

EDITORIAL and OPINION PAGE

Dallas Witnesses Claimed Shots Came From Two Sources

Second of five articles

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Special to the Star editorial/opinion page

The Hertz Rent-a-Car sign on top of the Depository Building showed the time to be 12:30 p.m. as the limousine carrying the President turned down Elm St. and drove in front of the Depository. Several shots rang out. Witnesses reported hearing from two to six shots, although very few of them were ever asked how many they had heard by either the Commission or FBI.

Of the witnesses asked where they thought the shots came from, 59 said they came from the grassy knoll area, and 32 thought they came from the Depository Building.

When the shots were fired, Chief of Police Jesse E. Curry, who was driving the first car in the motorcade, gave orders to "Get a man on top of that triple underpass and see what happened up there." Sheriff J. E. Decker, who was riding in the rear seat of the same car, ordered all available men in his office to move into the railroad yards (see map) to "hold everything secure" until investigators could get there.

Railroad switch-tower operator Lee Bowers Jr. said that when the shots were fired his attention was attracted to the area of the fence where he had observed two strangers just prior to the assassination. He was not sure what had caught his eye.

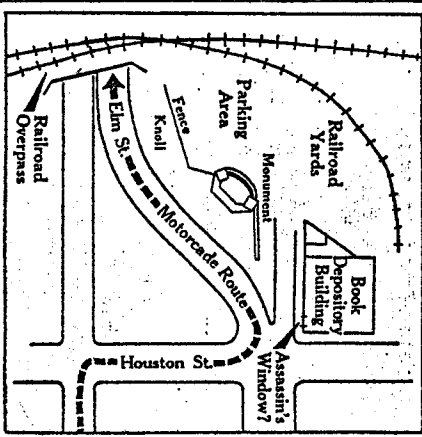
J. C. Price testified that just after the shots were fired his attention centered on the area behind the fence. He saw a man run away from the fence and towards the passenger cars on the railroad siding. Price's description of the man is very similar to the description of the "stranger" Lee Bowers Jr. saw in this area just prior to the assassination.

According to Price, the man was running very fast, which caused him to think that "he was doing the shooting." Price added that he was carrying something in his right hand which "could have been a gun."

Immediately after the shots were fired motorcycle policemen Clyde Haygood and Bobby Harris parked their cycles and raced up the grassy knoll towards the parking lot area. Numerous law enforcement officers and spectators also ran towards the same area. Within minutes of the assassination an estimated 50 policemen were searching the parking lot and railroad yards. Police control stations were soon set up and the railroad yards and parking lot were guarded for the remainder of the afternoon.

Within about 2 minutes of the shots, S. M. Holland arrived in the parking lot area and helped the 12 or 15 policemen and plainclothesmen, who were already there looking for empty shells.

After a few minutes, both S. M. Holland and James L. Simmons noticed mud on the bumper of a station wagon which was backed up to the fence. They suggested that it looked like someone had stood on the bumper of this area on a film of the assassination taken by Orville Nix shows someone who is apparently standing on the rear bumper of a car backed up to the fence.



Although the photo is not very clear, the man's arms are in a position which suggests that he may be firing a rifle, although no rifle is discernible on the somewhat fuzzy enlargement. UPI sent Jack Fox to Dallas with the photo which he showed to Lee Bowers Jr. and S. M. Holland.

Bowers said that the photo was "exactly what I saw" and Holland seemed to be of the same opinion.

Patrolman J. M. Smith, who ran to the parking lot from the front of the Depository, smelled gunpowder behind the fence. He encountered a stranger and drew his gun. The stranger identified himself as a Secret Service agent by showing credentials. (Deputy Sheriff Seymour Weitzman also testified that there was a Secret Service man in the area.)

The Secret Service, however, categorically denied that any of its agents were in the area at that time. The Commission never attempted to identify this man who was impersonating a federal officer and present near the spot from which an assassin may have fired.

Minutes after the shots an unarmed 31-year-old man was arrested in the railroad yards adjacent to the parking lot. He was booked on charges of "investigation of conspiracy to commit murder." These charges weren't dropped until Monday, Dec. 2, eight days after Lee Harvey Oswald's murder.

He was held for eight days, during which the Dallas police and nationwide news media were claiming the case was closed and Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin!

The Commission was told of the existence of this suspect by Oswald's mother, who testified that both she and Marina Oswald (Oswald's wife) had been informed of the arrest of another suspect while waiting to see Lee in the Dallas sheriff's office. The Commission never questioned the Dallas police about this suspect, so we may

never know why he was kept in jail after Oswald's death.

Standing near the Depository Building was Amos Eulms, a 15-year-old ninth grade student. Eulms also glanced up at the Depository after the first shot and watched a man fire from the southeast corner window of the sixth floor. Immediately following the shots, he reported what he had seen to a police sergeant who radioed to headquarters at 12:36 p.m. that he had a witness who said that the shots came from the Depository.

Several reporters who were in a press car which was eight or nine cars from the front of the motorcade saw a rifle, or something which they thought was a rifle, in the sixth floor window on the southeast corner of the Depository Building.

James N. Crawford, a deputy district clerk for Dallas County, who watched the motorcade from the Elm-Houston St. intersection, looked up after the third shot and thought he saw "movement" in the sixth floor window on the southeast corner of the Depository. He told the woman standing next to him "that if those were shots, they came from that window."

When the shots were fired there were three Depository employees watching the motorcade from windows at the southeast end of the fifth floor. At least one of these men thought that the shots following the first one came from directly above. They all came around to this point of view after discussing it.

After a minute or two, all three men ran downstairs and two of them ran outside and reported their experience to a police officer.

The Commission never ascertained when, if ever, the Depository Building was sealed off and guarded. As late as 20 minutes after the assassination it was possible to enter or leave the building without showing identification.

Tomorrow: The suspects and the witnesses.