

Excerpts From Rowley Testimony

Special to The New York Times

Following are excerpts from the testimony of James J. Rowley, chief of the United States Secret Service, on June 18, 1964:

CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN — The commission will come to order.

Chief, it is our procedure to read a little statement as to the purpose of the meeting, for the benefit of the witness.

Chief Rowley will be asked to testify with respect to the protective measures taken by the Secret Service in Dallas, changes in such measures made as a result of the Dallas experience, and with regard to the investigation of the assassination and any information he may have respecting the assassination of the President.

J. LEE RANKIN, chief counsel—Was one of the duties of your position as chief of the Service to have general supervision over the trip of President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson to Dallas around November 22, 1963?

A.—Well, that would be part of my job—the general supervision of the trip. The actual direct supervision would have been under the jurisdiction of Mr. Behn, who was in charge of the White House detail.

Q.—Could you describe briefly the nature of Mr. Behn's responsibilities in that work?

A.—Well, it would have been, as mine was in the period I was there, that he was responsible for developing all arrangements with the members of the White House staff, designating the members of the detail to develop advance work, assigning agents to the various shifts, directing their training as it applied to the White House detail, and participating in any event that he thought would be necessary in connection with his work at the White House.

Q.—Did you become familiar with what did happen on that trip, in your position as chief?

MR. ROWLEY—Yes; I was first informed while addressing a graduating class of our Secret Service school on that day. I was summoned by Mr. Behn to the White House, at which time he told me that the President had been shot. He was then at the hospital, and subsequently we were notified that the President had died; that the Vice President would take the oath of office in the airplane at Love Field.

In the meantime, I asked my deputy, who was in his office while I was at the White House, to arrange with the Immigration Service to close the border, Texas being in close proximity to the border. There might have been a conspiracy or something, we didn't want to take any chances. And then I immediately dispatched an inspector from my staff to the Capitol to protect the Speaker, and directed the other activities as we got the information from Dallas.

Q.—Did you learn in connection with the trip when the assassination occurred that certain of the Secret Service agents had been in the press club and what is called the Cellar, at Fort Worth, the night before?

A.—Well, that came to my attention through a broadcast that Mr. Pearson made, that the agents were inebriated the night before at the Fort Worth Press Club. I immediately dispatched Inspector McCann to Fort Worth to investigate the report, and to interview the agents.

Q.—What did you learn?

A.—I learned that there were nine agents involved at the Press Club. And I might say this—the agents on duty throughout that day had no opportunity to eat. When they arrived at Fort Worth, they were informed that there was a buffet to be served at the Fort Worth Club. This is what I ascertained in personal interviews. Upon going over there, they learned there was no buffet, and some of them stayed for a drink. Three, I think, had one scotch, and others had two or three beers. They were in and out—from the time they arrived, I would say roughly around 12:30, until the place closed at 2 o'clock.

Now, after that some of them went to the Cellar. This is a place that does not serve alcoholic beverages. They went there primarily, I think, out of curiosity, because this was some kind of a beatnik place where someone gets up and recites, or plays the guitar.

Q.—Did you learn whether or not there were any violations of the regulations of the Secret Service by these men? A.—Yes; there was a violation. At that time there was a section in our manual in effect that said that during—

Q.—Will you give us first the number? A.—Section 10.

Q.—Is that chapter 1, page 7? A.—Chapter 1, page 7; yes sir.

Q.—Now, will you tell the Commission about what the regulation was?

A.—“The use of liquor. Employees are strictly enjoined to refrain from the use of intoxicating liquor during the hours they are officially employed at their post of duty or when they may reasonably expect that they may be called upon to perform an official duty.”

The one that applies here—“However, all members of the White House detail and special agents cooperating with them on presidential and similar protective assignments are considered to be subject to call for official duty at any time while in travel status. Therefore, the use of intoxicating liquor of any kind, including beer and wine, by members of the White House detail and special agents cooperating with them or by special agents on similar assignments, while they are in a travel status, is prohibited.”

Q.—Can you tell the Commission how many men were involved in these trips to the Press Club and the Cellar, where these things were done? A.—There were 9 men involved at the Press Club, and there were 10 men involved at the Cellar.

Q.—Now, how many men, of those 10 men, were in the Presidential motorcade on the day of the assassination? A.—Four—four men were in the followup car.

THE CHAIRMAN. Who were they?

MR. RANKIN—Do you know their names?

MR. ROWLEY—Yes; Landis, Hill, Ready, and Bennett.

Q.—Did you make any investigation to determine whether or not their violation of the Secret Service regulations had anything to do with the

the car and stand to the right and left, in the same order as their designated positions on the followup car, and screen him. And then the car moves out, slowly, because the rest of the cars have to have an opportunity to follow in the motorcade, so that none lingers behind, or is left behind. And when the agent in the lead car determines that the motorcade is intact and is moving, then he steps up his speed, which is a cue to the Presidential driver to step up his speed, and then they go at a speed consistent with the crowd that is there, and so forth.

Now, upon leaving the airport, if there is a huge crowd there, the men are still on the ground running on the right and left side of the President, both rear and front of the vehicle. After they get out of the crowd, then the men in the front beside the Presidential vehicle drop back and take their positions in the followup car.

This is so that they are not in the way of the men running on the right and left rear. They move back last and have a clear opportunity to jump onboard the followup car in the event the speed of the motorcade is stepped up.

When the motorcade comes to intersections or turns which are always vulnerable points, in that if you make a right turn, that is the closest point for someone to come out, the agents on the right side before reaching that point, will jump off, to be available alongside the President's car in the event someone darts out with some malicious plan.

There have also been times when, innocently, ladies and young people will come out to throw a bouquet of flowers. And then if there is a crowd that is sparse, they return to their position in the followup car.

Now, when they come into a big crowd, they take it on foot, and at a little jog, if necessary.

In some instances, if the crowd continues for a prolonged distance, the agents work together. In other words, there are rear steps on the right and left rear of the Presidential car with handrails. These have two purposes. One, for agents to ride on and to screen the President from anything from above; the second, in a situation like this, to keep an additional man available in case of trouble, and also to alternate with the men to the right rear of the President, who are jogging along warding off the crowd.

MR. RANKIN. Now, what positions did the four men that you referred to that were involved in the press club and the Cellar matter occupy on the day of the assassination?

A.—Well, Mr. Ready occupied the right front, Mr. Landis to his rear—

Q.—What do you mean by right front?

Responsibility of Agent

A.—Right front running board position of the followup car. It was his responsibility or duty to jump off in crowds and to take the position at the right rear of the President's car.

Mr. Landis, if necessary, to jump off if the occasion demanded and take the right



Associated Press

SECURITY CHIEF: James J. Rowley, head of Secret Service in 1963, who testified on conduct of agents.

assassination of the President?

A.—Yes. They performed their duties from the time they departed in the followup car from Love Field until the point of the tragedy in a most satisfactory manner. There was nothing deficient in their actions or their alertness. They went through the heaviest part of downtown Dallas, through the crowds, and performed in an exemplary manner.

Q.—How do you know that? A.—From the reports that I got from their superiors.

Q.—In the work that you did with the White House detail before you became Chief of the Secret Service, did you know the various responsibilities of the White House detail? A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—Did you ever participate in such motorcades yourself? A.—I have; yes, sir.

Q.—How much? A.—Well, I have participated, in rough numbers, over a period of 22 years—roughly, maybe, a thousand or more.

Q.—Will you briefly describe the functions of the Secret Service agents in connection with the President's car?

THE CHAIRMAN—Have you finished this other matter? A.—No; I just wanted to—

THE CHAIRMAN—All right. Go right ahead.

A.—When the President's car leaves the airport or a railroad station or any other location, the agents accompany him to

front of the President's car.

Mr. Hill was on the left front running board of the followup car, and his responsibility was at the rear of the President's car. His position was assigned there because he was in charge of the First Lady's detail, and she was seated on the left side.

And Mr. McIntyre was to his rear on the left running board. So his assignment would have been up to the left front of the President's car, Mr. Bennett was in the rear seat of the followup car.

Q.—Now, how can you tell that the fact that they were out as they were the night before and violated the regulations, had nothing to do with the assassination?

A.—Well, based on the reports of my investigating agents and the facts as to how they performed at the time of the tragedy. Mr. Hill, who was on the left side, responded immediately—as he looked toward the Presidential car, being off the left side, he scanned from left to right, and when he saw there was something happening to the President following a noise, he immediately jumped from his position to get aboard from his side.

Mr. Ready scanned to the right so he was looking away from the President, because he was looking around from the right side. As a consequence, he wasn't aware of what was happening in the front. The car was also going on a turn at that time.

Q.—What about the other two? A.—The other two were watching—they reacted normally—the man on the left side looked to his left rear, and the man, Landis, looked to his right rear.

Q.—Have you done anything to discipline these men for violation of the regulations of the Secret Service?

A.—Well, I did consider what type of punishment would be provided.

Then I also considered the fact that these men in no way had—their conduct had no bearing on the assassination. And, therefore I thought that in the light of history, to place a stigma on them by punishing them at that time, from which inevitably the public would conclude that they were responsible for the assassination of the President—I didn't think this was fair, and that they did not deserve that, with their family and children.

ALLEN W. DULLES, former Director of Central Intelligence—May I ask one question there?

You described the assignment of the four men with respect to the followup car and the President's car. Do they have different assignments with regard to watching what is happening around them, or does that depend on the circumstances in which they are?

A.—Both. When they start off they have a certain area that they have to watch. Like the man in the right front, would naturally watch slightly to the right and in front of him. The fellow on the side, behind him, will watch to the right and rear. In other words, as they are going by a building, he should scan the building. In the meantime, he picks up where the man

in the front has finished. In other words, the scan of the man in the front will cover the building to his front and side; the fellow behind will scan along-side from rear to forward. Their scanning joins. This is the way they are accustomed to doing it.

Q.—Who would cover straight ahead? A.—The man in the front seat has that responsibility.

MR. RANKIN—Chief Rowley, how do you construe subparagraph (c) of your regulation 10 regarding the use of alcoholic liquors?

Regulation Is Read?

THE CHAIRMAN. Will you read it for the record?

MR. RANKIN. Will you kindly read it?

A.—“Violation or slight disregard of the above paragraphs or the excessive or improper use of intoxicating liquor at any time will be cause for removal from the service. In interpreting the words ‘excessive’ and ‘improper,’ slight evidence tending to indicate unusual or questionable conduct will be considered proof that the use of liquor has been improper or excessive. Association with others who drink to excess will be considered as an indication of using more than a moderate amount of liquor. The excuse that liquor was used for medicinal purposes will not be accepted.”

Q.—How do you construe and apply that?

A.—Well, in this instance, it was wrong.

Q.—Now, were these men under this regulation considered to be on travel status, so that they should not be using intoxicating liquor? A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—And there is no question about that in your mind? A.—No, sir.

Q.—Has anything been done to reprimand and cause them to realize that this is a violation of your regulations? A.—They were interviewed by the inspector at the time. The seriousness of the matter was impressed upon them. And I think they recognize the seriousness of their acts.

The men we recruit are men that are college graduates and mature, and we screen them very carefully, particularly before we assign them to the White House detail. They know and we know that they are in a fishbowl 24 hours a day and that, therefore, their conduct is always subject to scrutiny, and so forth, and that they are responsible individuals. Their records have indicated that they have been performing in a high degree. They have worked endless hours of overtime. They are dedicated. And if they were not, they would not be on the detail.

They realize the seriousness of the violation, and I went over it with my special agent in charge. He understands it. And I am quite sure that they all understand it at this time.

REPRESENTATIVE GERALD R. FORD—Mr. Rankin, I don't recall Chief Rowley saying precisely what the reprimands were specifically for these violations of the regulations in this one instance.

You spoke highly of their background, and you spoke very high in their praise. But I did not hear what reprimand, if any, had actually been lodged against them.

MR. A.—There was no reprimand. You are talking about the current thing?

Q.—I am talking about the Dallas trip.

MR. A.—I stated in considering what would be an appropriate punishment at the time, I felt that these men, by their conduct, had no bearing on the assassination of the President in Dallas. That to institute formal punishment or disciplinary action would inevitably lead the public to conclude that they were responsible for the assassination of President Kennedy. I did not think in the light of history that they should be stigmatized with something like that or their families or children. And, for that reason, I took the position that I did.

Q.—So there was no official reprimand or disciplinary action?

MR. A.—No, sir.

Q.—Did you talk to the agents, to indicate and make it plain to them that this was a violation of the regulations?

A.—I talked to some of the agents, as did my inspector at the time, who interviewed each and every one of them.

Q.—And I think the Commission would be interested in whether you can be assured, or assure them that the action you took was sufficient so that this would not happen again.

A.—Well, I am confident that it would not happen again, Mr. Rankin.

Q.—Can you tell us why you think so?

Question on Duty

MR. A.—Because they realize the seriousness of their action. Initially I can understand the situation—they thought they were going for a dinner, buffet, and they got into the place and it wasn't there.

I talked personally with the agents there, and they just thought while they were there they would have a drink. It was one of those situations.

The important thing was that it was pointed out to them this was wrong, this was a violation. These men are young men with futures, they realize the true situation, innocent as they may have seemed to think it was.

But I am quite confident that we will not have a repetition of that.

And in talking to Mr. Behn—I am confident, to, in him—I know that he will see to it that they are well supervised.

Q.—When they are out on a trip of this kind, Chief Rowley, as I understand your regulations, it is understood by the regulations and by the Secret Service that they are on duty all the time—that is, subject to call?

MR. A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—And even though it is late in the evening or they had gone to bed in the early hours of the morning, they could be called to go on duty and perform their responsibility of taking care of the President or the Vice President, or whoever they are charged with; is that right?

MR. A.—That is right.

Q.—So that do they understand that when they are out on that kind of duty, they are subject to call at all times, and anything they do contrary to regulations is a violation, be-

cause they are subject to the call and must be ready at any moment to perform their duties.

Q.—Chief Rowley, will you tell us whether you learned anything about the preparations in Dallas for the visit of the President on November 22?

MR. A.—Yes; I read the report of Special Agent Lawson, who was designated as the advance agent for that visit.

Q.—And do you know that that report has been furnished to us?

MR. A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—A copy of it.

And have you examined it to determine whether it is accurate, as far as you can determine?

MR. A.—It is accurate; yes, sir. Do you have any additions or corrections?

MR. A.—No; I have no corrections to make, sir.

Q.—Were you—are you satisfied, now examining that report, with the manner in which the advance preparations for the trip of the President were handled?

MR. A.—Yes, sir.

The report follows the standard procedure that we have exercised over the years, and in many of the trips we had taken with the late President. He covered everything with the police and all that we have normally on such visits.

Q.—Did you have enough agents at that time to perform the required duties in connection with this trip for both Dallas and the other cities in Texas to be visited?

MR. A.—Well, we never have enough agents for the activities that the President today is engaged in. We draw from the field to supplement or augment the agents from the White House detail. We move the agents from one point to another where we can—particularly in the area of the advance men.

But in Dallas we had sufficient agents with prior experience in Presidential protection who assisted Mr. Lawson in the advance preparations.

Q.—Did you furnish to the Commission a statement of the preparations that were made for the trip?

MR. A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—And that included the various protective activities, did it?

MR. A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—I hand you Commission Exhibit No. 1021, and ask you if that is the report you made in regard to the trip.

MR. A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—Do you have any corrections or additions that you care to make to it?

MR. A.—No, sir.

Q.—Mr. Chairman, I offer in evidence Commission Exhibit No. 1021.

The Chairman.—It may be admitted.

Q.—Would you tell the Commission what your practice was for the Secret Service concerning the route of the motorcade at the time of the assassination—that is, whether you made inspection of adjacent buildings?

MR. A.—At that time, and prior to that time, except for the inaugurations in Washington, and other parades, involving the visit of foreign dignitaries in Washington, in which the President would ride in the motorcade with the head of state,

where we had ample time to make these surveys, we had never conducted on trips out of Washington surveys of this nature. I have here a statement of the conditions that prevailed in Dallas as well as other areas—if I may read this.

Q.—Yes.

A.—“Except for inauguration or other parades involving foreign dignitaries accompanied by the President in Washington, it has not been the practice of the Secret Service to make surveys or checks of buildings along the route of a Presidential motorcade. For the inauguration and certain other parades in Washington where the traditional route is known to the public long in advance of the event, buildings along the route can be checked by teams of law enforcement officers, and armed guards are posted along the route as appropriate. But on out-of-town trips where the route is decided on and made public only a few days in advance, buildings are not checked either by Secret Service agents or by any other law enforcement officers at the request of the Secret Service. With the number of men available to the Secret Service and the time available, surveys of hundreds of buildings and thousands of windows is not practical.

“In Dallas the route selected necessarily involved passing through the principal downtown section between tall buildings. While certain streets thought to be too narrow could be avoided and other choices made, it was not practical to select a route where the President could not be seen from roofs or windows of buildings. At the two places in Dallas where the President would remain for a period of time, Love Field and the Trade Mart, arrangements were made for building and roof security by posting police officers where appropriate. Similar arrangements for a motorcade of 10 miles, including many blocks of tall commercial buildings, is not practical. Nor is it practical to prevent people from entering such buildings or to limit access in every building to those employed or having business there. Even if it were possible with a vastly larger force of security officers to do so, many observers have felt that such a procedure would not be consistent with the nature and purpose of the motorcade to let the people see their President and to welcome him to their city.

“In accordance with its regular procedures, no survey or other check was made by the Secret Service, or by any other law enforcement agency at its request, of the Texas School Book Depository Building or those employed there prior to the time the President was shot.”

Views of President

Q.—Chief, did you write me a letter for the commission on April 22, in which you enclosed the statements of five of your agents in regard to President Kennedy's view about agents riding on the back of the car? A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—I will hand you Commission Exhibit No. 1025, and ask you if that is your transmittal letter with the statements attached.

Q.—Mr. Chairman, I offer in evidence Commission Exhibit No. 1025.

THE CHAIRMAN. It may be admitted.

Q.—Chief Rowley, I should like to have you state for the record, for the commission, whether the action of President Kennedy in making these statements was understood by you or properly could have been understood by the agents as relieving them of any responsibility about the protection of the President.

A.—No, I would not so construe that, Mr. Rankin. The agents would respond regardless of what the President said if the situation indicated a potential danger. The facilities were available to them. They had the rear steps, they would be there as a part of the screen. And immediately in the event of any emergency they would have used them.

Q.—Do you know why there was no one riding on the rear step at the time of the assassination?

A.—From normal practice, based on my own experience over the years, I know that the agent in charge in the front or any experienced agent, who is either on the right front or the left front of the followup car, without being told, will react immediately. If he determines there is a situation here, there is a big crowd, and so forth, he will immediately leave that followup car.

Now, the running board on the followup car has an important place in the setup. It is a much better place to be than on the rear step if you see a situation, and you want to move fast. Suppose someone is coming toward the President's car—you would be surprised how fast you are propelled by jumping off that car, and you are in motion fast, where you can either tackle somebody, or block him or anything like that. So this is an important part. You cannot do that from the rear step of the President's car.

Now, when the agents are in a heavy crowd, as we have been abroad, in places where we had to run, say, for 10 miles alongside the car, agents could stand on the rear steps and screen the President. In addition, there would be agents on the side, protecting him on his right side. The crowd is surging close to him, you are bouncing off the car, and the people, trying to ward them off from touching the President.

After a period of time you are weary. But with the aid of this step, you can be replaced by the agent there, and he takes your place until you revive yourself, and you are acting as a screen.

Now, if the thing gets too sticky, you put the agent right in the back seat, which I have done many times with past Presidents.

When you come out of a big crowd like that, and the crowd is sparse, and it doesn't look like there is a potential danger, you return to the followup car to be ready for any emergency in the event somebody darts across.

In this instance, when the Presidential car was coming toward the freeway and the people were sparse, the men at

some point came back to this car. This is one of the automatic operations, if you will, that the agents respond to. So it wasn't until the first shot was fired that, as I said earlier, Hill had the opportunity to scan from his left to his right, that he saw the President—the action of the President. Then he responded immediately. This is why he got up to the President's car.

Criteria Mentioned

MR. DULLES—May I ask a question there?

You consider that the criteria as now furnished by you to the F.B.I. and other investigative agencies would cover a case like Oswald's? A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—You think they would? A.—Yes, sir.

Q.—You think they understand that? A.—Well, as we stated in the covering letter when we sent this out — we haven't gotten any reaction — we asked for their cooperation and suggestions in connection with such guidelines.

Q.—Defectors are not specifically covered, are they, by your criteria?

A.—Well, they are given to us now. We are being furnished the names of defectors, and they are being investigated, so that their background and history will be furnished to us, and we will be in a position now to determine whether they represent a risk or not.

REPRESENTATIVE HALE BOGGS—May I ask a question there?

Would you have any notion as to why names of defectors were not provided to you prior to November 22?

A.—Yes; under the broad picture, Mr. Congressman, there was no indication that they had made any threat toward the President or members of his family. Whenever there was a threat made, we were furnished promptly by the different agencies the information on the individual's name. And this was done in voluminous reports by the F.B.I., and the other agencies. When they got any information, they would notify the local office, notify their liaison, who notified us by telephone, and confirmed by memorandum. The same obtained with respect to the C.I.A.

Q.—This fellow was interviewed by the F.B.I. several times—he was interviewed in New Orleans when he allegedly had his Fair Play Committee. If my memory serves me correctly, Mrs. Paine was interviewed about him shortly before the visit of the President, after he had gone to work at the Texas School Book Depository. I agree that there had been no indication of a threat on the President's life. But, obviously he was a person in the F.B.I. files who was under some degree of surveillance. It would seem to me strange that the F.B.I. did not transmit this information to the Secret Service.

A.—The F.B.I., Mr. Congressman, are concerned with internal security. And I think their approach was internal security as it related to this individual, whether or not he was a potential recruit for espionage, intelligence, or something like that.

Their concern was talking to him in this vein, in the course of which there was no indication that he bore any malice toward anyone, and particularly to the President of the United States. If someone said that Henry Smith didn't like the President, and we got his file, we would get to the point where you have 3 million names in the file. How effective are you going to be then?

Q.—Well, that is right.

A.—And then you get in the area of civil rights and all, if you start going into individuals—

Q.—And if I remember correctly, there has never been—we have had no testimony from anyone that Oswald ever threatened the President of the United States. Is that correct? A.—That is correct.

SENATOR JOHN SHERMAN COOPER—May I ask a question?

Mr. Rankin asked you several questions. He asked you if you had credible information, which I think was a proper question. But may I ask if you have any information based upon any facts that you know or based upon any information given to you by persons who claim to have personal knowledge, that there were persons engaged in a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy?

A.—I have no such fact, sir.

Q.—I address the same question as to whether you have any information that the killing of President Kennedy had any connection with any foreign power? A.—I have no such information.