

AT THE BOOK DEPOSITORY - RECONSTRUCTION - TIPPIT KILLING

Statements of Witnesses - Mrs. Robert A. Reid, March 25, 1964, 3 H 270-81

Like the little boy who soils his hands every time he checks on a wet paint sign, the Commission ignored all the signs it should have seen about Mrs. Reid and soiled itself seriously, all for no good reason, all without any benefit. It used Mrs. Reid to account for Oswald's movements and time after he was ~~accosted~~ ^{accosted} by Officer Baker and ^{Roy} Truly and before he was allegedly seen on the bus. It didn't have to. Had the staff not been intent upon amassing an overwhelming ^{who} burden of trivia to make an impressive document and give the impression of thoroughness and devotion ^{ion} to detail, it would not have called her as a witness. She is the clerical supervisor at the Texas School Book Depository, by which she has been employed for ⁷ years. (p.270)

She remembers absolutely nothing about anything except Oswald. Unfortunately for the Commission's thesis, she remembered some of the wrong things about Oswald.

Mrs. Reid, as was her custom, ate in the lunchroom the day of the assassination, but she does not remember with whom she ate lunch. She does not know what time she left the building and, when asked to approximate it, gives the wrong time, saying it was 12:30 (p.271). From her own testimony, it was sometime prior to the motorcade that she was outside. She doesn't remember whether there were any men in the lunchroom when she left (she repeated this failure to recall), she doesn't know whether or not she was the last person in the room (p.272), she saw the 3 Negro employees looking from the fifth floor windows after the assassination, and even though it is a building she has worked in for 7 years, she does not recall the floor they were on, and when she guessed, she guessed entirely inaccurately, saying it was "a couple of floors up." (p.273)

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Her account of the assassination, briefly, is that she went outside, stood on the steps for several minutes, then walked over to where Truly and Campbell were standing, then moved off and was standing alone. She heard 3 shots, turned to Mr. Campbell and expressed her fear they had come from the Depository Building (p.273). Mr. Campbell had a different opinion, saying "it came from the grassy area down this way", indicating the area to the west of the building (p.274).

But to Mrs. Reid "it was just a mass of confusion". Without doubt, a truthful statement. ^{But} Her confusion ended the minute the Commission raised the question of Oswald. She is precise in saying exactly where she saw him, entering the office area of the second floor from the vestibule leading to the ^{lunch} ~~break~~ room. She is precise about where she was when they passed, neither stopping, just passed her desk several feet. (p.273) She is too exact and too positive in her description of his clothing, for it presents a problem to the Commission it ignored, thus jeopardizing its already tenuous reconstruction of Oswald's movements and time.

Mrs. Reid said, when asked what Oswald was wearing, "he had on a white T₁ shirt and some kind of wash trousers. What color I couldn't tell you." When shown two pairs of Oswald's trousers, she could not identify them. Asked if he was wearing a shirt or a jacket, she replied he wasn't. When shown a shirt, Exhibit 150, she said, "I have never, so far as I know, ever seen that shirt." (p.276)

Now the Commission knew what Mrs. Reid was going to say. They specifically knew about the shirt because she told the Commission she had been asked about the shirt before.

So what has the Commission accomplished here?

They have their witness, who is used to establish the time at which the Commission is going to conclude Oswald left the building,

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proving he was not wearing the clothing that subsequent witnesses say he was wearing.

From Mrs. Reid's testimony, the Commission, in its time calculations, must give Oswald (described as walking in a leisurely fashion by Mrs. Reid) enough time to transit the second floor to the front entrance, then go to wherever he had left at least his shirt (Whaley, the cabdriver, also said he was wearing two jackets).

The Commission could also have ignored Whaley and Mrs. Bledsoe and been much the better off for it. Both of these ^{witnesses} ~~witnesses~~ seriously undermined the entire case against Oswald. The Commission was using Mrs. Earlene Roberts as justification for its conclusion that Oswald left his roominghouse about 1:03. Actually, that was all the Commission had to show to pursue its theory.

In Using Mrs. Reid, the Commission puts her in conflict with Miss Geneva Hine, who had testified to the following things: 1. Miss Hine did not leave the building and was in the office prior to the return of Mrs. Reid; 2. She saw Mrs. Reid return but she did not see Oswald (6 H 397) (While Miss Hine's back was toward the door by which Oswald is alleged to have entered the office area, her face was toward the door by which he is supposed to have left it. 6 H 397)

Mrs. Reid does not recall seeing anyone in the lobby. Ignoring the extreme improbability of the lobby being empty at that moment, she is not asked if she saw anyone on her return to the office. Obviously, this would have either put her in a position of again not recalling or of confessing the presence of Miss Hine, who was there. (p.274) Her initial description of having seen Oswald said, "He mumbled something to me" as they passed. (p.274) But she later says she wasn't paying attention to what he said and wasn't interested. She described him as

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calm and with a coke he "was holding in his ~~hands~~ hands." (p.274)

But when the Commission wanted - needed - Mrs. Reid to be specific, this woman who could remember so little about anything, suddenly developed a remarkably sharp recollection. Of his coke: "It was full." Which hand was he holding it in? ^{"In} /His right hand." (p.279) (p.278 ~~p.27~~)

Such acuteness of recollection in such sharp contrast to the almost ~~same~~ everything else Mrs. Reid couldn't remember in itself is enough to cast serious doubt upon all of her testimony.

The coke had to be full, else the Commission would have had to allow time for him to have drunk it. It ignores the total futility of a man carrying a full coke through a building for no purpose whatever, for the Commission says he left the building ~~xxxx~~ ^{about} as fast as possible after he saw Mrs. Reid. Actually, it would seem faster, for in the Report (p.155) it said he left the building at 12:33. Counting only what it admits is the minimum time in which Mrs. Reid could have returned to the office, 2 minutes, the Commission allows Oswald 30 to 45 seconds following the departure of Truly and Officer Baker to purchase the coke, open it and walk into Mrs. Reid's office.

Even if this were true, and it cannot possibly be, what about the time for Oswald to go and get his shirt and then leave the building? And did anybody find a full coke anywhere in the building? There is no evidence of this.

The Commission times Mrs. Reid's return to the office beginning either just before the first shot was fired or at the very latest at the instant of the first shot. The Commission at no points indicates any possibility of the first shot having been fired before 12:30. After the shots- all of the shots - Mrs. Reid had a conversation with Mr. Campbell (Pp.273-4). It lasted long enough for them to at least

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exchange contrary opinions as to the source of the shots, even if we presume the conversation contained no other exchanges.

Mrs. Reid stayed long enough to see "people beginning to fall" for that is the reason ^{she gave} for hastening to her office.

Truly and Baker have both testified to the need for them to fight their way through the people outside the Depository and apparently on the steps and in the lobby. Mrs. Reid has no recollection of any of this and there seems to be no allowance in her time reconstruction for any of it. She is presumed to have returned to her office without seeing any fellow employees, without exchanging any comments with any fellow employees, and yet when she got to her office, seeing an employee she hardly knew, to have commented to him immediately.

It just does not add up. The very earliest Mrs. Reid could have gotten back to her office is after the time the Commission said Oswald had left the building.

Mrs. Reid also is in contradiction to other employees about Oswald's eating habits. She said that she regularly ate her lunch in the cafeteria. Yet she testified (p.276) that she saw Oswald there only "a few times". In all, she had seen Oswald, during his entire period of employment, ^{only} about 5 times. She didn't even know his name until she saw his picture.

But some of the Negro employees testified that Oswald frequently or customarily ate in the lunchroom and read left-over newspapers there. They can't both be right, and they are both the Commission's witnesses. Mrs. Reid, whether ~~she~~ she is right or wrong, casts suspicion upon other witnesses.

And what kind of a picture does she draw of Oswald? First, she said he is a man who had little to say and "always went about his business" (p.280). There are few employers who will complain about this, and Mr.

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Truly found it an asset. The few times he did talk? She recalled only one conversation in which Oswald told one of the other office employees about his having a baby. Is this a portrait of a killer? And after the assassination, how did he appear? "Just calm." (p.278)

How did he leave the building? Not by means of the doorway through which he had entered her office, but right past where Miss Hine was sitting, and Miss Hine didn't see him. (p.278) This was the only possibility, according to her testimony. But Miss Hine did see and identify a number of other employess whose names she gave in her tetimony. Mrs. Reid has not mentioned a single employee other than Oswald.

And even any motive Oswald could have had in going to the lunch-room other than the one he gave the police, to get a drink, is destroyed o by Mrs. Reid, who testified that the only means of exit, through a conference room, was locked. It was still lokced when the police arrived and she personally got the key for the police with which to open this door. (p.277)

Even the reconstruction, about which there should have been no doubt, leaves nothing but doubt. Belin and she did it together three times the previous Friday. Unlike the reconstructions with Baker in which Belin also used a stopwatch, his stopwatch with Mrs. Reid came out to "about 2 minutes". When he asked her if this was the maximum or minimum time, she said, "Well, it wasn't any less than that, I am sure, because 2 minutes time - " Mr. Belin did not let her finish. He interrupted her. Even 2 minutes, as he must have known, was not nearly enough time for Oswald to get his shirt and leave the building. He asked her, "Did we kind of run?" They both agreed it was three times, and as to what he meant by the diminutive "kind of ^{run} man" he denied him-

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self in the next question by asking, "And we were both huffing and puffing?" Mrs. Reid agreed.

Presenting Mrs. Reid as a witness is an imposition on the credibility of the readers of the testimony of the country at large. It is asking too much of reasonable men to believe that a woman^{who}/doesn't recall with whom she did or didn't not have lunch would remember that a man whose name she didn't know, whom she had seen only a few times, was carrying a coke that was full and even in what hand he was carrying it.

Unless the Commission's staff is adjudged stupid, and there is reason to believe only the opposite, the use of Mrs. Reid and too many other witnesses like her can be construed only as a confession on the part of the staff of the realization of the weakness of the case it was building against Oswald and the necessity of following the path it chose, immersing the Commission in a mass of testimony and exhibits beyond the capacity of the members to consider and evaluate, especially with all of the other great responsibilities each bore, and the equally great necessity of presenting to the press and the world such a tremendous volume of words and books that appraisal and evaluation became an impossibility.