

August 31, 1984

Dear Harold,

Thanks for your note of the 14th, and for all the other material you have sent. I still owe you a ~~proper~~ proper reply to your letters going back quite a while, but I want to get the enclosed to you quickly.

Joanna is quite cute, I must admit (see enclosed); I'm still a bit sleep-deprived, of course.

You asked about the official accounting of Tippit's whereabouts before the 12:45 broadcast. I don't know ~~if~~ if there is an official version - I recall none, and found none in the WR and HSCA report. Perhaps one is in CD 1002, which you must have in your basement somewhere - I think that was the FBI's ~~response~~ response to a WC request for general background on Tippit. What I could find is the enclosed pages (68-73) from ~~Judy Bonner's~~ Judy Bonner's book, which describes the disturbance on Bonnie View ~~which~~ which Tippit dealt with before being moved.

You also asked for the documents and Golz story on Hoover's punishment of the DPD. My recollection is too vague to help on this. If you have the date (even the year) of the Golz article, I ~~can~~ could probably find it - or, for the documents, when (roughly) you would have sent them to me.

Finally, about Nixon's '60 Minutes' comments on Hoover saying (early) that it was a 'Communist.' I FOIA'd the FBI, on the assumption that H might have had this phone call transcribed (as he did many others). My guess was that anything they found would tend to clear H, so I figured they ~~would~~ would look properly. I got a fairly ~~prompt~~ prompt response - nothing found. My guess: Nixon and H had two or more conversations on 11/22, and Nixon misremembers which one Hoover made ~~that~~ that comment during.

With hasty regards,

Paul

PLH

JUDY W. BONNER
(INVESTIGATION OF A HOMICIDE)
(DROVE HOME, 1969)

11:55 a.m.

"Bye, honey,"

"Be careful. Let me know what time you'll be home."

Marie Tippit stood in the doorway, watched her husband drive his squad car to the corner, then went back inside the house to wash the lunch dishes and see the rest of the President's motorcade on television. She was relieved that J. D. had drawn an Oak Cliff assignment today instead of having to cover the Presidential visit. That meant he was able to come home for lunch and gave them a chance to talk about their plans for the weekend, when he would be off for the first time in almost a month.

"Did you say goodbye to Daddy?" Marie Tippit tousled the hair of their youngest son, Curtis Glen, aged 4, as he sat at the kitchen table finishing a glass of milk. The other two children — Charles Allen, 13, and Brenda Kay, 10 — were both in school.

"Where is he going?"

"Back to work, sweetheart. He'll be home this afternoon."

As he turned the corner and headed toward Highway 77 leading from his South Oak Cliff home into central Oak Cliff, J. D. Tippit clicked on his police radio and reported back in service. Tippit worked alone, as did all squad car patrolmen in the Dallas Police Department, a relatively new situation which most officers disliked because they felt partners in a car insured safer and more effective law enforcement, but one that had been dictated by budget and most of all a growing personnel shortage. The dispatcher — Tippit recognized the voice as that of Clifford

Hulse — greeted him and ordered Tippit to investigate a disturbance at 4100 Bonnie View, about a mile north of his present location.

"10-4," Tippit said, giving the customary police response to indicate he had received the message and would follow instructions.

"12 noon, KKB-364," Tippit heard Hulse say as he drove toward Bonnie View. Like most Dallas police officers that day, Tippit's thoughts were on the Presidential visit, and he assumed from the time that the motorcade was in the downtown area.

Tippit would have liked to see the President during his Dallas visit. He had voted for Kennedy and admired him. But he was also relieved not to be under the pressure of helping guard his safety. Tippit shared the fear that an incident involving the President might occur during his Dallas visit, and he had spoken of the possibility with his wife as they ate lunch a few minutes before.

"But, honey, don't you imagine anybody would be afraid to try anything, after all the appeals the mayor and Chief Curry have made, and so many officers guarding him?" she had asked.

"Well, that's true," he had answered. "But when you get a lot of people together, you never can tell what's going to happen. The crowd could get out of hand, or one nut might try something. I'm just happy to be out here where it's quiet."

Now, as he drove toward the Bonnie View call, Tippit decided that it was even quieter than he had expected. There was less traffic than usual for a Friday noontime, and Tippit figured that a lot of people must be downtown watching the motorcade. He glanced toward the empty seat besides him — an habitual action to make sure his shotgun was still in its rack in front of the seat, saw that it was, and settled back to think about the coming weekend. He and Marie wanted to do some work on their home, which they had purchased almost exactly two years before, and Saturday night Tippit hoped to play dominoes, his favorite indoor pastime. The coming weekend should be warm and he wished he would have time to go fishing with his sons, but the house came first.

It had cost them a lot of money, the neat white brick and frame cottage at 238 Glencarrn, almost more than J. D. Tippit's \$442 a month policeman's salary could stand, but they had wanted a larger place for the growing children. Although they needed some more furniture and a new washing machine, the Tippit's joint bank account held less than \$300, and they had no savings, so that would have to wait. The extra money Tippit earned as a guard at Austin's Barbecue in Oak Cliff, at the Stevens Park Theater and at occasional Cotton Bowl football games was barely enough to cover expenses the new house had brought. But it had been worth it. He and Marie liked the neighborhood. Several other policemen — the only real friends the Tippits had — also lived there. It was near the schools which their two older children attended and only a short drive to the Beckley Hills Baptist Church, where the Tippit family worshipped every Sunday when J. D. wasn't on duty.

J. D. Tippit was not a big man, but he was ruggedly built, with a tanned face, dark eyes, heavy lips and a shock of coarse black hair which almost gave him the appearance of an Indian. He had been born 39 years before in a little pocket of Northeast Texas near the Red River which separates the state from Oklahoma and gives the county of his birth its name. He was christened simply with the initials "J.D.," which stood for nothing, a common method of naming children in Texas then. Life had been lonely and hard as he grew up. He worked every morning and afternoon on his father's farm and attended a small country school which he had been happy to quit midway through the tenth grade because that enabled him to quit fulltime and earn more money. When the war came he enlisted, as all of his friends were doing, wound up in paratrooper's school, was shipped overseas and made several jumps in France and Germany in the closing days of the fighting. He came home and married Marie Gasway, a hometown girl he had known for several years, on the day after Christmas of 1946.

In the years following World War II it became increasingly difficult for a man without a high school degree to find work. J. D. and Marie Tippit stayed in Red River County for a time, then tried their hand raising cattle at Lone Star, Texas, but in spite of

all their efforts they were never able to turn a profit. They came to Dallas where J. D. worked at various construction jobs until he joined the police force on July 28, 1952, and found the niche he had been searching for. He liked his work, and although he may not have been conscious of it, his policeman's uniform gave him a status he could never have enjoyed otherwise, and the salary, while not high as measured by current living costs, was more than he could make anywhere else. When he thought about it, which wasn't very often, he admitted to himself that he would never rise very far in the police department because of his limited education, but he knew that in spite of this he would probably remain there the rest of his working life.

He was a good policeman. Although he was inordinately shy — "countryfied" he was often called by other police officers — he lived by a rigid personal moral code, rooted in his bleak Baptist upbringing, and took the business of law enforcement as seriously as any officer in the department. Compared to many patrolmen, he seldom wrote tickets for traffic offenders but always gave a stern lecture on the importance of safe driving when he caught a speeder. Some of his friends in the department, dispatcher Jerry Henslee among them, often kidded Tippit about the way he ducked his head when he approached a suspect — a habit that went with his shy personality. "Look 'em in the eye or you'll be in trouble someday," Henslee once said, but Tippit had never found it possible to change the mannerism, it was so much a part of him. He was slow-talking, slow-moving, and sometimes slow-thinking, but he was physically tough and not afraid to handle a case alone, although he had never been forced to use his pistol or shotgun, and as one officer had said of him, "You knew if J. D. called on you to help, it was a son of a bitch."

The Bonnie View call turned out to be a dry run, an elderly woman who had thought she had seen a man trying to burgle a house next door. Tippit politely took down her story, made a fruitless search of the neighborhood, returned to his car to write out a report, then radioed in for another assignment. Tippit was the kind of police officer who worked one job at a time and never thought about the next one until it happened. He didn't surprise easily.

"78 clear," he signalled. The dispatcher acknowledged his call and reported the time: 12:20 p.m.

Tipitt cruised around South Oak Cliff, waiting for his next assignment, monitoring the dispatcher's messages. About twenty minutes later he noticed that something was jamming the channel I transmissions. Then he began to hear the moan of sirens picked up by the radio and, over the noise and interference, bits of messages about "ambulances going to Parkland." Tipitt wondered if something might have happened in the motorcade, but he could learn nothing until, at 12:40, he heard the dispatcher announce, "There's been a shooting in the downtown area involving the President."

Tipitt pulled his squad car to the curb and turned up the radio's volume. The dispatcher continued to order squads to Elm and Houston streets. Then at 12:45 came a description of the suspect in the shooting. Tipitt made a careful mental note of it.

Seconds later dispatcher Jackson signalled Tipitt and squad 87 to move into the central Oak Cliff area. Tipitt responded with the customary "10-4" and headed his car northward. At 12:54 Jackson called him again.

"You are in the central Oak Cliff area, are you not?"

"Lancaster and Eighth," Tipitt replied.

"You will be at large for any emergency that comes in."

Tipitt drove north on Lancaster to Colorado Boulevard, then turned west and followed Colorado along the northern edge of Lake Cliff Park. Usually there were people in the park, sitting on benches or feeding ducks along the banks of the small, quiet lake, but Tipitt saw no one, and the streets were practically deserted.

He continued driving west to Tyler Street, then turned south to Tenth.

As he drove, J. D. Tipitt must have thought about the description of the suspect in the President's shooting, and about the dispatcher's warning to "be at large for any emergency that comes in." It must have seemed unlikely to him, three miles distant from the scene of the shooting in downtown Dallas, that an emergency would ever arise where he was, or that whoever might have shot the President would ever get as far as Oak Cliff.

12:33 P.M.

William Franklin (Bill) Alexander drove his grey 1960 Plymouth slowly across the Houston Street viaduct leading from Oak Cliff to the southwestern edge of downtown Dallas, his grey Stetson pulled low over his forehead, a toothpick stuck between his lips. He had eaten meat loaf and mashed potatoes for lunch in a cafeteria on Jefferson Boulevard and was headed back to duty in the district attorney's office in the Records Building, thankful he had drawn an office assignment that day instead of having to go to the Trade Mart with District Attorney Henry Wade and first assistant Jim Bowie. Bill Alexander disliked crowds and official functions, even something as important as today's luncheon honoring President Kennedy. He'd rather be gathering evidence for a trial, working in the courtroom where he was acknowledged as a brilliant prosecutor, or most especially investigating in the field with police officers.

Although he was District Attorney Wade's chief prosecutor, a man who had won scores of difficult convictions, Alexander was as much a part of the Dallas Police Department and the sheriff's office as he was of Wade's staff, and the police rank and file admired and respected him more than almost any other Dallas official, except for their own chief. Alexander spoke the police language. He understood police problems, worked with the police, endured dangers and hardships with them and sweated out investigations and arrests with them. He was, in fact, one of them. Even off duty, he was never without his 380 Colt automatic.