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Historical

FROM = ~~PHOTO~~
"PICTURES OF THE PAIN"
BY R. TRASH

(2)

CHAPTER 23

Dallas Cinema Associates



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Copy to = H. WINBERG
(on the DCA film)

Almost since the inception of practical photography with the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839, Americans have been enthusiastic collectors of the visual image, particularly of images of themselves and of their families. Yet the first few generations of photographic consumers had to rely principally upon professional photographers who had both the expertise and the cumbersome equipment needed for quality work. This all changed in 1889 with the introduction of the Kodak box camera, which allowed anyone to simply point the camera and press the shutter release. The company would then upon receipt of the camera do all necessary processing. From that time on, with the continual advancement of cameras and film, the amateur photographer became a voracious consumer who, by 1961, was using some 40 million cameras to shoot over 2 billion black-and-white photographs per year.¹

Motion picture film had trailed the development of photography by some 50 years when, in the late 1880s Thomas Alva Edison and others exhibited and then continued to perfect its practicality. Although at the end of the 19th century equipment was available for amateur movie makers, it would not be until the middle of the 1920s when, with the development of safety film rather than the highly volatile nitrate film, movie making began to achieve a more general popularity. First utilized was a black-and-white 16mm film format. By the late 1930s safety film in a smaller 8mm size and the introduction of easy-to-use movie cameras, created a new non-commercial film system geared specifically to the amateur home movie makers.

The popularity of 8mm home movies exploded following World War II into the 1950s and 1960s. Simple to use, yet more sophisticated cameras were introduced almost yearly, with zoom lenses replacing 3-lens turret cameras, magazine loading beginning to compete with spool-loading models, and electric eyes replacing hand-held light meters or guesswork. These changes, while often compromising slightly on the resulting film quality by allowing the equipment to cut corners rather than necessitating an intelligent amateur doing the task, nevertheless, were viewed as progress. They almost always resulted in a product very acceptable to the amateur.

By 1963 numerous companies, some quite old and some just getting into the 8mm camera market, gave the consumer a wide choice of equipment. Bell & Howell of Chicago, and Eastman Kodak of Rochester, New York, competed with such other American companies as Keystone of Boston, Revere from Chicago, and Argus of Ann

Arbor, Michigan. Other models in manufacture included Bolex by Paillard Products of New York, Wollensak Optical Company of Ann Arbor, and DeJur Ansco Corporation of Long Island City. Canon, Konica and Yashica of Japan were also making strong inroads in the United States 8mm market.²

Besides less expensive, older model, second-hand 8mm cameras lined up in the windows of hundreds of photo dealers across the country, new models coming out yearly were available at a variety of suggested dealer list prices. Top-of-the-line models such as the Bell & Howell Zoomatic Director's Series retailed for \$210, while a simple one-lens camera could be purchased for about \$60.³

By the early 1960s the 8mm electric eye camera was the most popular type and size for use for home movies, and the preferred film was Kodachrome II. With an ASA rating for daylight use of 25, this film was 2½ times greater in speed and had a better sharpness than that of the regular Kodachrome. Kodachrome II Type A Tungsten, available for indoor, flood-light use, was rated ASA 40. Kodachrome II tested in *Consumer Reports* as substantially better than all other films tested. Retailing for a suggested \$2.65 and a suggested Kodak developing cost of \$1.85 also made the 25-foot double 8mm roll film more expensive than most other films. Some serious amateurs, as well as those trying to save money, could also use Ansco Moviechrome 8 film with an ASA of 20, Technicolor film with an ASA of 25, Sears, Roebuck's Tower film with an ASA of 10, or Dynachrome.⁴

Dallas, Texas, had its share of 8mm movie camera buffs, some of whom liked to talk about the technical aspects of their photography, shared information and belonged to camera clubs such as the Camera Guild of Texas, and the Dallas 8mm Movie Club. The city had numerous photo supply stores and vendors, including the large retail outlets of Sears, Roebuck & Co., and Montgomery Ward & Co., and the local Sanger-Harris Department Stores, all of which included well-stocked camera shops. Smaller, independent stores, including Glendale Camera Shop and Kincaid Photo Service, sold photographic films and cameras, and processing could be ordered through any of these outlets, plus numerous drug and department stores. There were also several large photo processing laboratories, including Fox Film Studio, Color Photo Inc., and Eastman Kodak.

With news of the coming of President Kennedy to Dallas's Love Field, and a noontime motorcade through the downtown area to a scheduled luncheon at the Trade Mart, scores of 8mm movie enthusiasts decided that such an event as this would be worth filming, and would be a fine addition to their reels of family events, local happenings, and vacation remembrances.

Irving Gewertz lived in Dallas with his wife Anita and their 14-year-old high school sophomore son Martin Anson Gewertz. A 40-year-old architect with Roscoe DeWitt, Architect, on Cedar Springs Road, Gewertz owned a Bell & Howell 8mm Model 416 camera with electric eye. Recently the electric eye had not been working properly, and Gewertz brought it in to the Sanger-Harris camera department at Main and Lamar Streets to have it checked out. Deputy manager Bryant Boren, who had sold the camera

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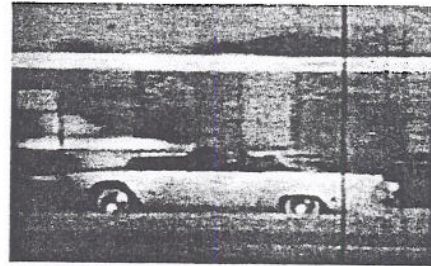
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to Gewertz, looked it over and not finding anything obviously wrong with it, advised Gewertz to try another roll of film, and that if it still gave difficulty, Boren would send it out for repairs. Learning of the President's visit to Dallas, and that the motorcade would travel right by Gewertz's office, the family decided to watch and film the motorcade from that location on November 22. Martin was allowed to miss school, and he and his mother met Mr. Gewertz a little before noon that Friday. In the office they listened to the motorcade's progress until about 12:05, when they walked outside and took up positions on the north side of Cedar Springs Road at #2025.

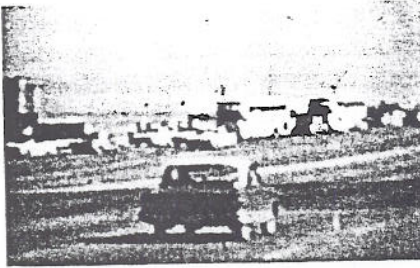
About 12:20 the motorcade was in view, and Martin, who had custody of the family camera, attempted to take some movies. Irving saw his son shaking and banging the camera in frustration. By the time the President's vehicle had gone past, Martin had only been able to get a short sequence as it disappeared on Harwood Street. Martin was upset with the camera and the situation; and his parents, seeing the disappointment, told him to get into the car and they would quickly go to the Trade Mart, where he might get another chance to take movies.

The trio got as far as the service road opposite the Trade Mart, and just after they arrived, they watched as the President's limousine came at a high rate of speed up Stemmons Freeway with lights flashing and sirens wailing. Mrs. Gewertz saw a man lying over the back of the President's car, who was pounding the trunk of the car with his fist as the car passed their position. Not prepared for such a sudden and fast ride-by, Martin apparently took some film of a few of the later motorcade cars rushing by on the freeway above, followed by a short clip of two of the motorcade busses. Listening to their car radio, the Gewertzes discovered that the President had been shot and was taken to Parkland Hospital. The three drove to the hospital area and observed much commotion. Around 2:00 Mrs. Gewertz told her son to film an ambulance as it was leaving the hospital, which scene they later learned was of the body of President Kennedy being taken from the hospital back to Love Field. The next day the three visited the site of the assassination and took movies of the spectators and floral tributes gathered there.⁵



One of the motorcade convertibles rushing down the Freeway near the Trade Mart

Within a short time Mr. and Mrs. Gewertz took the film they had made the week of November 22 to the Sanger-Harris Department Store, and complained to manager Boren that the camera had not operated properly. They were bitter that their son had missed some historic film of the motorcade because they had taken Boren's advice about the camera. Boren suggested that, as he knew of several people who had taken sequences of the motorcade and had processed their film at the store, he would attempt to obtain copies of these so that the Gewertzes could have a record of it. Boren



Frame from a second sequence, probably made by Martin Gewertz, showing the two press busses on the road to the Trade Mart.

had himself, with fellow employee Richard Stewart, viewed the motorcade. At the time Stewart was learning the operation of a Bolex camera from Boren and had taken a few feet of the motorcade. Boren subsequently gained possession of this film and gave a copy to Gewertz. Boren also contacted Clarence Hays, who had likewise taken film of the procession and had it developed through Sanger-Harris. Being informed about Mr. Hays, Mrs. Gewertz took it upon herself to visit Hays and his wife Fran-

ces, and view his film. Mrs. Hays became particularly interested in the possibility of gathering other sequences from other amateurs.⁶

The original intention of obtaining a few sequences by the Gewertzes soon developed into the gathering of a number of film clips which could be swapped and shared by the various movie makers. Mrs. Gewertz had the idea of not just relying upon those film makers Boren discovered through the department store, but to take the initiative of telephoning residences and businesses along the motorcade route to find other possible film sources. Both Mrs. Gewertz and Mrs. Hays began pursuing this objective. From December 1963 to early January 1964, Gewertz and Hays telephoned and visited numerous places looking for film. Their persistence bore fruit. Irving Gewertz's friend George Kincaid, owner of a popular still photo print service, had himself taken an 8mm film clip of the procession and gave his movie to Gewertz, releasing all rights to it. Gewertz and Hays also located five other film makers who were willing to share their movies. One of them was Albert Bunnell, a purchasing agent for Cambell-Taggart Associated Bakeries, who in turn was able to provide Gewertz with three other names of men who had film, including one co-worker and two fellows whom he knew through a movie camera club. Gewertz and/or Hays would typically ask to see the film and then request an exchange of film clips. When they realized that they were gathering together a fair amount of footage, the group decided to try and splice all of the clips together and then make a copy for each contributor.⁷

Mrs. Gewertz also found in her process of telephoning people along the motorcade route that Phil Willis and his family had witnessed the assassination, and that Mr. Willis had taken photographs of the events in Dealey Plaza. Willis's slides were obtained shortly after the assassination by the FBI, who returned them to Willis in January 1964. It was not until June of 1964, however, that he was interviewed by the FBI, and by that time he had locally marketed twelve of his slides for retail sales. Mrs. Gewertz also learned that a Mrs. Ashmore had taken still photographs in the vicinity of the Trade Mart on November 22. In later investigating of these amateur film makers, the FBI

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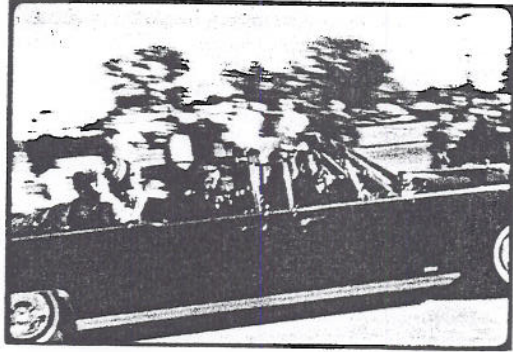
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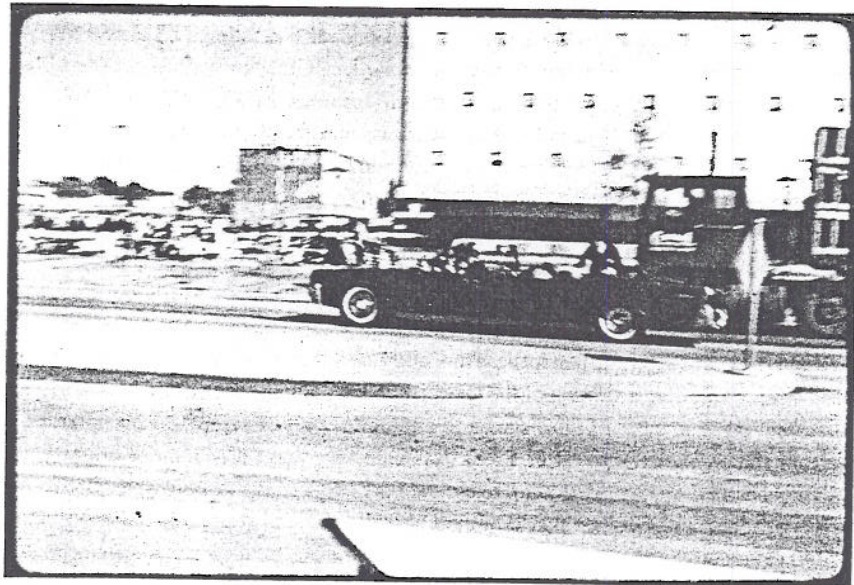
learned through Mrs. Gewertz of Ashmore, and on June 17, 1964, Mrs. Ashmore was also interviewed.

In the FBI report, Mrs. Evelyn Ashmore, a housewife living on Hyer Street, related that she had taken her 35mm camera to a location opposite the Ramada Inn on Cedar Springs Road to view the motorcade. She took several pictures of the area and also two pictures of Air Force Two and Air Force One as they came low overhead in their landing pattern for nearby Love Air Field.



Mrs. Ashmore photographed the President's limousine earlier in the motorcade. Mrs. Kennedy was wearing sunglasses at the time.

Around noon the motorcade from Love Field approached her and, "... She took one snapshot of the President just as he raised his hand



Mrs. Ashmore captures a blurry view of the presidential limousine on its way to the hospital, a poignant contrast to her earlier photo.

to brush some hair from his face." Believing she had not obtained a good photo, Mrs. Ashmore traveled to the west side of Stemmons Freeway on the service road across from

the Trade Mart, where she knew he was scheduled to arrive. At about 12:35 she saw the President's car approaching at a high rate of speed, and she took a picture as it sped by. Seeing the car traveling up a hill towards Parkland Hospital, she knew something was wrong, a fact which was confirmed when she got into her car and turned on the radio.⁸

Mrs. Ashmore's color slide of the President's limousine racing down the service road towards Harry Hines Boulevard and Parkland Hospital is a blurry image in which the Lincoln convertible with presidential and national flags straight out against the onrush of air can be discerned at the front hood of the vehicle, while Secret Service Agent Clint Hill sticks up half in and half out of the back seat, unable to do anything but hope the driver, William Geer, will get the huge, powerful vehicle quickly to its new destination. The Lincoln is passing an 18-wheel trailer-truck on its right. The driver in the elevated cab, if he had time to notice the car to his lower left, could probably not grasp that he was being passed by the assassinated chief executive of his country. At the left background of the slide one sees what appears to be a few white helmeted motorcycle cops, with at least one and possibly more three-wheeled cycles in the area of the Trade Mart.⁹

Mrs. Gewertz was not interested in still photos, however, as her expanding project was focusing only on film sequences. She was also not the only one who had located movie clips of the motorcade. Wyman Parr, owner of Glendale Camera Shop on South Marsalis, though not having seen the motorcade, did through his business know some four men who had taken movies, and was beginning to coordinate their film sequences, while at the same time attempting to locate other amateur photographers. By January both groups became aware of the existence of one another. Jules Spiegel had heard about Mrs. Gewertz's efforts in the middle of December, and at the end of the month was also called by Parr, while Richard Allen, who had turned over his film to Parr, was contacted by Gewertz in January. Allen suggested Mrs. Gewertz get in touch with Parr. German native Rudolph Brenk, a general supervisor at Exline-Lowdon Company and vice-president of the Camera Guild of Texas, an 8mm camera club, had also taken some five to six feet of film of the motorcade at Harwood and Ross Streets. In February Mrs. Gewertz had located him and asked if he would be interested in a film exchange. Following a viewing of the Gewertz collected films, Brenk told Mrs. Gewertz that due to the number of films shown to him and their quality, he was not interested at that time. Shortly thereafter Brenk was called by Parr, of whom he might have already been aware, who asked him to look at Parr's collection. According to Brenk, he told both Parr and Gewertz that he would agree to join the venture if the two groups could get together and combinè all the film clips. Brenk appears to have been a catalyst in the project, as he had experience in editing and film processing. At some point between January and February, Mrs. Gewertz felt that from the reaction she was receiving about putting together the film clips, such a combined film might have popular public appeal to warrant its being marketed. Following some serious friction and disagreements between the two groups, by March 18 an agreement had been hammered out. Eighteen, including six who had not taken film themselves, formed a group called

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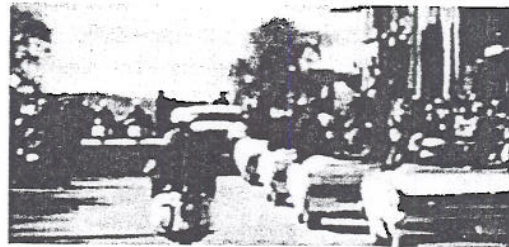
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the "Dallas Cinema Associates, Inc." The 18 members would share equally in any profit made from the sale of copies of the film. Brenk was president, Boren vice-president, and Mrs. Hays secretary. The members turned over their original clips to Brenk for editing, and he combined what he believed to be the valuable portions of each. Adding several subtitles, he created a film of approximately 175 feet with a running time of 12 minutes 50 seconds. The film was then sent to Technicolor, Inc., in Burbank, California, for further processing to achieve more unified shading and coloring. The group made a contract with Sanger-Harris Department Stores, allowing their exclusive rights of sale in the Dallas area for a one-month trial period, and according to plan the film was to be ready for sale at \$24.95 by the middle of June.¹⁰

Titled *DCA Presents/President John F. Kennedy's Final Hour/Dallas, Texas, Nov. 22, 1963*. ©1964, the film included coverage by three amateurs at Love Field, three along Lemon Avenue, one at Turtle Creek Boulevard, three on Cedar Springs Road, two on Harwood, four on Main Street, and two at Dealey Plaza, one taken after the shooting. Scenes were also included of part of the motorcade going to Parkland, an ambulance leaving Parkland carrying the President's body, scenes of the assassination site the following day, shots of newspaper headlines, and the garage entrance to the Dallas Police Station at the time of



A zoom film sequence, possibly taken by Richard Stewart, looking westerly down Main Street towards the Plaza. The two cycles in the background locate the President's car, while in the right foreground are three camera cars and a congressional car.

Oswald's shooting. A commentary was to be included with each film, partially attempting to justify the commercial production of it, partially defending Dallas's name, and partially explaining how the film came about. A portion of the text read:

After the tragic numbing hours of November 22, 1963, and its fateful aftermath had settled into its place in history, a pall of self-recrimination, misconceptions, and unjust accusations still lingered in the minds and hearts of people in this country and abroad.

Foremost amidst this background of suspicion was the blemishing of the city of Dallas and its citizens for the supposed hostility toward the person of the President and his entourage. Having witnessed the exact opposite of this in an unprecedented show of warmth and affection towards the President, his wife Jacqueline . . . a group of citizens endeavored to gather a photographic record of this particular event that would best illustrate what they saw and to show the world

the pleasant warmth and enjoyment that surrounded the President on this, his last hour on earth.

Upon investigation, it was found that the news media had no documentary film on the motorcade itself, . . . Thus it was that the only available filmed record of the Dallas motorcade was that taken by amateur movie-makers along the route of travel.

After an exhaustive search was made to locate people who had taken movie film of this particular event, enough film was found to tell a coherent, poignant story of November 22, 1963, when a President and a city had a rendezvous with history.¹¹

Marketed in Dallas for a time, Wolper Productions, a subsidiary of Metromedia, Inc., bought rights to this film and edited and produced a 16mm version. Although it is unclear how many copies of the film sold, the local marketing of the film was not a huge success, and a number of the shareholders lost interest in the project, while others had disagreements concerning the whole business. By 1966 Brenk was no longer associated with DCA, or the business venture.¹²

So much is known about this group of amateur film makers, their cameras and what they filmed, primarily because the FBI contacted and interviewed most of them. The FBI's interest developed through two different sources, one a local TV representative, and the other from one of the amateur film makers.

On April 10, 1964, Eddie Barker, News Manager of KRLD-TV, informed the Dallas FBI that he had obtained a copy of the group's film, and that it was made up of film clips taken by Dallas citizens of the Kennedy visit and scenes outside the Dallas Police Station on November 24, 1963. According to the language of the FBI report concerning Barker, he told the agents that upon running the film he noted the group, "had failed to obtain film taken at the scene of the assassination on November 22, 1963." Barker obtained a black-and-white copy of the film for the FBI on April 13, and an agent field report states, "A review of same fails to reveal any pertinent film taken at the time of the assassination of President Kennedy. . . ."¹³ One of the DCA film sequences, however, had been taken at Dealey Plaza just prior to and following the assassination. The photographer was Johnny Martin, a man whose identity had been previously known by the FBI.

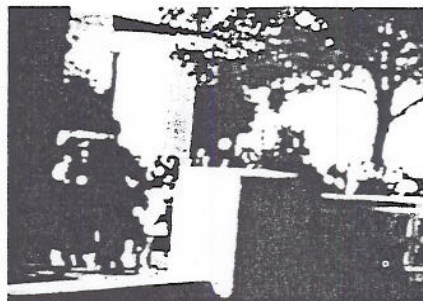
John Martin, Jr., was a 58-year-old native of Minnesota who worked as Superintendent of Safety at the Post Office Terminal Annex at 207 South Houston Street on the south edge of Dealey Plaza. Like many of the annex employees, Martin had decided to view the President's motorcade, and took his 8mm DeJur movie camera with him to work that Friday. At about 12:10 Martin left his fifth floor office and walked the short distance to the west side of Houston Street, a few feet north of Main Street. When the motorcade arrived at the corner of Main and Houston, Martin began filming as the presidential limousine turned north on Houston Street. As the limousine passed his position, Martin then scurried up Houston to the northern end of the reflecting pool

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adjacent to Elm Street and opposite the front entry to the Texas School Book Depository Building. Martin took a fleeting view of the car going in front of the Depository on Elm Street, and after he had stopped filming, he heard a report. As he related to Canadian researcher David Hawkins in a 1979 interview, "... and the shot came over my head, and I looked around to see who was throwing a firecracker. Then a few seconds later there were two more shots." Martin recalls the spacing of the shots to have been, "One shot then a space of time, then two more rapidly."



Filming over the north reflecting pool, Martin picks up a fleeting glimpse of the President's limousine on Elm. Ten-year-old Rosemary Willis is running to the left.

Shortly thereafter Martin recalls, "A couple came running up near me and said, 'Duck, because they're shooting at us!'" Martin resumed his filming in time to take movies of the motorcade camera cars traveling down towards the underpass, some of the car occupants taking pictures of the activity in the direction of the grassy knoll.¹⁴

Martin's initial reaction was that the shots had originated from the Texas School Book Depository. Chaos broke out in the Plaza and some motorcade cameramen, as well as police, initially concentrated on the grassy area on the north side of Elm Street, where the Newman family had fallen to the ground at the sound of the shots. Martin, like scores of others, ran towards the knoll area; Martin, in the words of the FBI report, "... thinking that perhaps the person who fired the shots had left the building and was being pursued by the police." He related to researcher Hawkins, "... I ran over there then and asked a man I found later was a Treasury Department [man] — I said, 'Why are they all running up here?' He says it seems like someone was chasing someone up here. When I saw him, he was right on top of the hill behind the gang that was running up there. I walked up part way and then turned around and came back, and told a policeman that they ought to surround the building there [Texas School Book Depository] because I think whoever shot was still in the building. I know that definitely that first shot came from over my head, and I figured that's the one that got him. So I asked this officer, and said, 'You better surround this building and not let anyone get out of here.'"¹⁵

Martin remained near the Book Depository for some ten minutes taking film of activities in front of the building, including witness Charles Brehm being interviewed, cops holding shotguns, views of Houston and Elm Streets including the entrance to the Book Depository, and a clip showing 16-year-old Amos Lee Euins, who had seen a man fire from the building. Euins was driven away on the back of a police motorcycle for questioning. Martin then walked back to the annex and phoned his wife, telling her about what he had witnessed.¹⁶

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Martin had mentioned, as recorded in his FBI interview, that while in the vicinity of the knoll area, ". . . He stopped and talked to a man who he presumes was a Secret Service agent. . . ." Martin was not alone in recounting the presence of a Secret Service agent, as several others mention that fact in their testimonies. Many critics have used these statements, coupled with the knowledge that no agents in the motorcade remained at the shooting scene, to strongly suggest that the agent encountered was a "phony" and possibly an assassin using fake ID to disguise his true purpose.

Most of these incidents can probably be explained as a mistaken or presumed identity on the part of the spectator. Everyone knew about the President's civilian-clothed Secret Service, who always shadowed his every step, and it was not uncommon for many people to presume that non-uniformed officials around the President might be these special protectors. Prior to the motorcade, Arnold Rowland had seen a man in a window of the Texas School Book Depository holding a rifle with a telescopic sight. When asked later by Secret Service Agent Forrest Sorrels why Rowland had not told an officer at the time what he had spotted, Rowland explained, "I just thought he was a Secret Service man."¹⁷

There were many civilian-dressed protective or investigative personnel around the motorcade route and after the shooting at Parkland Hospital and Dealey Plaza. Released estimates mention that on-duty personnel for the motorcade included 40 Dallas Police Department plainclothes personnel, 16 Texas Department of Public Safety plainclothesmen, and 14 from the Sheriff's Office. After the shooting, many others not specifically assigned to the motorcade protection streamed into the Plaza area from nearby buildings, as did at least one Army Intelligence Corps Special Agent. It is not too incredible, given the intense excitement at the time, that some people assumed many of these civilian officials were Secret Service. FBI agents, carrying their commission books as ID as well as at least one CIA agent, are known to have quickly gone to Parkland Hospital. Other FBI agents arrived at Dealey Plaza. For a civilian to assume plainclothes officers were Secret Service was thus possibly a very human assumption that day.¹⁸

The testimony of Dallas Police Officer Joe M. Smith, however, causes a wrinkle in this explanation. When questioned by Warren Commission staff attorney Wesley Liebler, Smith testified that when he reached the parking lot behind the knoll where there were various people, ". . . I pulled my pistol from my holster, and I thought, this is silly, I don't know who I am looking for, and I put it back. Just as I did, he showed me that he was a Secret Service agent. . . . He saw me coming with my pistol and right away he showed me who he was."¹⁹

Although the White House and vice-presidential protective detail remained with the presidential party, S.A.I.C. Sorrels had six special agents in his Dallas office. Sorrels, who was riding in the lead car of the motorcade, returned to the School Book Depository after the President was stretchered into the hospital, arriving at the shooting scene within 20 minutes. Sorrels had six other agents assigned to the Dallas Field Office, some of whom might have been in the vicinity of the Plaza area shortly after the shooting. Their

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whereabouts are not identified in official released records, except for Special Agent Robert Stewart, who after the President's death returned to the office, ". . . to correlate activities of other agents."²⁰

One final telling bit of information is that Deputy Constable Seymour Weitzman, upon hearing the shots while standing at the corner of Main and Houston Streets, ran over to the railroad yard behind the knoll and testified to having seen other officers and ". . . Secret Service as well. . . ." Shortly thereafter Weitzman was given a piece of red material found in the street, which he turned over, ". . . to one of the Secret Service men and I told them it should go to the lab because it looked to me like human bone. I later found out it was supposedly a portion of the President's skull." Weitzman's specimen had thus apparently been given to a verified official, whether or not he was a Secret Service agent.²¹

Thus, though the identity of the "Secret Service agent," mentioned and identified as such by some witnesses, cannot be identified as to a specific individual or individuals, enough in the way of alternative explanations are possible to show this incident as quite possibly of no major importance — just mistaken identity.

Meanwhile, after phoning his wife from his office, John Martin returned to the School Book Depository area at about 12:50. By this time he had used up the first 25 feet of his film roll. "I turned the film over and I tested it and it seemed all right, and I put it back together and I started taking more pictures, and I thought I had all 50 feet. . . ." Later when at home Martin, ". . . took it out of my camera and came to find out there was 20 to 25 feet left in there, and there was a crimp in the film. That's something I have never had an experience with before."²²

Martin had remained in the Dealey Plaza area for about 2½ hours, roaming the vicinity and talking with people. He made note of what he described as a bullet mark on the concrete pad of a sewer cover on the Elm Street infield grass area and recalls, ". . . I told the officer you better get your boss down here to check this thing out, because that will show where the bullet came from." This is the site Officer Foster and others examined following the shooting. Photographers Jim Murray, William Allen and others had made pictures of the scene.

Some time after the shooting, while standing about 50 feet north of Commerce Street on the west side of Houston, Martin saw a black-and-white Checker Cab traveling south on Houston Street. In 1979 Martin recalled concerning the cab's passenger, "He was not very far from me when he got in the taxi cab. I took the picture, but that's the part that doesn't come out. He had a kind of a black sweater on, I remember that, and his hair-do, I specially remember how he combed his hair. What I saw was kind of bushy and combed up high. And [he] turned around and looked at me rather intently, wondering what I was doing, and I was taking the pictures." In his FBI report of late March, Martin described the man as a white male in his early 20s, bareheaded and wearing a dark shirt which appeared to have vertical broken pinstripes. Martin told the FBI that at the time, ". . . the thought raced through his mind that 'Wouldn't it be funny if he were the assassin?'" The report goes on further to state that Martin, ". . . believed

from pictures that he saw subsequently in the newspapers and on television, that this male was Lee Harvey Oswald."²³

While in the Plaza area Martin had spoken with a number of people, and this is probably how one of the local "stringer" representatives of *LIFE* Magazine, who had quickly begun to canvas for potential photographers to use in their pictorial magazine, heard of Martin's film. When Martin arrived home shortly before 5:00 p.m., his son told him that representatives of the magazine had called and were interested in contacting him.

In 1979 Martin recollected that a man named Hershorne came out to his home. This is most likely Sheldon Hershorne, a free-lance photographer whose work was often circulated through Black Star Photo Agency, and who may also have been helping out the local *LIFE* stringers. Martin agreed to turn over his undeveloped film to Patsy Swank, *LIFE*'s Dallas representative, who in turn gave it to Richard Billings, Bureau Chief from *LIFE*'s Miami office, who arrived in Dallas late Friday afternoon and set up operations at the Adolphus Hotel. This undeveloped film was then sent to New York City for development and review.²⁴

Although *LIFE* Magazine found out about and had acquired the Martin film, no law enforcement agency was aware of its existence. It remained the case until the first week in December, when Martin was discussing the events with a friend who also worked on the fifth floor of the Terminal Annex, Harry D. Holmes. Holmes was a postal inspector who had watched the assassination and chaotic aftermath from the bird's-eye view of a window in his office overlooking Dealey Plaza. Holmes, while using binoculars, had heard the three reports and watched the President slump in his car and Mrs. Kennedy climb out onto the trunk. He also had taken part in the post-assassination investigation, as Oswald had taken out Post Office Box #6225 in the Post Office Building on November 1, and had also purchased there a P.O. Money Order for \$21.45 to buy a rifle. Holmes had his men locate the original P.O. stub for the money order. Then on the morning of November 24, Holmes had been invited by Police Captain Will Fritz to sit in on an interrogation of Lee Oswald prior to his being moved to the County Jail. It was after that interrogation, when Oswald was being led to a vehicle transferring him to the County Jail, that he was gunned down by Jack Ruby. Martin related that while discussing the events of that weekend with Holmes, Martin told him about his film. ". . . And I told him, 'They don't even know I've got this film. I wonder if I should tell them.' So he picked up the phone and told the FBI I had it."²⁵

On December 3 Martin was contacted by the FBI. He told the agent on the phone that he possibly had obtained movies of the Texas School Book Depository Building, and that he had given the film over to *LIFE*. On December 9, two special agents reviewed the developed film in New York and reported, "A review of the film revealed no pertinent details which would aid Dallas investigation." On December 17 the film was forwarded to FBI Headquarters in Washington, where a copy was made, and the original film was sent back to *LIFE* on December 22. At that point the FBI lost interest in the film and except for a very cursory statement being recorded noting

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Martin's being present at the scene of the assassination, the Bureau did no further follow-up.²⁶ *LIFE*, with its possession and publication of the graphic frames from the Abraham Zapruder film of the assassination, also had little interest in the Martin movie, and returned it to him around February.

Sometime in February Martin was contacted by Wyman Parr concerning putting together strips of film taken by amateur photographers of the events, and when the DCA was incorporated on March 18, 1964, Martin became a member. According to Martin, quite a bit of his film was not used in the DCA print.

Aware of the creation of the President's Commission on the Assassination and its field workers in Dallas, and not having had any contact with investigators since December, Martin contacted Dallas U.S. Attorney Barefoot Sanders about his having been on the scene and his being positive the shots had come from the Depository Building. Sanders notified Commission representatives who in turn indicated they would not interview Martin if the FBI desired to interview him.

Dallas A.S.A.C. Kyle Clark notified FBI Headquarters about this communication from the Commission. It is apparent that the local FBI was not enthusiastic concerning the call or what they perceived to be Martin's making it sound as if they had not followed through on him. In an internal FBI memo of late March, Assistant Director Al Rosen reported to Assistant to the Director Alan Belmont, "Martin alleged he had never been interviewed. . . . Martin was previously contacted on 12/3/63 by an agent of our Dallas office in connection with some movie film Martin took of the assassination scene. Martin stated he had already turned the film over to a representative of *LIFE* Magazine. At this time Martin furnished no additional information or gave any indication he had any additional information relating to the assassination. Subsequent inquiry made by us has established Martin's film was of absolutely no use to our investigation. . . . A.S.A.C. Clark stated that Martin, like many others, is apparently now 'recalling' pertinent facts in view of the presence of staff members of the Commission in Dallas. *ACTION: In view of the request Dallas was instructed to interview Martin for full details regarding his alleged pertinent data and to appraise him of the fact he had been previously contacted by our office.*"²⁷

The memo, quite sarcastic in tone, is also self-serving in attempting to discredit the motives of a witness while making it sound like the FBI had done its investigation as thoroughly as possible in December. Available records indicate no real interview was made in December, only the "contact" by telephone made by an agent concerning the whereabouts of Martin's film.

On March 31 Martin was interviewed by Agents Petrakis and Raymond. The interview resulted in the typing of two separate reports, one dealing with Martin's recollections of the assassination itself, and the other with facts regarding the DCA film, in which Martin listed names, addresses, and phone numbers of shareholders in the corporation.²⁸

An Airtel to Washington from the Dallas Field Office on April 2 enclosed the reports and a statement that ". . . The individuals mentioned as being members of the

above referred to corporation will not be interviewed." This Airtel was soon followed by a directive on April 6 from "Director, FBI" that ". . . It is essential that these individuals, if not already interviewed, be interviewed, particularly if they have any knowledge whatsoever regarding the assassination of President Kennedy. It is pointed out any of these individuals who allegedly took photographs of the presidential motorcade would appear to be logical individuals for interview. . . . You should also make efforts to review the film allegedly being produced by this corporation to determine if it has any pertinence to the inquiry being conducted by the President's Commission."²⁹

The instructions were clear and could not be ignored. With whatever work load the Dallas office was under, they now had to interview a large group of amateur film makers. One gets the distinct feeling when looking over these memos and communications, that the Dallas office resented Martin's going to others about his information, as it indirectly criticized the FBI's earlier performance. As a result of their new interviews, they now had to open the fact-gathering even wider. A note on one FBI document, though true enough, indicates a personal lashing out at these DCA people by stating, "This appears to be a business venture capitalizing on the fortuitous location of these individuals on fateful day."³⁰ It seems to this author that the only reason these people were being interviewed was the fact that this venture was going public and the Bureau wanted to cover itself against possible later criticism of not conducting a thorough investigation.

In any event, as a result of the directive, FBI agents collected a very thorough set of interviews outlining the witnesses' stories, locations, cameras and film data. These reports were generally more complete and rich in detail than what was done with the photographers who were actually at and filming the assassination scene in Dealey Plaza.

Following Martin's interview on March 31, Agents Petrakis and Switzer began a plodding process of locating, interviewing, and writing up their findings regarding the people associated with the DCA film. Twenty-three interviews were conducted between April 4 and May 21, 1964, during which information on 18 separate film sequences was gathered. Eight people who did not take any film, including parents, husbands or wives of film makers, or people who had secured rights of others who had actually made the film, were interviewed. Five of those interviewed who had made film were not partners in the DCA corporation, while three who had actually filmed were not interviewed, although information about them was gathered. Personal stories were sometimes also recorded, such as Joe C. Brown, who brought his son to Love Field in order to see and film the President. Brown reminisced that as a Marine in World War II during an assault on an enemy island in the Coral Sea, his 50-foot lighter landing craft was knocked out of commission. The 13 men aboard were at the mercy of the sea for three days when a Navy torpedo boat, PT-109, answered their distress signal. Within 30 minutes they were rescued by a destroyer. Brown and the other men aboard owed their lives to Lt. John Kennedy and his PT boat crew, and ". . . It was because of this that he kept his boy out of school and brought him to Love Field with him, so he would have the opportunity to see President John Fitzgerald Kennedy."³¹ It was also noted among the

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various interviews that Wyman Parr, the owner of the Glendale Camera Shop, and one of the coordinators of the film group, knew Jack Ruby, "... as a speaking acquaintance from infrequent visits to Ruby's club." Charles Rhodes, another DCA partner and head of stock at Sanger-Harris camera department, had twice repaired Ruby's personal Polaroid camera.³²

Besides Martin, the only other amateur film maker in the DCA group who had taken any films of the assassination scene on November 22, was Ernest Charles Mentasana. A 45-year-old owner of a local grocery, on that Friday Mentasana and an employee traveled to the intersection of Turtle Creek Road and Cedar Springs Road at about 11:40. Mentasana took about 10 feet of film of the motorcade with his Wollensak camera with 1.9 lens as the President's car went by at about 12:10. After dropping the employee back at the store, Mentasana drove to the Katy Railroad Freight Depot near the Texas School Book Depository in order to pick up some previously purchased salvaged foodstuffs. While there he learned of the assassination, and still having his camera with him, Mentasana took several feet of "... the turmoil in and around the Depository Building." Mentasana joined the group of spectators who were standing on the west side of the Dal-Tex Building. Facing Houston Street and the Book Depository Building across the street, Mentasana and the others watched the high profile police activity. Officers carrying shotguns stood in the street, many looking up at the Book Depository and most pointing their weapons so that they faced up at an angle from their bodies. A short clip features two police officers on the seventh floor east side fire escape of the Book Depository.³³

One of Mentasana's film clips has become embroiled in controversy. Sometime around 1:00 he filmed a group of three police officers and several others in civilian clothes huddled together, most with their backs to Mentasana. They are in the east side of Houston Street between two parked cars. Across the street another parked car and the bottom floor of the Book Depository can be seen, the southeast corner facing Houston Street just out of frame at the left. The men are in animated discussion. One of the uniformed officers holds a long gun with its butt resting on his left hip and the barrel projected in a 45° angle from his body.³⁴

The center of attention in the film clip is directed towards the people within the circle and not at the weapon which is physically outside the circle. At the time the DCA film was spliced together, Rudolph Brenk, possibly not knowing that many cops had prominently displayed long-barreled weapons on Houston Street, apparently thought this to be the assassination weapon. Making the DCA film as complete a story as possible, Brenk added a white-lettered lay-over caption to this part of the film reading, "THE ASSASSIN'S RIFLE." At the time of the film release, no one gave the caption more than curious notice, assuming it to be pictures of the Oswald rifle. In 1967 photographic researcher Richard Sprague came to the realization that this could not have been the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle. It was found later and its travels outside the Book Depository were known. If the rifle was not the one discovered on the sixth floor, then many critics of the government investigation felt it must be a second assassination weapon which had



A frame from the sequence filmed by Ernest Mentasana on Houston Street and later identified in the DCA film with an incorrect caption

been found. The discovery must have been hushed up and the weapon made to disappear as part of a masterful and wide-ranging conspiracy. If there were two possible explanations to a question relating to the case — one simple and logical and the other complicated and incredible — many critics would typically go with the latter explanation. Soon unsubstantiated stories from nebulous or second-hand sources spoke of a rifle having been found on the roof of the Book Depository.³⁵

Though many people worked themselves up to imagine scenarios for revealing the fact of this second gun, there is a simpler explanation. The officers were questioning someone now unknown or discussing the situation at hand. This happened on numerous occasions, several of them filmed that day. One cop still carried a weapon as many of his fellow officers had at that time around 1:00. As critics have noted, the weapon has neither a telescopic sight nor a sling, and the thick barrel seems to protrude seven or so inches past the stock. Comparing these frames with an assortment of still photos made by photographers William Allen and Jim Murray, the pictures show the pump shotguns carried by officers to be carried in the same manner as the one seen in the Mentasana clip, which compare very obviously to these police weapons, even to the end nub seen on some of these shotguns.³⁶ (See photo, page 503.)

If any unusual activity had taken place around the confines of the Book Depository for the first two hours following the assassination, all the photographers, still and movie, would have made a bee-line to the locale to shoot it. Several of the photographers later recalled that if something practically moved, they photographed it. Such was the case with the detaining of Larry Florer and numerous other witnesses and the removal of evidence including the rifle from the sixth floor of the Depository Building.

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This sequence does not show a mysterious second rifle, but rather incidentally pictures a cop holding a police-issue shotgun.

Mentesana's completed film was sent to Fox Film Company in Dallas for processing. In early January, Mentesana was contacted by a co-member of the Dallas 8mm Movie Club, Albert Bunnell, who told him of Mrs. Gewertz's interest in gathering together film sequences. Subsequently Mentesana joined with the forming DCA. He died from a heart attack in 1969.³⁷

Except for the Martin film, none of the sequences would appear to aid in the investigation. A copy of the edited film sequences, however, should at least be evaluated in Washington. In early July Warren Commission General Counsel J. Lee Rankin wrote to the DCA Post Office box requesting the availability of the film and if in the preparation of the film, they discovered any film taken at the scene of the assassination, other than those taken by Zapruder, Nix, and Muchmore. Rudy Brenk responded to the letter through the U.S. Attorney's office in Dallas with a copy of the film and his statement that so far as he knew, there were no other persons who took film at the scene of the assassination. Brenk was not asked about the unedited strips of film from which he made the edited reel, and although probably only Martin's original film would include scenes of the Dealey Plaza area around the time of the assassination, apparently no one in the government picked up on this to attempt to review Martin's complete film at that time.

Rankin requested Hoover at the FBI to have the DCA as well as the Wolper Production version of the film, which was also requested and provided by Wolper, examined.³⁸ Hoover reported to Rankin that both films had been examined, "... And it was found that it showed very little of the President's motorcade during the firing of the assassination shots." If members of Rankin's staff desired to view the film, they could so advise the FBI. And thus ended the investigation into the DCA.³⁹

The full Martin film sequence remained one of the most obscure of the films taken that day. In 1967 researcher Richard Sprague had a long conversation on the phone with Martin about his film and subsequently was able to view it in its entirety. Sprague's notes about the film indicate the first sequence was made by Martin some 50 feet from the south curb of Elm Street while he was on the Houston Street sidewalk. The second sequence shows the President's car traveling down Elm in front of the Book Depository prior to the first shot. Sequence three, taken after the shots and lasting some 1 to 2 seconds, pictures the first camera car, followed by Martin's resuming filming again a few seconds later with the second camera car in view. Sprague's notes indicate the scene shows, "three or four men, a puff of smoke clearly drifting from the grassy knoll. One man is in the pergola shelter, while three or four are running between the wall and fence towards the RR tracks and then along the base of a longer fence at the top of the slope. Three camera cars are seen with two men in the second camera car, taking pictures towards the running men." The final motorcade sequence shows the same three cars further down Elm Street, the grassy slope area closer to the underpass and a portion of the fence at the top of the slope.⁴⁰

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In his third book on the subject, prolific self-publishing researcher Harold Weisberg, who believed the entire government investigation to be a whitewash, goes on to quote Sprague's interpretation of the film content:

Dick believes this suppressed film shows five men on the grassy knoll and in apparent flight after the fatal shot. He believes that it also shows men present and well hidden at points from which they could have fired without being seen by the naked eye. The "puff of smoke" about which witnesses testified, which the Commission depreciated, is quite apparent and can be seen floating away.

Dick's examination of the suppressed film shows clearly that there were professional cameramen in three vehicles of the motorcade. Many of them continue to take pictures as the cars passed the assassination scene. These pictures, whose contents might well mean nothing to the men looking for news interest, can be of an estimable value in photographic intelligence, to those familiar with what happened and who know what to look for. They show large numbers of people in the area, many identifiable, and where they went. They show, among the many other important things, the man in the doorway in the Altgens film, from a different angle, and after the lapse of a short interval. He is then in a different relationship with other people and objects in the picture.⁴¹

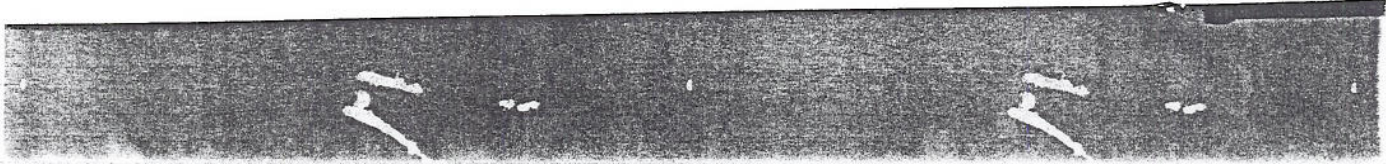
No scientific study has been made of the film concerning the so-called "puff of smoke" and the activities and actions of those recorded in the film has only been the subject of less than objective visual examination by critics.

Except for the edited sequences in the DCA film, Martin's movie has seldom been seen or individual frames published. Kept in a safety deposit box, the film which Martin is not sure is his original or a copy, is seldom looked at by its owner, who has given his sons responsibility for it. Occasionally Martin was invited to participate in broadcast events concerning the assassination, but he had no interest. He was called to New Orleans during the Garrison investigation, but was never called to the stand as a witness. Concerning the shots he had heard back in 1963, by 1979 Martin, possibly being swayed by new and vocal theories, had re-examined his previous statements and told an interviewer, "I'm doubtful now that there were only the shots that came from the sixth floor. I think now — I'm beginning to wonder if there weren't some from up in the hill."⁴²

CHAPTER NOTES

1. *Consumer Bulletin Annual*, 1963/64, 9/1963, v. 38, p. 59.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
3. *Consumer Reports Buying Guide*, 12/1963, v. 28, no. 12, p. 311-314.

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4. Ibid., p. 307-309.
5. FBI interview of Mrs. Irving Gewertz, 5/22/1964, CR 1066, p. 56-57; FBI interview of Irving Gewertz, 5/22/1964, CR 1066, p.52-53.
6. Ibid.; FBI interview of Mrs. Frances Hayes, 4/14/1964, CR 1066, p. 16-17; FBI interview of Clarence Hayes, 4/22/1964, CR 1066, p.18; FBI interview of Bryant Boren, 4/22/1964, CR 1066, p.28; FBI interview of Richard Stewart, 4/29/1964, CR 1066, p. 32.
7. Gewertz, op. cit.; Hayes, op. cit.; FBI interview of Albert Bunnell, 5/18/1964, CR 1066, p.39-40; FBI interview of George Kincaid, 4/15/1964, CR 1066, p. 13.
8. FBI interview of Mrs. O. B. Ashmore, 6/19/1964, CR 1245, p. 52; Letter, Stewart Yeakel to Trask, 5/7/1990.
9. Evelyn Ashmore 35mm transparency, 11/22/1963.
10. FBI interview of Rudolf Brenk, 5/21/1964, CR 1066, p. 49-51; FBI interview of Wyman Parr, 4/22/1964, CR 1066, p. 23-24; *Dallas Cinema Associates Presents John F. Kennedy's Final Hour*, c. 1964.
11. *DCA . . . Final Hour*, ibid.; Irving Gewertz, op. cit. p. 54-55.
12. Harold Weisberg, *Whitewash II* (Dell paperback), p. 242; Telephone interview of Johnny Martin Jr., by Dave Hawkins, tape no. 115, 2/27/1979.
13. FBI interview of Eddie Barker, 4/14/1964, CR 1066, p. 10.
14. Telephone interview of Martin, op. cit.; FBI interview of John Martin Jr., [interview A] 4/2/1964, CD 897, p. 51-53.
15. Ibid.
16. *DCA . . . Final Hour*, op. cit.; *Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*, v. 2, p. 201, 205.
17. *Hearings*, op. cit., v. 7, p.351.
18. Ibid., v. 18, p. 794-795, 798-799; Philip Melanson, *Politics of Protection*, p. 166; FBI interview of James W. Powell, 1/13/1964.
19. *Hearings* op. cit., v. 7, p. 535.
20. Ibid., v. 7, p. 347; v. 18, p. 797.
21. Ibid., v. 7, p.107.
22. Telephone interview of Martin, op. cit.
23. Ibid.; FBI interview of Martin [interview A], op. cit.
24. Documents obtained from FOIA request #274,211, 10/28/1986, including documents marked "DL 89-43 / CTB:mam" and " 1 / DL 100-10461 / WGB/gm."
25. *Hearings*, op. cit., v. 7, p. 290-298; Telephone interview of Martin, op. cit.
26. Documents obtained from FOIA request, op. cit., including documents marked "DL 89-43 / NY 89-75 / NPO / RE: Movies taken by John Martin," "Memorandum /To Director, FBI / From: SAC, New York / 12/17/1963," "SAC, New York / Director, FBI / 12/27/1963."
27. Documents obtained from FOIA request, op. cit., including documents marked "1 / DL 100-10461 / RPG/cms," "Memorandum / To Mr. Belmont / From A. Rosen / 3/25/1964."
28. FBI interview of Martin [interview A] op. cit.; FBI interview of Martin [interview B] 4/2/1964, CR 1066, p. 7-9.
29. Documents obtained from FOIA request, op. cit., including documents marked "Airtel / To: Director / From: SAC, Dallas / 4/2/1964," "Airtel / To: SAC, Dallas / From: Director, FBI / 4/6/1964."
30. Documents obtained from FOIA request, op. cit., including document marked "NOTE,," n.d.
31. FBI interview of Joe Brown, 5/22/1964, CR 1066, p. 43-45.
32. FBI interview of Parr, op.cit.; FBI interview of Charles Rhodes, 4/22/1964, CR 1066, p. 30-31.
33. FBI interview of Charles Mentasana, 4/28/1964, CR 1066, p. 35-36.
34. Mentasana film, 1/22/1963.
35. Ibid.; Joseph Backes, "Rediscovering the DCA Film: President Kennedy's Last Hour," *The Third Decade*, 5/1993, p. 7-8; Robert Sibley, "The Mysterious, Vanishing Rifle of the JFK

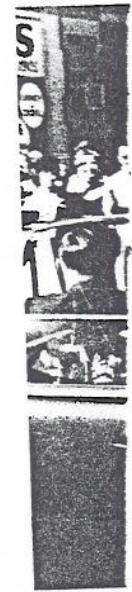
Assassination," *The Third Decade*, 9/1985, p. 16-18; Richard Sprague, "Letter to the Editor," *The Third Decade*, 11/1985, p. 21-22.

- 36. See various Allen photos made of officers on Houston Street as well as Murray Roll 1, #32-33, 35, 36, Roll 2, #13-16, 23-24. The print in Roll 1 #36 even shows what could be members of this group including the shotgun toting police officer.
- 37. FBI interview of Montesana, op. cit.; Sibley, op. cit., p. 18.
- 38. Letter, J. Lee Rankin to Dallas Cinema Associates, P.O. Box. 15521, 7/2/1964; Harold Weisberg, *Photographic Whitewash*, p. 252-254.
- 39. *Ibid.*, p. 250-251.
- 40. Richard E. Sprague papers, Georgetown University Library, Washington, D.C., folder 16, "Phone conversation with Johnny Martin, 2/25/1967."
- 41. *Photographic Whitewash*, op. cit., p. 106. Study of the man in the door utilizing the Martin film as well as the Bell and Hughes films by critic and photo expert Robert Groden helped end the controversy as to whether the man was Lee Oswald or another Book Depository employee, Billy Lovelady. The film analysis supported other evidence that it was in fact Lovelady. See *Appendix to Hearings Before the House Select Committee on Assassinations*, v. 6, p. 288-289, 310.
- 42. Telephone interview of Martin, op. cit.



Officer Wise, with police-issue shotgun #202, confers with a superior on the Book Depository front steps.

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