeling tired" recently and had suffered from diabetes for years.

**SHE SAID HE** had always expressed hope he would die in his sleep.

Born in Hamilton, Hamilton County, he moved to Dallas with his parents as a child and graduated from Crozier Tech High School.

He was hired merely as an extra policeman during the Texas Centennial in 1936, but stayed on and worked his way up to assistant police chief during the latter part of the

late Carl Hansson's 15-year administration.

Curry took over from the retiring Hansson in 1960 at a time when dissension racked the police ranks over the creation of the Dallas Police Association.

Curry inherited the dissension when he took over and went along with the city fathers' opposition to the association. But Curry soon earned the respect of association members by dealing openly with them and the tension eased.

In September 1961, eight Dallas schools were integrated and Curry was faced with ensuring the black students' safety. It was a triumph for Curry when the first phase of integration was carried out with no hint of public disorder.

## dies

Congratulated around the world for the speedy capture and arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald only two hours after the president's assassination, Curry was condemned the next day for Oswald's shooting by Jack Ruby in the basement of police headquarters.

Curry accepted the barrage of criticism aimed at him, along with the blame for the incident.

**AS OTHER POLICEMEN** explained, Curry wanted to dispel rumors that Oswald was being mistreated by police by allowing the press to get a good look at him during his transfer from the city jail to the county jail.

Curry wrote a book, *J.F.K. and the Assassination*, which was published in 1969, three years after his retirement. See CURRY on Page 26D.



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ment. He presented no new theories and gave no new physical evidence, but complained that federal and state agents actually hindered the assassination investigation by their presence at Oswald's interrogation.

"Any experienced investigator will admit that the proper way to interrogate a prisoner is to be alone with the prisoner without distraction. Because of the constant pressure from other investigative agencies, (retired Dallas police homicide Capt. Will Fritz, was never allowed to carry out an orderly private interview with Lee Harvey Oswald," Curry said.

HE CONTINUED, "the Dallas homicide bureau was caught in a politically motivated crossfire from the press and the other law enforcement agencies. The interrogation was a 3-ring circus."

In his book he said Oswald played the role of an "indignant and belligerent prisoner who had no knowledge of anything."

"He had an ignorance that made it impossible to communicate even simple questions," Curry added.

He reflected on the assassination and the events surrounding it at his retirement in 1966. "I wake up every now and then at two or three in the morning, thinking about Kennedy, Oswald and Ruby, and can't go back to sleep."

His daughter said her father finally overcame those sleepless nights, but he didn't discuss it with her as much as he did her husband. She and her mother believe he wrote all he knew about the assassination and didn't take any secrets to the grave.

She said the controversy surrounding the assassination sometimes bothered him, but she added, "I don't think so much of it was guilt, but maybe the pressure of not ever really knowing what happened."

Curry always maintained that he couldn't say with absolute certainty that it was Oswald who killed the president because Oswald was never physically placed in the room where the shots were fired. He left that to history to decide.

**OTHER CONTROVERSIES** came on the heels of

the Kennedy assassination. While Dallas police were taking the heat, Curry made a disturbing announcement. He disclosed that the FBI had known about Oswald and a report by one of their agents showed Oswald capable of committing the assassination.

The Dallas police hadn't been tipped off. The FBI knew Oswald was in Dallas, Curry said, and knew he was suspected in Cuban activities, worked downtown and was considered a risk to the president. When Curry dropped this bombshell, relations between FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and Curry's office froze. Hoover claimed his agency was embarrassed and the two were no longer on speaking terms.

Another controversy developed when crime began rising along with the city's rise in population in the mid-1960s. A blue-ribbon citizens' committee looked into the problem and laid part of the blame on Curry's "administrative weakness."

Some observers felt Curry had lost step with the times and was unable to cope with the day-to-day pressures following the Kennedy assassination.

As a result of the citizens' committee's findings, the city council hired the International Association of Chiefs of Police to conduct a full survey of the Dallas police department.

The association's recommendations encouraged Curry to step down from his job after he didn't want to follow its suggestions.

After Curry retired, he became chief of security for Texas Bank and Trust, now First City Bank until two heart attacks sidelined him in 1976.

He then worked as a private insurance investigator until his death.

Curry was a Mason and was honored only two Sundays ago as the oldest member of St. John's United Methodist Church.

He is survived by his wife and daughter; a son, Gene Curry; two stepdaughters, Margie Hollis and Karen Fouts; a brother, Pete Curry; a sister, Mabel Hollis, and 10 grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday at Ed C. Smith Funeral Chapel with burial in Grove Hill Cemetery.