

Some Citizens Are Critical

Findings Give Dallas
A Sense of ReliefBy Laurence Stern
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DALLAS, Sept. 28—"Welcome to Big D," the stewardess draws over the public address system.

Dallas is soaked after an all-day rain. Now it is overcast and the temperature is in the middle 50s—not unlike the weather last Nov. 22.

Television has already broken the news of the Warren Commission's conclusions about the assassination of President Kennedy. The Monday morning papers aren't out yet.

The drive from the airport takes about 20 minutes. It isn't long before you can see the brash, new skyscrapers—the banking and insurance centers in which the City's money and power are enshrined.

But now Dallas reflects the singular desolation of Sunday night.

There are a few bars open and a saloon is sometimes a good place to find out what a city thinks and feels.

"I heard that report on Kennedy today," says a young bartender at a place on Commerce st. His tavern is empty and he seems pleased to have something to talk about. "But I tell you there's nothing we didn't know before."

Another bar man comes in. It is his night off and he was just nearly run over by two T-birds. He pours out a bottle of beer.

"Yeah, I watched it all on television," he says, "and let me tell you something. They're going to burn that Ruby. You can take all the Jews and all their money—Ruby's going to burn."

The early edition of the Dallas Morning News finally reaches the street shortly before 10 p.m. "Oswald termed sole Kennedy slayer," say the banner headlines. But there is no rush to buy copies. "Things are real slow," says a newsboy.

Jack Ruby's place is closed, although there is still a sign in front that says: "Sensational performances on Three Runways."

Two beers later the streets are even more empty. Main st. is one block over.

This was president Kennedy's last thoroughfare.

You turn a corner on Main later but the place still School Book Depository building. It is almost midnight and nearly a year later but the place still seems to wear a shroud of menace. Your eye involuntarily fixes on the sixth floor, corner window. How could they not have seen it, you wonder.

Now, the next morning—Monday—the stream of official reaction begins. The verdict for Dallas was acquittal, and that is what the City really care about.

"Dallas holds its head high as it should, based on this report," proclaims John Stemmons, president of the powerful Dallas Citizens Council.

"The Warren Commission report," echoes Mayor J. Eric Johnson, "justly destroys for once and all the fiction that Dallas fostered an unfriendly climate."

An editorial in the Dallas Times Herald is skeptical. "The Warren Commission's report on the assassination of President Kennedy is out, and the only surprise that may come with its release would be that everyone accepted it and thus ended irresponsible speculation on the event," the editorial begins.

In a downtown restaurant three local businessmen discuss the report.

"They spent all that damned money and didn't tell us anything, new," says one of them. "I'll bet it cost 15 or 20 million dollars for all that foolishness."

Another speaks up: "They criticize the police for letting the press all over the place. But I'll tell you old Chief Curry would have been crucified in our own papers if he kept them out."

Dallas police chief Jesse Curry shakes your hand cordially but says he doesn't want to comment on the report. "They said we lost a prisoner," he conceded, "and we can't argue with that. It's been a bitter lesson. But we accept the report."

Curry is grateful for the report because of the acquittal for his city. "When Oswald was shot," he says, "people didn't have anyone to fix their resentment on—so they just took it out on Dallas."

District attorney Henry Wade, the City's cigar-chomping prosecutor, is—characteristically—more willing to talk. How does he feel about the report?

"A lot of people thought I gave out evidence on the Friday night after Oswald was arrested," he relates. "But the only thing I said was that I thought it was a death penalty case."

"Then on Sunday night there was all sorts of wild rumors. I thought the police should go on television and methodically detail all the evidence."

"Now I never saw the gun. I wouldn't know a Mauser from a . . . Wade throws up his hands and then leans forward again.

"I think we would not have had Mark Lane and all those books if someone gave out the correct factual details at the time," the prosecutor continues.

What about Ruby's condition, Wade is asked.

"After he got death it affected his mind," he replies. "The average person, when he gets death, he'll react that way."

"Ruby thinks the Jews are being slaughtered on the streets here," Wade continues. "I talked to him up in the jail. Ruby says to get his family back to Israel. I don't know whether he believes all that or someone is just saying it to bother him."

Ruth Paine, the suburban Dallas housewife who befriended Marina Oswald, is not surprised either by the report.

"I have been convinced from the outset that Lee Oswald shot the president," she says.

How is the assassin's widow reacting?

"Marina has become the girl she was back in Minsk before she met Oswald. She is curling her hair and reviving her young girl interest."