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## R.I.P.: THE BLACK DOG MAN

by

*Martin Shackelford*

One of the more persistent myths in Kennedy assassination research is the idea that someone was perched with a gun behind the concrete retaining wall on the grassy knoll in Dealey Plaza. This individual has long been dubbed "The Black Dog Man." It is a misnomer, as we shall see.

Like many myths, this one has been exposed in whole or part by a variety of independent researchers. The author owes a debt of gratitude for the work of Robert Cutler, Richard Trask, Bill O'Neil and Matthew Smith, who provided some of the elements which eventually came together to create this article.

A little after noon on November 22, 1963, secretary Marilyn Sitzman went down into Dealey Plaza with her boss, Abraham Zapruder. As they prepared for the filming of the President's motorcade, Ms. Sitzman saw a young black couple eating their lunch on a bench in front of and below the pedestal on which she and Mr. Zapruder were standing. [1] The location of the bench is indicated in a detail from a chart which appears in Richard Trask's comprehensive study of the photographic evidence. [2] The bench appears in a film frame [3] and in a photo [4] which also shows the paper lunch bags from which the couple had been eating. One was drinking an orange pop, and one a red pop. [5]

When the shots began, the young woman was standing up, looking toward Elm Street. She appears, as the image long identified as "The Black Dog Man," in the Hugh Betzner and Phil Willis photos. An enlargement from the Betzner photo, published by Matthew Smith, definitely looks like a woman

[6]. The House Select Committee on Assassinations photo panel found flesh tones in the image [7]; and it is clear from good color copies of the 5th Willis photo [8] that the flesh tones of the image are darker than those of most of the other people in the picture, including Zapruder and Sitzman, at approximately the same distance from the photographer.

When she stood up, she apparently set her orange pop bottle on the concrete wall, where it appears, orange tone visible in a good enlargement, in the third photograph by Jim Towne [9]. Sitzman later recalled seeing the bottle [10]. Barbara Rowland mentioned police inspecting a pop bottle there. [11]

After the last shot was fired, Sitzman heard the crash of breaking glass, which was "much louder than the shots were" and the young couple ran up the steps, last seen heading for the pergola area behind her. [12]

The breaking glass was apparently the red pop bottle, which left a pool of red pop, later mistaken by some spectators for red snow cone [13] or a pool of blood. [14]

An image often mistakenly cited to bolster the theory of an assassin in this location is frame 413 of the Zapruder film which shows the back of a man's head and a straight image which somewhat resembles a rifle [15]. Also in the image is a bush located just in front of Zapruder. The image of the "rifle" passes between Zapruder and the leaves of the bush indicating it (probably a branch) was closer to Zapruder than the leaves (similar images, though not as long, appear elsewhere in the frame, also crossing leaves). On the other hand, leaves appear between Zapruder and the man's head, indicating the man was beyond the bush. Robert Cutler has established that the man is probably one of the three men standing on the knoll steps, visible in the Moorman photograph and Muchmore film, among others.

The preponderance of the witness and photographic evidence, then, indicates that the figure long referred to as "The Black Dog Man" was in fact a young black woman, part of the couple having lunch on the knoll that day. Logic, too, tells us that an assassin is unlikely to have positioned himself in plain view of Zapruder and Sitzman. In addition, Sitzman clearly stated that no shots were fired from any location that close to her. [16] "Black Dog Man," rest in peace.

### Notes

1. She reported this to Josiah Thompson, in an 11/29/63 interview; the transcript is cited by Richard Trask, Picture of the Pain: Photography and the Assassination of Pres

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*Martin Shackelford*  
216 N. Webster, Apt. 2  
Saginaw, MI 48602

- dent Kennedy (1994, Yeoman Press, Danvers, MA), p. 73 (hereafter cited as Trask); full citation is in footnote 4, p. 148.
2. Trask, p. 56.
  3. Trask, p. 76; on p. 74, he identifies the photo as having been taken by Johnny Flynn of the Dallas Morning News.
  4. Trask, p. 75.
  5. Phone conversation 10/16/94 with Bill O'Neil, regarding his 10/25/92 conversation with Marilyn Sitzman in Dealey Plaza during the A.S.K. Conference (hereafter O'Neil phone).
  6. Matthew Smith, JFK: The Second Plot (1992, Mainstream Publishing Company, Edinburgh).
  7. HSCA v. 4, p. 410.
  8. See, for example, p. 24 of Robert J. Groden, The Killing of a President (1993, Viking Studio, New York) (hereafter Groden).
  9. An excellent enlargement appears on p. 194 of Groden.
  10. 10/24/94 letter from Bill O'Neil, summarizing his 10/25/92 conversation with Sitzman (hereafter O'Neil letter).
  11. Warren Commission v. 6, p. 184, cited by Trask, p. 74.
  12. Trask, pp. 73-74; O'Neil phone; O'Neil letter.
  13. O'Neil letter.
  14. This was photographer Malcolm Couch's assumption in his Warren Commission testimony; it is also featured prominently in a chapter in Unsolved Texas Mysteries by Wallace O. Chariton, Charlie Eckhardt and Kevin R. Young (1991, Wordware Publishing, Texas).
  15. For a high resolution color copy, see Groden, p. 195.
  16. O'Neil letter: referring to the Badgeman location, about the same distance, Sitzman stated "the blast of a high-powered rifle would have blown me off that wall." She did allow, however, that a shot could have been fired from "farther down, closer to the overpass...or maybe they were using silencers."

## STEPHEN H. LANDESBERG AND THE GREENWICH VILLAGE HOAX

by  
Stan C. Weeber

On the night of November 22, 1963, a man who identified himself as Jim Rizzuto called a New York City radio station to report that Lee Harvey Oswald had been seen in Greenwich Village in 1962 in the company of Steve L'Eandes, a Nazi sympathizer and right-wing agitator from Wiggins, Mississippi. [1] The FBI ultimately determined that Rizzuto's story was a hoax and that Rizzuto's real name was Stephen Harris Landesberg. This paper will recite the story Landesberg told to the FBI and will consider the implications of that story, assuming it is true, for research on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The paper also explores: (1) the similarities in the political careers of Landesberg and Lee Oswald; and (2) the circumstantial resemblance between Stephen H. Landesberg and actor/comedian Steve Landesberg, a Bronx native who played detective Arthur Dietrich in the Barney Miller TV series.

When "Jim Rizzuto" called the radio station on assassination night, he claimed that he served in the Marine Corps with both Lee Oswald and L'Eandes, a man whose pro-segregationist, anti-Semitic rhetoric disrupted Jewish gatherings and liberal rallies in Greenwich Village in 1961 and 1962. [2] Rizzuto stated during his call that he could find L'Eandes and bring him to the station for an interview that weekend. The station was very much interested in talking to Rizzuto, and arranged to speak with him at 3:00 A.M. on November 23. The station called in the FBI to observe the interview. When Rizzuto showed up, he told station officials and the FBI the same story that he had apparently already recited at several radio stations and newspaper offices on November 22. [3] This information is summarized below.

He met Steve L'Eandes and Lee Oswald in the Marine Corps at Camp LeJeune in the summer of 1956. [4] After his Marine service he kept in touch with L'Eandes, who sent postcards from Stockholm, Leningrad and Moscow in 1960. L'Eandes was accompanied in Europe and Russia by Lee Oswald and a man named Earl Perry, who in 1963 was living near El Paso,

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Stan C. Weeber  
2444 W. Oak, #120  
Denton, TX 76201