

THE ALTGENS PHOTOGRAPH, Exhibit 900

This photograph appears in the report and also in Vol. XVIII of the Exhibits, incorrectly listed in the table of contents but actually appearing on p.93.

No place have I seen (as yet) reference to another picture taken by Altgens. The Associated Press issued a memorial volume entitled "The Torch Is Passed". On p.16 of this volume, the Altgens exhibit, 900, does appear, and it reveals ever so much more than those copies printed by the Commission. I shall return to this in a moment. In the caption the Associated Press apparently correctly says this photograph was taken following the firing of the first bullet. It with seeming accuracy says, "The President's left arm has just jerked up convulsively".

At the top of the following page is another extremely clear photograph, also taken by Altgens, showing Agent Hill already on the rear bumper of the Presidential car and already assisting Mrs. Kennedy. I may be in error, but I do not recall that this was a Commission exhibit.

There are a number of valuable pieces of information contained in the clear reproduction of this photograph. One of them is the painted stripe on the road. The photographs were taken with a telephoto lens, which of course had a distorting effect in appraising distance from front to back. But they do clearly show the broken stripes in the road. The picture also shows that the Presidential car had just reached the fork of these stripes. Its left front tire but not the part of the car in which the President was seated had just passed the beginning of the fourth of these stripes.

The aerial photograph of the area used by the Commission is, as I have pointed out in my analysis of the report, almost completely

valueless. It is Exhibit No. 867 on p.33. However, many publications, including LIFE of October 2, 1964, printed very clear photographs of this area. The LIFE photograph, on p.47, shows exactly where the Presidential car would have been at the moment the photograph was taken. Bear in mind this photograph was taken after the President had clearly been injured.

I point this out because, instead of all the phony measurements the Commission took, here they had an absolutely certain mark and an absolutely certain position prior to which the President had been shot for the first time. It is even possible that the President had been hit at an earlier point because there is a red arrow <sup>in the LIFE</sup> ~~xxxxxright~~ photograph that may obliterate other stripes in the road closer to the intersection with Houston Street.

The Altgens photograph also shows Mrs. Kennedy reaching out a gloved hand to assist the President. In addition, it clearly shows the position of Governor Connally as much too far to the right to make possible the kind of injury he had. He would have been wounded completely through the body from left to right had he been injured in the position in which this photograph shows him. ~~If~~ This photograph should be compared with the Secret Service reconstruction on p.96 and the total inapplicability of this reconstruction, Exhibit 903, becomes immediately clear. A comparison of this photograph with the more discernible details of the Zapruder photographs as reproduced in the issue of LIFE referred to above will reveal several interesting things. First, the President had reacted with both arms prior to the time Mrs. Kennedy reached out toward him. This is clearly shown in photograph No. 2 in the issue of LIFE. By that time Governor Connally had, exactly as he testified, turned around toward

his left and was sitting approximately straight in the car; that is, a line drawn between his shoulders would seem to be at right angles to the sides of the car. There is a tree in this photograph and a group of men in the lawn on the opposite side of Elm Street from which the photograph was taken. This tree was almost entirely out of the picture on the left, or behind the car, at the time the picture was taken. Knowing the point at which Zapruder was standing - and the Commission is very careful not to let us know this - it is, of course, possible to find out where the Presidential car was at the time the picture was taken. Parenthetically, I want to note an intention to try to find an older picture of this area, one taken closer to the time of the assassination. This whole thing would make a lot more sense if the sign were to the east of where it now is because there is no place like the location Zapruder identifies himself as having been standing when he took the pictures on the west of the sign.

All this would seem to suggest that the first bullet to strike the President hit him when he was east of where the Commission says he was. This would mean two obvious things, and perhaps others: First, it would mean that the tree visible in the Altgens picture would have blocked the view of the car from the sixth floor window. Second, it would make a very considerable change in the angle at which he was hit. On the point of the angles, an examination of the photograph shows that, in addition to bringing his arms up in reaction to the wound, the President also tipped his head forward.

Returning for a moment to Zapruder's testimony, the Commission shows him photographs in which he identified himself. The failure to print these photographs identifying the point at which Zapruder was

standing is an extremely suspicious failing that I think cannot, in all fairness, be called merely a failing.

In Zapruder's deposition, 7 H 570, Zapruder says he was on a "square of concrete - I don't know what you call it - maybe four feet high". In the next sentence Mr. Liebeler showed him the "picture that has been marked Hudson Exhibit No. 1 and I ask you if you can in fact see yourself in that picture?" (If the Hudson exhibit is printed, it is not in Vol. XVIII). After a comment by Zapruder, Liebeler says, "You are pointing out a concrete abutment that comes up immediately to the right of the sign that reads 'Stemmons Freeway, keep right?'" Later, on the page, Liebeler identifies the picture as one of a series being sold by a man named Phil Lewis of which the picture he showed Zapruder was fifth in a series of slides. On p.571 Liebeler again says that Zapruder "stood there on this abutment ..." and on p.573 Zapruder indicates his unhappiness about the pictures - stills from his movies - that were shown him. At one point he says, apparently referring to the sequence, or a photograph, "this shouldn't be there - the shot wasn't fired, was it? You can't tell from here?" The transcript shows "No response" from Mr. Liebeler. At the conclusion of his next comment, Zapruder says, "I wish I had an enlarger here for you". I believe Zapruder meant "projector".

Note Liebeler's language on p.570, "You are pointing out a concrete abutment that comes up immediately to the right of the sign that reads 'Stemmons Freeway, keep right?'" It would seem that the photographs <sup>were</sup> ~~were~~ taken from the opposite side of Elm Street from where Zapruder was standing. The only road sign visible in the aerial photograph is to the west of the steps, and there is no abutment visible to the west of the steps. It is possible that it could be hidden by trees; nonetheless, none is visible.

In Vol. XVIII the Commission prints but six frames from the Nix film and 3 from the Muchmore film. These are on pp.81-5. The first 2 frames of the Nix film printed are 10 and 24 and with people in the foreground and the poor quality film they do not show the rear of the Presidential car clearly. They do, however, clearly show the background, and they show an area considerably to the east of the stairs and an abutment of some sort that is part of the decorative effect immediately to the west of the Book Depository Building. Frame No. 66 on p.82 clearly shows an abutment to the east of the steps. It also very clearly shows that a man, presumably the Secret Service agent, had reached the Presidential car. It also seems to show that Mrs. Kennedy had arisen. Frame 88 on the same page shows the car approximately abreast of the steps and it shows the Secret Service agent on the car and Mrs. Kennedy reaching in his direction. All of this happened subsequent to the President's receiving his head wound, but it is not until frame 106 on p.83 that the car gets abreast of a road sign which cannot be read and which is immediately to the west of a lamppost that the road sign shows clearly. Its shadow does show in frame 88. This road sign is to the west of the abutment and to the west of the steps.

However, on p.84, frame 42, and on p.85, frame 55, show what seems to be an abutment on the west side of the steps. But unless Zapruder covered a considerable amount of distance while he was taking his movies, there had to be another road sign because the first part of his movies clearly show a road sign in the picture and the aerial photograph clearly shows no abutment visible behind the road sign. The Nix films show that the President received his head wound to the east of the steps and the Zapruder show he received his head wound

to the west of the road sign visible in the Zapruser film. It does not seem possible that there is any explanation except that there was another road sign and that it had to be to the east of the steps.

The effect of all of this is to move all of the action to the east and quite possibly to shorten the time.

This reconstruction should be compared with the statements of the Secret Service agent in Vol. XVIII. On p.747 Secret Service Special Agent William T. McIntyre, in his statement dated November 29, there was a "green sign with white lettering, stating 'Entering Thornton Freeway'." This is not the language quoted from Mr. Liebel from Vol. VII, p.570. This would clearly seem to indicate an additional sign and in the context of McIntyre's statement considerably to the east of the other sign.

Returning again to the Altgens photograph, Exhibit 900, and the one on the opposite page of the Associated Press book, both show the sun visors of the Presidential car standing straight up in the air, above the molding around the windshield. The point of this observation is this: The report refers (p. ) to the denting of the molding around the windshield by what was presumably the fragment of a bullet. This showed only a very small part of the molding accessible to a bullet without first making a hole in one of the sun visors. Later discovered a bullet did hit there. See separate memo on photographs.

Again it would have to be one of the many coincidences, one of the many long shots, all of which were in favor of the Commission's thesis. It is possible; it is also extremely unlikely. In any event, unless the dent is approximately in the middle of the windshield and in an area that can't be much wider than a man's hand, it needs further explanation by the Commission.

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The expression on Governor Connally's face in this photograph is hardly that of a man who has been shot.