

# SS 'imposters' spotted by JFK witnesses

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Several men posing as Secret Service agents were in Dealey Plaza shortly before and after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, The Dallas News has learned.

Shortly before the shooting, one of the apparent imposters discouraged a soldier from walking behind a wooden fence atop the grassy knoll from which the House Assassinations Committee recently testified a rifle and a pistol. The soldier — and at least four other people — say they saw men who

either showed identification as Secret Service agents or said they were.

All but one of the encounters were in the parking lot west of the Texas School Book Depository Building from where Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly shot the president on Nov. 22, 1963.

All BUT ONE of the counterfeits agents wore business suits. One man was in sportcoats and "had dirty looking hands or dirty fingernails," according to a Dallas policeman who confronted him.

None of the 28 Secret Service agents

protecting President Kennedy were on foot at the scene shortly before or after the shooting, the Warren Commission Report said.

"None (in the presidential motorcade) stayed at the scene of the shooting, and none entered the Texas School Book Depository Building, at or immediately after the shooting," the Warren Report stated. "Secret Service procedure requires that each agent stay with the person being protected and not be diverted unless it is necessary to accomplish the protective assignment."

Gordon L. Arnold, the former Dallas soldier, said he was stopped by a man wearing a light-colored suit as he was walking behind the fence on top of the grassy knoll minutes before the assassination. Arnold, now an investigator for the Dallas Department of Consumer Affairs, was not called by the Warren Commission and has not been interviewed by the House Assassinations Committee.

Arnold said he was moving toward the railroad bridge over the triple underpass to take movie film of the presidential motorcade when "this guy

just walked towards me and said that I shouldn't be up there."

Arnold challenged the man's authority, he said, and the man "showed me a badge and said he was with the Secret Service and that he didn't want anybody up there."

Arnold then retreated to the front of the picket fence high up on the grassy knoll just to the west of the pergola on the north side of Elm Street.

As THE PRESIDENTIAL limousine came down Elm toward the triple underpass, Arnold stood on a mound of fresh dirt and started rolling his film.

He said he "felt" the first shot come from behind him, only inches over his left shoulder, he said.

"I had just gotten out of basic training," Arnold said. "In my mind live ammunition was being fired. It was being fired over my head. And I hit the dirt."

Arnold, then 22, said the first two shots came from behind the fence "close enough for me to fall down on my face." He stayed there for the duration of the shooting.

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## 3rd officer sighted on bridge

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HIS PRONE position, under the shade of a tree, may have locked away his story for 15 years as the Warren Commission and later other assassination researchers scanned photographs and movie footage of Dealey Plaza for witnesses to the shooting.

The first two shots that Arnold heard didn't come from the Texas School Book Depository Building because "you wouldn't hear a whiz go over the top of your head like that," he said. "I say a whiz — you don't really hear a whiz of a bullet, you hear just like a shock wave. You feel it... You feel something and then a report comes right behind it. It's just like the end of a muzzle blast."

He said he heard two shots "and then there was a blend. For a single bolt action, he had to have been firing darn good because I don't think anybody could fire that rapid a bolt action."

"The next thing I knew someone was kicking my butt and telling me to get up," Arnold said. "It was a policeman. And I told him to go jump in the river. And then this other guy — a policeman — comes up with a shotgun and he was crying and that thing was waving back and forth. I said you can have everything I've got. Just point it someplace else."

ARNOLD TOOK his film from the canister and threw it to the policeman. "It wasn't worth three dollars and something to be shot. All I wanted them to do was to take that blooming picture (film) and get out of there, just let me go. That shotgun and the guy crying over there was enough to unnerve me for anything."

Two days later, Arnold was on a plane reporting for duty at Fort Wainwright in Alaska. He hadn't given police in Dealey Plaza his name and never told his story to authorities "because I heard after that there were a lot of people making claims about pictures and stuff and they were dying sort of peculiarly. I just said, well, the devil with it, forget it. Besides, I couldn't claim my pictures anyway, how did I know what were mine?"

TWO UNIFORMED Dallas policemen had been assigned to guard the railroad bridge. The Warren Report, however, said the two policemen — just as fellow officers guarding overpasses along the motorcade route — were not assisted by federal agents.

Police officer James C. White told The News that he and James W. Foster were keeping unauthorized people off the bridge.

"If there was one (Secret Service agent) up there, we didn't know it," White said. "He wasn't on that bridge. I know that."

However, a railroad signal supervisor, who aided White and Foster in identifying railroad personnel on the bridge, was under the impression that "a plainclothes detective or FBI agent or something like that" was helping the officers guard the bridge.

THE SUPERVISOR, S.M. Holland, told the Warren Commission that about 90 minutes before the motorcade came by Dealey Plaza he met the two policemen and the agent near the bridge.

In 1964, Holland, now dead, was asked by Samuel A. Stern, Warren Commission assistant counsel, if he spoke to the three together.

"Two — there were two city policemen and one man in plainclothes," Holland said. "I didn't talk to him (the man not in uniform). I talked to the city policemen."

Stern pressed further and asked if he knew what the third man's "affiliation was." Holland said he didn't know, and Stern moved on to another subject.

ABOUT AN HOUR before Holland and the policemen were on the bridge, Julius Hardie of Dallas was driving his electrical equipment company truck east on Commerce Street and was about to make a U-turn to the Stemmons

entry lane when he noticed three men on the bridge. That was between 9:30 and 10 a.m. the day of the assassination, and people hadn't started gathering in Dealey Plaza to catch a view of the motorcade.

"I looked over on the railroad bridge and I saw three men," Hardie told The News. "And I thought I saw two of them carrying guns, long guns. I glanced to my left to check for traffic and then looked back, because even in Texas it's unusual to see people carrying long guns."

"Now I can't tell you whether it was rifles, shotguns or what. But two of them had long guns."

Two of the men wore dark business suits and the third an overcoat, Hardie said.

Unlike Arnold, Hardie called authorities after the assassination and in a week or two was visited by two FBI agents. He told his story but "never heard from them after that," he said.

MINUTES AFTER Arnold's encounter with the phantom federal agent behind the wooden fence on his way to the bridge, Mrs. Jean Hill witnessed the assassination of President Kennedy. She was only a few feet from the presidential limousine.

She spotted a man dashing into the parking lot adjacent to the Texas School Book Depository Building before other spectators, still stunned, began to rush up the grassy knoll past Arnold.

Mrs. Hill ran after the strange acting man and was met in the parking lot by a "tall and slender" man in a business suit who "whipped out" identification purportedly showing he was a Secret Service agent, she told The News.

"I thought he was trying to get away," she said, "but evidently he wanted me to keep from getting away (and pursuing the fleeing man). He identified himself, supposedly, and I took it that he was. I just figured they (Secret Service) were shooting back."

Smith immediately after the assassination he started toward the Texas School Book Depository Building and met a woman who told him, "They are shooting the president from the bushes." The policeman checked the bushes next to the wooden fence atop the grassy knoll and the parking lot behind it.

Smith and a deputy sheriff met a man in sportclothes in the lot. Smith drew his pistol. "And I thought, 'This is silly, I don't know who I am looking for,' and I put it (pistol) back," Smith said. "Just as I did, he showed me that he was a Secret Service agent."

The man displayed the "regular identification" of the Secret Service in "a wallet and folder," Smith said.

"I remember one thing, he kind of had dirty looking hands or dirty fingernails it looked like," Smith said. "But hell, we all have to work on a car or something like that every now and then. That's what this looked like to me."

ANOTHER POLICEMAN, Sgt. D.V. Harkness, told the Warren Commission he went to the back of the Texas School Book Depository Building shortly after the shooting and "there were some Secret Service agents there. I didn't get them identified. They told me they were Secret Service."

Harkness, now a Dallas County adult probation officer, told The News he "assumed they were with the presidential party. I would assume they would be Secret Service men if they would be riding with the president."

He said the men, dressed in suits, "were all armed."

Dallas Secret Service agent-in-charge in 1963, Forrest V. Sorrels, was the only agent to return to the shooting scene within an hour. Sorrels said he entered the rear door of the Texas School Book Depository Building without showing any identification.

THE DALLAS Secret Service chief, however, would have searched the depository building too late to be one

Mrs. Hill lost sight of the man running through the parking lot about the time he reached the railroad tracks near the point where they ran across the triple underpass.

A RETIRED Dallas policeman, Tom Tilson Jr., recently told The News how he chased a man who slid down the west side of the railroad embankment from Dealey Plaza minutes after the presidential limousine sped by on its way to Parkland Memorial Hospital. Tilson said the man jumped into a dark car at the foot of the embankment near the Elm Street underpass and drove west toward Industrial Boulevard.

Tilson, who was not on duty at the time, drove after the car while his daughter, sitting beside him, wrote down the license number. He lost the speeding car as it turned off Industrial onto the Fort Worth Turnpike, but he reported the incident and the license number that day to the police homicide bureau. He said he never heard whether the matter was investigated.

Although Tilson and Mrs. Hill now know Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby was in The Dallas Morning News building at the time, they insisted the fleeing man they each chased closely resembled Ruby and wore dark, heavy clothing.

MRS. HILL, now remarried, said agents from the Secret Service, FBI and CIA interviewed her during the following year and all told her the man she met in the parking lot with Secret Service credentials did not exist under the name she recalled he gave her.

The CIA agents who talked to her on several occasions came from Washington and New York and "had proper identification and they knew enough to scare me," the former Mrs. Hill told The News.

She asserts another man who purported to be a Secret Service agent "just showed up at my door one day" shortly after the assassination. She said he "threatened" her to stop talking about the parking lot encounter. She said she talked about the threat during her Warren Commission testimony months later, but it was "deliberately" left out.

ANOTHER ENCOUNTER with a phantom Secret Service agent in the parking lot was made by Dallas police patrolman Joe Marshall Smith.

Smith, who is still with the force,

of the agents Harkness thought he encountered in back of the structure.

Asked about the phantom agent, Sorrels, now retired, told The News he was "not answering any questions about this thing. I gave all my testimony in Washington and I don't put out anything else. As far as I am concerned, that's a closed incident."

All but one of Sorrels' six Dallas agents in 1963 submitted reports of their whereabouts the day of the assassination and none said they were on foot in Dealey Plaza immediately before or after the shooting. During that time they were either at the Trade Mart, where a luncheon was to be held for the president, or at Love Field.

Elmer Moore, the agent who did not submit a report, said he was in San Francisco and did not return to Dallas to join the investigation until a week later. About the men who showed Secret Service identification in the Dealey Plaza area, Moore said, "You can be pretty sure they were not (Secret Service)."

ANOTHER LAW officer who said he talked to a Secret Service agent in Dealey Plaza shortly after the assassination was deputy constable Seymour Weitzman. Weitzman told the Warren Commission he found a portion of President Kennedy's skull on Elm Street and gave it to the agent.

Weitzman first ran to the parking lot behind the grassy knoll and with an alleged Secret Service agent present, "noticed numerous footprints that did not make sense because they were going different directions."

At about the same time, railroad supervisor Holland also found many footprints in the mud over a small area in the parking lot where a station wagon was backed up behind the wooden fence.

It was in the same location where, on the Elm Street side of the fence, Holland told the Warren Commission a "puff of smoke came out six or eight feet above the ground" as he heard what he asserted was a fourth shot. Others on the bridge and in the plaza also said they saw smoke.

Holland said apparently "somebody had been standing there for a long period. I guess if you could count them about a hundred foot tracks (were) in that little spot, and also mud up on the bumper of that station wagon."