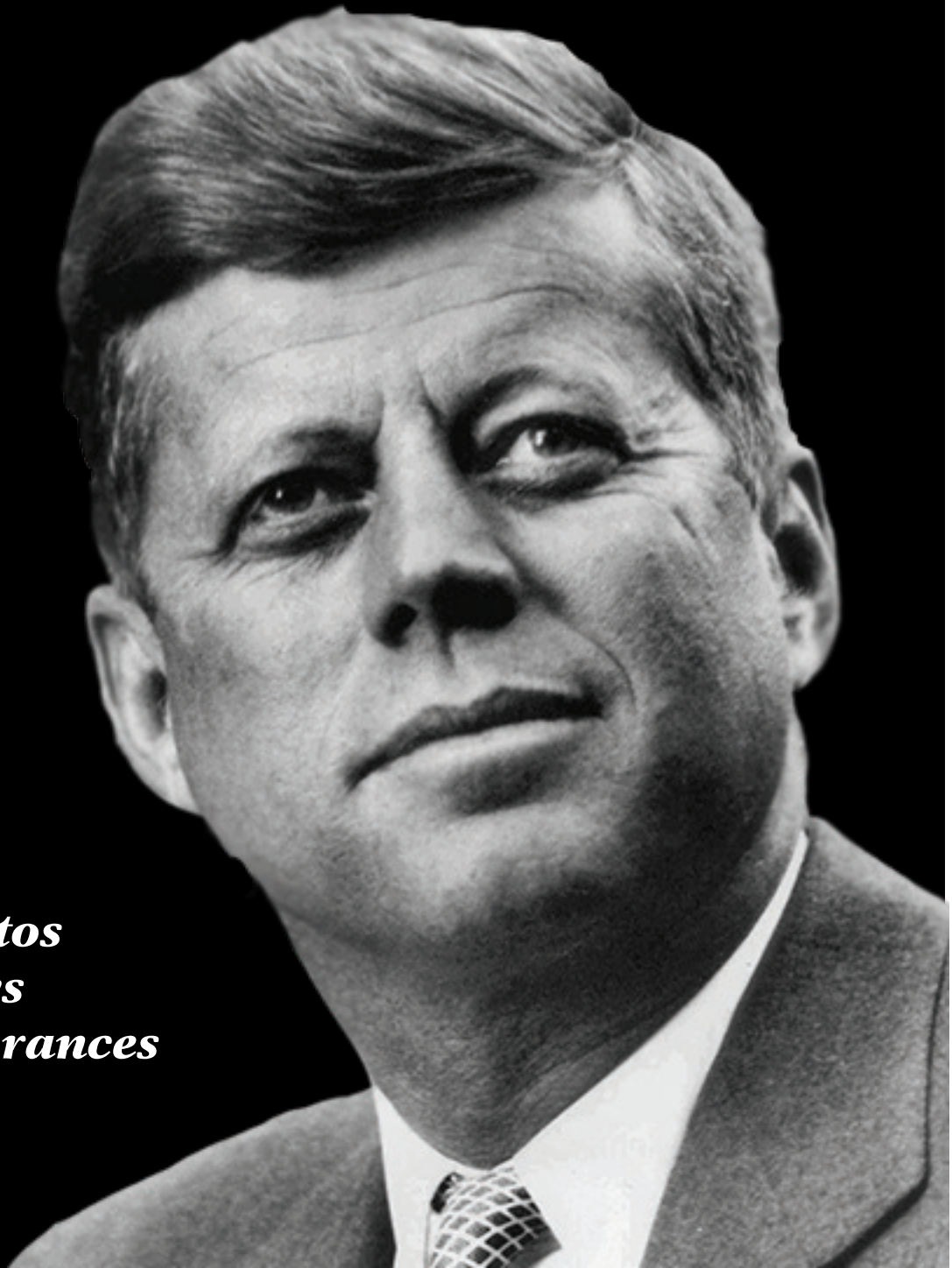


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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	page 4
A Decades-Long Quest for Facts	page 5
Ruth Paine Remembers the Oswalds.....	page 9
The Ruth Paine Home Museum.....	page 12
Secret Service Agent Mike Howard Recalls the Assassination Weekend.....	page 13
A. Dallas Advance Team	
B. LHO Missing Pages	
Eyewitnesses Bill and Gayle Newman Share Their Experience.....	page 17
Dr. Walter Wyrick's Work at Parkland Hospital.....	page 20
Tina Towner-Pender Photographs the Motorcade.....	page 22
Sixth Floor Museum Curator Stephen Fagin Lives His Dream.....	page 23
Villager Donna Rector Views the Motorcade	page 24
Villager Georgia Riddle Hears Shots Ring Out.....	page 25
Villager Bill Veal Takes Lunch Break to View Motorcade.....	page 25
Robert Groden on JFK Assassination Photography.....	page 26

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Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank others who helped make this magazine possible, beginning with our Hot Springs Village Voice General Manager Jennifer Allen, who immediately supported the project. Also thanks to staffers Misty Castile, Summer Benedict, Stephanie Dodson-Highfill and Nicky Sherman.

A big thank you also goes to those who interviewed with me for the magazine. That includes four Hot Springs Village residents – Bill Veal, Donna Rector, Walt Wyrick and Georgia Riddle. I appreciate all of the interviewees for sharing their experiences of that horrible event 55 years ago this week.

At The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza, I thank curator Stephen Fagin for interviewing with me and sharing his passion for his work. Thank you also, to Museum Librarian and Archivist, Krishna Shenoy, for her help in the research room and library, and to Laurie Ivy who approved the Hot Springs Village Voice's taking photos on the actual sixth floor of the Museum.

If you have not visited the Museum, I suggest you do. It's a fascinating trip back in time where you will see many excellent information panels and the actual southeast-corner window where shots were allegedly fired. Lee Harvey Oswald's wedding ring is there and is an interesting part of the Nov. 22, 1963, story. The Museum is located at 411 Elm Street in Dallas. For more details about the museum and hours of operation call 214-747-6660 or visit jfk.org.

The Ruth Paine Home Museum in nearby Irving, Texas, is also definitely worth a stop, where City of Irving Archives Coordinator Kevin Kendro headed up an effort to transform the Paine home to its 1963 look.

I found out about the Paine Home Museum from Bart Stevens, Operations Manager of the Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture, which is also located in Dealey Plaza, one block away from The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza.

Jeff Meek
Managing Editor
Hot Springs Village Voice



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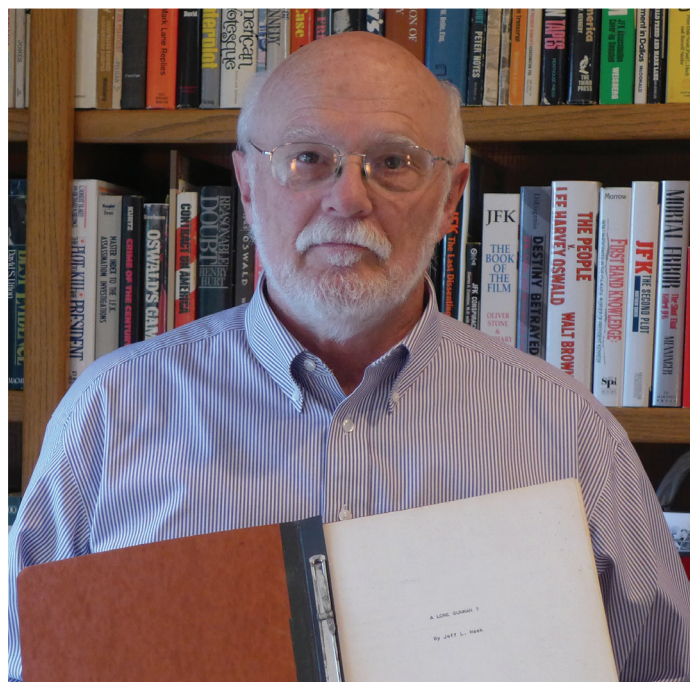
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Top: Burial and folding of the flag ceremony for President John F. Kennedy, 25 November 1963. Gravesite, Arlington National Cemetery, Washington, D.C. Please credit "Abbie Rowe. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston" Right: Jeff Meek holds a typed copy of his original manuscript. (Misty Castile photo)



The Assassination of President John F. Kennedy: my decades long quest for the facts

On November 22, 1963, I was 13 years old and a student at Kimball Junior High School in Elgin, Illinois. I was in shop class when someone came up to me and asked if I'd heard that President Kennedy had been shot. I hadn't, so didn't give it any thought.

Next for me was English class, up on the second floor of the school, and it was while in that class that our principal come over the intercom announcing that Kennedy had been shot and killed in Dallas, Texas.

As I remember it, school continued until the end of day, but the weekend was like none other. Friday through Monday my parents and I were glued to our little black and white television set. Then came the news of an arrest, a man called Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested in the Texas Theater in Dallas, the area where Dallas Police Department officer J.D. Tippit had been shot and killed near 10th and Patton Streets in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas.

A trail of tips led several officers to the Texas Theater where Officer M.N. McDonald arrested Oswald during a brief scuffle. From there Oswald was taken to police headquarters for questioning. He denied any involvement in either the Tippit or the Kennedy killings.

As if that wasn't enough, two days later Oswald was gunned down by Dallas night club owner Jack Ruby in the Dallas Police Department basement.

Next came the funeral of the fallen president. I can still hear the sound of those muffled drums as the procession went through Washington, D.C. to Arlington National Cemetery.

As the week went on, life slowly got back to normal. For me that meant classes, basketball practice that winter and looking forward to the next spring fishing trip with my father. I remember a big report (The Warren Report) coming out months later that said what most everyone thought to be true – Oswald, alone, killed President Kennedy, and Ruby, alone, killed Oswald. That was it for me. I can say I didn't pay any attention to the

assassination reporting after that.

After finishing college and a 1973 marriage to Jeanne, I noticed a movie was out on the assassination that same year. It was called "Executive Action," starring such big names as Burt Lancaster and Robert Ryan. It was touted as a "film of fiction – based on fact." So we went to see it and picked up an eight page newspaper about the movie, which I kept and still have today (see photo). It was filled with information "uncovered by private investigators." Little did I know I would become one of them in a few years. I thought the movie was entertaining, but again, didn't get swallowed up in the details. I was busy looking for my first teaching job.

How It All Started

I had always been a big Raquel Welch fan and I noticed that the March 6, 1975, edition of Geraldo Rivera's show, "Goodnight America" was going to have her as a guest. So I decided I'd stay up late and watch. Well, she wasn't the only part of the program that grabbed my attention. A significant segment of the program had Dick Gregory and Robert Groden talking about the assassination. And it was the very first time the Abraham Zapruder film was shown to a national audience. I remember the audience gasped when they saw the effects of the shot that hit Kennedy in the head and the resultant backward movement of his head. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Conspiracy? What conspiracy are they talking about? Rivera said his next show would devote the entire 90 minutes to the JFK murder. So I borrowed my mother's small tape recorder and watched that next program. The guests shared many "unknown facts" that stunned me. They talked about certain books, which I soon checked out of the library to see if what they were saying was actually in the books, and it was. In the back of one book it listed footnotes. Still unconvinced, I wrote to Washington, D.C. for the actual documents. When they arrived, it was further confirmation of



The exact model camera used by Abraham Zapruder (Misty Castile photo)

what the men had said on the show. From there, for the next 10 years, it almost became an obsession to learn more.

I somehow had learned of a highly respected researcher in Dallas named Mary Ferrell. No one wrote a book about the assassination without consulting her. In September 1975, I wrote her a letter saying I was coming to Dallas in December. Would it be possible to meet with her?

Quickly, I received a letter back from her dated Sept. 26, 1975. It ended with, "Jeff, I receive mail daily from all over the world such as, 'I have started working on the Kennedy assassination. Please send me everything you have.' I ignore most of it. Your letter was intelligent and definitely above the ordinary....I look forward to meeting you, and I'm glad you are now among those dissatisfied with the 'official version'." Wow, I was going to be able to pick the brain of arguably the most respected Kennedy assassination researcher in the world.

A Trip to Dallas

So, in December Jeanne and I piled into our little Mercury Capri and drove to Dallas. There, also, at that time was an English lawyer, Michael Eddowes, working on a book about Oswald that proposed that the Oswald that went to Russia in 1959 was not the same man who returned from Russia in 1962. Instead it was a KGB agent (his theory was later proven wrong when Oswald's body was exhumed on Oct. 4, 1981, and confirmed as such by pathologists).

Every night into the wee hours of the morning we'd talk and read documents. When I'd get up in the morning, Ferrell would have a stack of government records for me to read while she was at work, then at night we'd discuss them. She was so kind to us, to the point she had us move from the fleabag hotel we were in, to a nice room at Love Field, which she paid for.

It was during one of those nights when I noticed a discrepancy on an Oswald fingerprint card. Mary got excited; she had never noticed it and said she had to tell fellow-critic Penn Jones, Jr., about the find so he could include it in his next book, "Forgive My Grief III, Revised," which he did. It's on pages 104-105 of his 1976 book. Eddowes was also at the table that night and used some of the information a few years later in his book, "The Oswald File," but he didn't mention me as the source.

And Ferrell did something I couldn't believe. She gave me a copy of the Zapruder film! Remember, it had just been shown to

the public for the first time just nine months previously.

While in Dallas, we visited all the related sites – Dealey Plaza, Oswald's rooming house, Jack Ruby's apartment complex, previous Oswald residences – you name it, we saw it.

Sharing What I Learned

I also started writing a book, titled it "A Lone Gunman?" and eventually found a literary agent in Chicago that was interested. But we hit a snag: the FBI had just released many thousands of pages of documents. My agent said I'd need to obtain and digest them or the book would be outdated before it was ever on the market. It would have cost me a few thousand dollars to obtain all the documents, so that was the end of the book idea. I still have the original manuscript which Ferrell took the time to type for me.

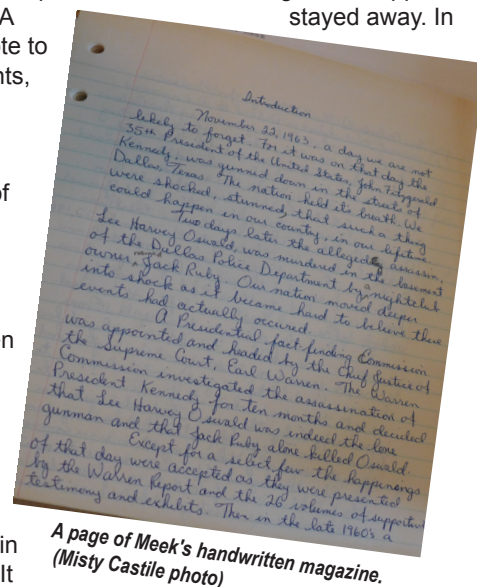
It was also during this time that I put together a slide presentation, wrote a script and began doing speaking engagements at local colleges. Having the Zapruder film drew lots of attention because, if you hadn't seen it back on March 6, 1975, you likely had never seen it. Three of those presentations I still remember. One was at Joliet Junior College, Joliet, Illinois. My presentation took about 50 minutes and when finished, I was used to having attendees ask questions. On this night the Q and A went two hours. It was amazing. Another presentation was at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where another big turnout took place. But the oddest time was when I did it for a group of about nine retired naval officers at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, Illinois. When I finished and asked if there were any questions, the room was silent, until one man said, "Thank you Mr. Meek." My wife and I often wondered if I was asked to speak to the group so they would know what I knew. It was kind of creepy.

Also during this time and well beyond, I began to develop an index card system with names, dates and places I saw in anything I read. Over the years it grew to 9,000 index cards. More on that later.

In 1977, I developed a real interest in a man by the name of Jean Rene Souetre, who according to documents I'd receive at a later date, was an external coordinator for the French OAS, the group that tried to assassinate French President Charles DeGaulle in 1962. At one point the OAS had sought CIA support for its work, but the CIA

stayed away. In

December 1977, I wrote to CIA for more documents, stayed persistent, and eventually received them, I think, in 1981, four years later. One of the documents (#632-796) was astonishing. It said that Souetre, aka Michel Roux, aka Michel Mertz, had been expelled from the U.S. at Fort Worth or Dallas 48 hours after the assassination. He had been in Fort Worth on the morning of Nov. 22, 1963, and in Dallas that afternoon. It also said that the French "would like to know the reason for his expulsion



A page of Meek's handwritten magazine. (Misty Castile photo)



From left: Michael Eddowes, Mary Ferrell and Jeff Meek in 1975. (Jeanne Meek photo)

from the U.S. and his destination." I could not believe it. A known killer in town on the day Kennedy was killed and our government hustled him out of the country! Other documents showed we had an interest in Souetre in April 1963, seven months before the assassination. I quickly sent copies to two other researchers who were also chasing Souetre. They, too, were stunned. We never did get more out of the government, like where Souetre went, for example, but years later he was found in France, running a Mafia-owned casino. Souetre claimed that he was not in Dallas, but that a Michel Mertz was.

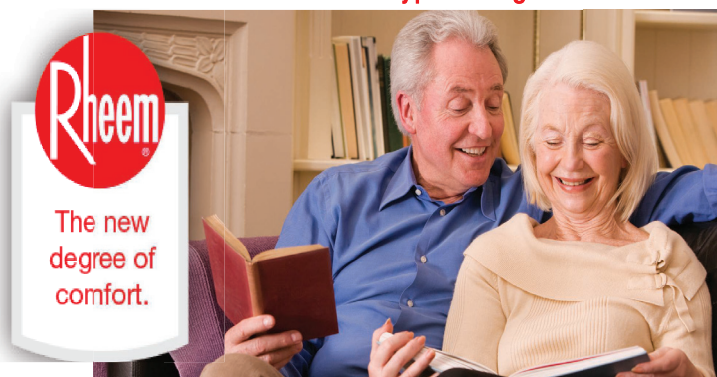
Months later I got a call from the "National Enquirer" magazine asking if I would interview about the Souetre find and share the documents. Although I really wanted to facilitate getting the information out to the public, I feared if people read it in the "Enquirer" they wouldn't believe it, so I declined. Sure enough, a few months later they had the Souetre story and printed it in their Nov. 22, 1983, issue. According to their story, they found Souetre, who told them he was not in Dallas, but Mertz was and that back in 1962, admitted he, Souetre, was a major suspect in a DeGaulle assassination attempt.

The Quest Continues

Around 1979, I was contacted by a group in Chicago known as the Alliance to End Repression. As I remember it, they had filed a lawsuit against the FBI to find out more about the Chicago Police Department's "Red Squad." In trying to come to a settlement of sorts, the FBI decided to release every 100th (I think) file in their system. Turns out one of them was the JFK assassination file. Asked by the Alliance if I was interested, I said yes, and for the next several weekends went downtown to the Dirksen Federal Building where the FBI office was located and looked through the file. Problem was, I couldn't do anything with what I was looking at. Before seeing anything, I had to sign a non-disclosure agreement, so, I've not been able to share anything I learned. So much for transparency.

In the late 1980s I was contacted by the Assassination Archives and Research Center (AARC) in D.C. They asked if I'd share my 9,000 card index system with them, which I did. The

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Washington Times newspaper ran a story about it in their April 19, 1988, edition, mentioning that I had provided the AARC the index material.

Renewed Interest, Then and Now

Life got in the way for a few years, but my interest was again piqued when, in 1991, Oliver Stone's movie "JFK" came out. It was based on the 1967 case brought by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison who charged Clay Shaw in the murder of the president. I was happy to see the case brought back to life, but felt that basing anything on the Garrison trial was asking for trouble. Garrison's shotgun approach to "who done it," made any of his conclusions difficult to believe. He had everyone involved – CIA, FBI, Cubans – except the Mafia, which I thought was interesting. The movie also triggered another round of books on the subject, many of which I purchased. Most were not impressive.

Then around the time of an Aug. 23, 1993, government document release on the Kennedy assassination, I was approached by the publisher of "Real Crime Book Digest" to write a critique on the new book by Gerald Posner, "Case Closed." It was being heralded as perhaps the best book ever written in defense of the Warren Commission conclusions. I accepted and had an article, "The JFK Assassination: Is the Case Really Closed?," in the magazine's Dec. 1993/Jan. 1994, issue. Writing a counterpoint to my piece was Robert Gemberling, the FBI Special Agent who coordinated the Kennedy assassination investigation in Dallas. He and I spoke on the telephone on Sept. 30, 1993, and exchanged a few letters. He thanked me for the courteous manner in which I spoke to him on the phone and said he was respectful of my right to have my opinion, but I noticed that much of what Gemberling said was an attack on me, not on the inconsistencies I pointed out in the Posner book. I wrote him a letter saying so, but did not hear back from him.

Then in 1994, came a book called "Mob Lawyer," by Frank Ragano, who was a lawyer back in the day for Marcello, Trafficante and Jimmy Hoffa. Through another contact I had, I was able to get in touch with Ragano. We spoke over the phone several times and corresponded regularly. That led me to get in touch with a Jack Ruby lawyer, Melvin Belli, and others tracking any Mafia connection to the assassination.

One day, after I got off the phone with Ragano, my wife said, "What are you doing talking to Mafia lawyers? We have two little kids." That brought me to my senses and from that day forward I kept an eye on developments, but nothing like I had been doing.

Over the years other books would come out and I'd buy a few just to stay current, but that was the extent of my interest.

Then just last year in October, the U.S. government released thousands of pages of documents and one could read them online.

That sparked my interest again and having dinner with friends one night the subject came up. Jeanne mentioned I knew quite a bit about the



JFK movie poster

assassination and I started rattling off a few facts and names. Later that week I got to wondering if what I'd said was accurate, as it had been several years since I'd actively researched.

So I dug out all my research materials and began to review. I had a couple hundred hours of tape recordings I'd collected over the years, then learned a friend of mine had a machine that would convert those old cassette tapes to CDs. I borrowed it. It took me two weeks to get it all transferred, and as I did I listened to the programs, which really got me interested again.

So, Who Did Assassinate JFK?

I've been asked many times who I think assassinated President Kennedy, and to be honest I have to say I don't know. I have my suspicions, but nothing I can prove.

I like the answer Bill Newman gave me when I asked him who he thought killed JFK. He was, like me, hesitant to answer, but basically said this: if it was just Oswald alone, why are there so many documents still classified for the sake of national security? Good question Bill. I wish I had the answer.



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Marina and Lee Oswald, the assassination, the aftermath – Ruth Paine remembers

In Nov. 1963 Lee Harvey Oswald's Russian-born wife, Marina, was living with Ruth Paine in Paine's Irving, Texas home, while Lee worked at the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas and rented a small room at 1026 N. Beckley St. in Oak Cliff. Paine took Marina in to help her, to learn the Russian language and to relieve some of the boredom of living separated from husband Michael.

Lee would visit the Paine home on weekends, with one exception. On Nov. 21, the day before the assassination, Ruth returned home that afternoon from the grocery store and there was Lee in the front yard playing with his daughter, June. Ruth was kind enough to interview with me earlier this year, something she rarely does, so I started by asking for a little background information, like how she ended up in Irving, Texas, and thus part of history.

She told me she and Michael moved there in 1959 from Pennsylvania because he got a job with Bell Helicopter in the research and development department. Ruth was very pregnant at the time, soon had a son and became a stay-at-home Mom. She had an interest in language and was a part of a national group of young Quakers. "They thought we needed to be able to talk to our enemies. We developed a group called 'East – West Connections', trying to deal with the Cold War difficulty and stresses with the Soviet Union," Ruth explained. That interest in the Russian language led to meeting a young couple at a party in February 1963. "A friend was having a party and knew I was interested in Russian and said a couple of his guests were Lee Oswald and his wife, who was native Russian. So I got invited and talked with her that evening," Ruth said.

Thereafter, Ruth stayed in touch with Marina by mail and would visit the Oswald's in Dallas from time to time. She learned Marina was pregnant again and that Lee was talking about sending her back to Russia. "She didn't want to go back at all and I thought she should have a choice. She liked being in the States and looking forward to staying here," Ruth said.

Ruth felt there was an immediate connection between her and Marina. "Yes, as young mothers our connection really had to do with where we were in our stage of life, being concerned with children and of course the kids could play with each other."

In April 1963, during a visit to the Oswald apartment, Ruth saw that Lee was packed up to go somewhere. She learned he was going to New Orleans where he had family and where he would look for work. He asked Ruth for a ride to the bus station and had a ticket for Marina, but Ruth thought it was too much for Marina so she suggested she come live with her in Irving, until Lee was ready for her to join him in New Orleans. So, Marina moved in with Ruth.

Life with Marina Oswald

About her stay, Ruth said, "It went pretty well. My Russian wasn't all that great, but we could talk some and the kids were a good age to be with each other." She added that Lee wanted Marina to only speak Russian, which Ruth thought was very "narrow" of him. Later, Ruth drove Marina and June to New Orleans to be with Lee, who now had an apartment on Magazine Street. Marina was not pleased with the apartment and things were



Ruth Paine (photo courtesy of Kevin Kendro)

tense that weekend. After returning to Irving, Ruth was contemplating divorce, bored, and decided to travel east to see friends. On the way back in September, she stopped in New Orleans only to find Lee was again preparing to leave, he said, to find work elsewhere (after the assassination it was learned Lee went to Mexico City and visited the Cuban and Russian embassies).

Lee packed up Marina's things, then she and Ruth drove back to Irving. Weeks later, Lee called the house. He asked for a ride, but ended up hitchhiking to Irving. Ruth told him he could stay over the weekends.

Asked if she was comfortable around Lee, she said, "Not especially. He wanted to speak only Russian and I had a limited vocabulary and there wasn't a lot we could talk about. It was a mixed picture. He liked to play with June and was helpful one time fixing a door that wasn't closing properly," said Ruth.

Lee found a place to live in Oak Cliff and Ruth, through neighbor Linnie Mae Randle, learned of a possible opening at the Texas School Book Depository. Ruth spoke with depository superintendent Roy Truly who told her to tell Lee to stop by. Lee was hired in October and began his weekend visits to Ruth's house thereafter, getting rides with Randle's brother, Buell Wesley Frazier.

Lee had left a phone number for Ruth to use when Marina was about to have the baby (Rachel), but the number wasn't needed because the baby came on a weekend when Lee was already at Ruth's. Marina had Ruth drive her to Parkland Hospital while Lee watched the other children.

Sometime later Ruth called that number and was told no one by that name lived there. Soon they learned Lee had registered under an assumed name, O.H. Lee, and Marina was furious about it. "I was bewildered why he would give us a number but not who to ask for," Ruth said.

Why was Lee so secretive, I asked? "He had fantasies about being a big man and important and I think he was mysterious," she said. Ruth added that she didn't want to get into a conversation with Lee about political views. "I had the feeling if you agreed with him you were acceptable, but if you didn't you

Original wire service photo of Marina Oswald.



were the enemy.”

Ruth tried to be helpful to the destitute Oswald's in any way she could and that included giving Lee driving lessons in her 1955 Chevy station wagon, so he could buy a car and increase his chances for employment. They practiced in a nearby empty parking lot and near her home. “He would practice in my car. Clearly he was new at it, but was eager to learn. He knew not having a car was a handicap for work,” said Ruth.

On Nov. 1 and Nov. 5, FBI Agent James Hosty came to Ruth's house to speak to Lee, but he wasn't there, so he spoke to Ruth and through Ruth to Marina. Of the visit Ruth told me, “I was not surprised. I knew that Lee had tried to defect to the Soviet Union and then decided to come back. I kind of expected the FBI would want to know where he was and keep an eye on him.” They visited for a while, was given Hosty's business card and the agent left. Marina was very concerned about the visits because Lee had told her the FBI was like the Russian KGB. Unbeknownst to Ruth, during one Hosty visit, Marina slipped out the back door and wrote down Hosty's license plate number for Lee.

Nov. 21, a Thursday, began as a normal day, until Ruth returned home late that afternoon from the grocery store, and there was Lee. This was the one and only time he came to Irving other than over the weekend and without asking permission. “He was there in front of the house with Marina and June. He helped carry the groceries into the House.”

At this point Ruth said, “Oh, the memories are awful. She paused, then continued, “I said to him in Russian, ‘our President is coming’ and I'm all excited about it and he mumbled something and went right past me.” She didn't ask him why he was there unannounced on a Thursday, but she and Marina thought it was to make up after an argument that happened earlier that week about the phony name. “I had no clue why he came, until later of course.”

Oswald went to bed very early on the night of Nov. 21, then up early and down to Frazier's place for the ride to work. He told Frazier he had curtain rods in a package in the back seat. Oswald also left behind his wedding ring and \$170.

Nov. 22, 1963

At this point in the interview I could tell the conversation was getting difficult for Ruth. You could hear it in her voice, but she pressed on.

Marina and Ruth watched the morning coverage of the Presidential visit in Ft. Worth, had breakfast, got the kids dressed and Ruth left for a dental appointment, leaving the TV on for Marina. Very shortly after returning they heard Kennedy had been shot. “I thought, oh my God, it's fatal and I lit a candle,” Ruth said. A short time later the announcement of his death reached them and only a few hours later there was a knock at her door.

It was the police. They asked if they could come in. Ruth asked them if they had a warrant. They said no, but could quickly get one, so she let them in. “They spread out and looked in every corner of the house,” she said.

They told her Lee was in custody for shooting a policeman. “One of them asked me if Lee had a gun and I said no. I translated to Marina and she said yes, he did and she led us to the garage and showed us where she had last seen a rifle in a blanket roll and it was empty,” Ruth said.

Police began taking things from her garage, including some of her things that she needed for a Thanksgiving Day Quaker gathering. She protested, then told me, “One of the officers grabbed my arm and said ‘we've got to get down to the station right away’”.

The police wanted them to come to the Dallas Police station, so Ruth got a neighbor to watch the children. An officer got irritated with how long it was taking the ladies to get ready and said the police could take the children to a juvenile facility. “It was like a threat. That really irritated me,” said Ruth.

Once at the station, Ruth met Lee's mother, Marguerite Oswald. In the process, Marguerite invited “Life” magazine officials to Ruth's home.

The Aftermath

The next morning “Life” took Marina and her daughters with them (they were later placed in Secret Service protection – see Agent Mike Howard story).

Ruth found out from “Life” personnel where Marina was taken and placed a call to her. Marguerite answered and would not let her speak to Marina. I asked why. “First, she wouldn't know what was said (because they would have been speaking in Russian) and wasn't about to let it happen,” said Ruth.

On Nov. 24, Lee was shot and killed by Jack Ruby and Ruth saw it happen, as did millions of others following the TV coverage on Sunday. About the shooting Ruth said, “You have to understand that I was almost in an altered state. I just didn't understand or know what to think at that point. I was somewhat relieved actually. It was like closing a chapter and there would be no trial.” Asked if she thought Oswald, alone, killed Kennedy she said, “Yes, I do. And I have personal experience that supports that,” then she told of the April 1963, attempt to kill General Edwin Walker. Later, as evidence was being collected, a note Lee had written to Marina the day of the Walker shooting turned up, quite by accident.

Ruth was gathering some things together for Marina and the kids. There was an Irving police car assigned to Ruth's house so she gave the items to the officer and asked that they be taken to Marina. One of those items was a child care book and in that book was later found that note Lee had written to Marina that related to the Walker attempt.

A few days later the Secret Service showed up at her home and
Hot Springs Village Voice



A 1975 look at Ruth Paine's Irving, Texas home.

showed her the note telling Marina what to do if he did not return. A Russian interpreter with the Secret Service asked Ruth if she'd ever seen the note ("no") or knew who wrote it ("no"). He then, very accusingly, said that Ruth had purposely sent the note to Marina. An agent said the note was in the child care book. "I said 'I sent the book, but had no idea this note was in there'." In 1964, Ruth testified before the Warren Commission. She said she didn't feel accused of anything and they treated her respectfully. After Marina's Warren Commission testimony, she invited Ruth to where she was living. The two women talked some, but had very little contact thereafter. Ruth explained that they had little to talk about except for the terrible shared experience of Lee, the assassination, and their children. "There's only so much you can say about diapers and children. We ran out of things to say," Ruth said.

As life went on, Ruth traveled to several locations and now lives out west. As we concluded the interview, Ruth said, "I'm glad you're doing something (this magazine). I think too often people get their information off the internet and the internet is not monitored, there's no editor, so a lot of junk is on the internet. I find there are very few people that know about Oswald's attempt to kill Walker, which is crucial to understanding Oswald. (The shooting) was just days after he got his mail order rifle," said Ruth. She added that Marina had kept that a secret, was afraid and probably recommended to Lee that he go to New Orleans. I said to Ruth, "It's been a long time, but this is still kind of raw with you isn't it? I can hear the emotion in your voice." She replied, "Oh yeah, it's terrible. It's very hard, especially because I really want people to have good information, that I do this kind of interview."

I said, "You don't interview too much do you?" She answered, "No, I do not." I asked, "I'm curious. Why did you say yes to me, a guy you've never met before?"

"You demonstrated that you have a legitimate role with your newspaper and were a serious journalist. I like journalism and journalists so I want to encourage good reporting."

Ruth's former West 5th Street home in Irving, under the watchful

Remembering 11.22.63

eye of Kevin Kendro, has been made into a multimedia museum, which she visited when it opened in 2013. Doing so was tough, "eerie," Ruth said.



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The Ruth Paine Home Museum, a step back in time

The home where Ruth Paine lived in Irving, Texas, became a museum in 2013. The home was purchased by the City of Irving in 2009 and work on making the interior look as it did in 1963 continued through 2012 and 2013. Paine attended the opening and toured the home with City Archivist Kevin Kendro, which was a very emotional experience for her, Kendro said.

As plans to make the home into a museum moved forward, the city spoke with those who lived in the neighborhood, matching roof tiles were located, as were the correct period windows and furniture. In the kitchen, the wall paneling and knotty pine cabinets are the same as when Paine lived there. "We tried to make it look as close as possible to how it looked in 1963. We based a lot of the work on photographs, right down to the type of fabric on the living room couch," said Kendro of the 1,200 square foot home. Several of the details are amazing, like a 1963 telephone with Paine's 1963 phone number on it.

That's not all. In the Oswald and Paine bedrooms are "Pepper's



The garage where Lee Harvey Oswald kept a rifle

Ghost" effects, like a hologram, that give the illusion that people are actually in the room. This was done by recording local actors playing the part of Ruth and husband Michael Paine, Marina Oswald and their children. The words they speak are from actual transcripts from the assassination investigations and interviews they've given over the years. Standing in the bedroom where Lee Harvey Oswald and wife Marina spent their last evening together was amazing and very impactful.

Inside the small garage where Oswald kept his rifle in a blanket, the illusion continues, where the women are "seen" with a police officer who had come to search the home. Standing in that garage with a blanket on the floor and the images on screen make for a moving experience. It's almost as if you were there on Nov. 22, 1963, when the police arrived that afternoon and learned from Marina that Lee owned a rifle.

The Ruth Paine Home Museum is off the radar for many, since it is approximately 20 minutes from Dealey Plaza, site of the assassination. The tour begins at the Irving Archives and Museum Center at 801 W. Irving Blvd.

Inside the Center, visitors first experience a look at 1963 footage of



Kevin Kendro stands in the Paine kitchen that still has the original knotty pine cabinets

the assassination weekend, shown on vintage televisions. From there, visitors are taken in a van to the Paine home which is approximately 10 minutes away. The tour is done this way to keep traffic to a minimum in the neighborhood.

To reserve a tour, visit CityofIrving.org/Museums or call 972-721-3729. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday with tours running at 10 a.m. and 2 and 4 p.m. Admission (age 12 and older) is \$12, 11 years old and younger is free.

If you take the time to experience this little-known gem, you will not be disappointed. It is absolutely worth a visit. The city of Irving has done a fantastic job of taking us back to Nov. 1963.



The Oswald bedroom in Ruth Paine's Irving, Texas, home



Secret Service Agent Mike Howard explains the missing page.

Secret Service Agent Remembers JFK Assassination

Earlier this year I drove to Texas for an interview with former Secret Service agent Mike Howard at his ranch north of Dallas. Howard recalled for me that dark November day when President John F. Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas. Howard was the advance agent in Fort Worth on Nov. 21, the morning of Nov. 22 he was in the room when suspect Lee Harvey Oswald was interrogated and he later protected Oswald's family for a week following the assassination.

After graduating college and serving in Korea, Howard got a call from the Secret Service office in 1960. "I had no idea what they wanted with me," said Howard who was about to finish a law degree. He took exams, filled out an application in May and on July 1, 1960 was sworn in.

Howard vividly remembered his first assignment just 10 days on the job. Because no one would recognize him, he was put undercover to help catch a counterfeiter, which they did in just three days, red-handed with cash and printing plates in his possession.

We then jumped ahead to the weekend of Nov. 21-22, 1963, for his memories of that fateful Kennedy visit. The Democratic Party had scheduled five stops in Texas for that weekend which included an overnight stop in Fort Worth on Nov. 21. At approximately 11 p.m. that night the president's plane arrived at Carswell Air Force Base. "I was there to meet the plane because I was on the advance team," Howard said. He and others traveled with the motorcade to the Texas Hotel in Fort Worth through streets lined with people despite a driving rain. The crowd was yelling "Jackie, Jackie," and because of all the cheering she rolled down her window to wave at the crowds. President Kennedy then did the same.

By the time they arrived at the hotel, the President, First Lady and the agents were soaked. JFK and Jackie settled in for the night while agents prepped for the upcoming morning breakfast on Nov. 22.

During his advance work, Howard had investigated approximately 30 people who had made some kind of threatening comment. He told me they came up with whatever reason they could dream up to put some of them in jail during the visit. Many of them disliked Kennedy solely because he was Catholic. "Some of them made the crack that they ought to kill that SOB," said Howard. Of those 30, some ended up in jail and others were tailed by agents and police.

Howard was up at 4 a.m. on Nov. 22, checking out the breakfast hall, other rooms, exits, the fire escape and elsewhere to be sure all was safe for JFK. He was told to lead the Kennedy entourage out of the hotel to an awaiting flatbed truck where Kennedy would give a short speech to a crowd assembled outside. Thereafter Kennedy went back to his room, then off to the breakfast gathering. Howard was stationed in front of and below the speakers table that was up on a stage. Kennedy had begun his speech when suddenly Jackie walked in



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President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy exit the Hotel Texas after the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce Breakfast, Fort Worth, Texas, 22 November 1963. Mike Howard front. Please Credit: "Cecil Stoughton. White House Photographs. John. F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston."

Aide Kenneth O'Donnell told Lyndon B. Johnson he was now the president. Howard said LBJ came out of the room holding his shoulder, likely because his Secret Service agent Rufus Youngblood pounced on him in the car during the shooting. Next, the casket was loaded and started to be removed, which created a scuffle. Dallas County Medical Examiner Dr. Earl Rose insisted that the body stay there for autopsy. The Kennedy entourage would have none of it. After a confrontation, the body was taken to Air Force One at Love Field. Howard watched as the casket, LBJ and others boarded the plane. "I was at the base of the stairs," he said.

Soon Howard recognized Federal Judge Sarah Hughes who had come to officially swear-in Johnson. "I had cases in her court before, so I knew who she was," Howard said. After the planes left for Washington, D.C., Howard was told to return to Fort Worth to interview a suspect.

The suspect had been seen at a filing station with a rifle and scope in the backseat of his vehicle. Police found him and took him in for questioning. They were getting little information from him until Howard arrived. He entered the interrogation room and sat down in front of him. The man said the rifle was his father's and he had gotten it from a repair shop. While at the store he decided to purchase a shotgun, thus the guns in the car. Howard asked him what he was doing in Dallas. "He said none of your business," Howard said. At that point an exhausted Howard had enough of the cocky suspect, pulled his revolver, cocked the hammer back and convinced the man it would be in his best interest to talk, which he did. Turns out the suspect had picked up a girl in Dallas and spent the night in a hotel. Thereafter the man was released.

Howard meets Oswald

Now back in Dallas, Howard asked how the interrogation of Oswald was coming along and told not so well, but Dallas Police Captain Will Fritz would get him to open up. Howard entered the room with the head of the Dallas Secret Service, Forrest V. Sorrels, where Oswald was seated. Howard sat off to the side of the room to observe. Shortly thereafter an FBI agent came in to question Oswald. Howard said Oswald denied everything. I said to Howard, that watching the films over the years, Oswald looked so calm throughout his time in custody and that really surprised me. "Did he seem that way to you," I asked. "Oh yes. He wasn't serious at all and that made us kind of mad," Howard said. Howard told me there was no doubt in his mind Oswald was guilty and that's why he was so calm. "He could not possibly be that calm and go on if he were innocent. I'd seen these kind of people before," he added, saying Oswald was so calm because he knew what was going on, not unaware of why he had been arrested.

He asked to interrogate Oswald but was told no. Howard said if Sorrels would have been allowed to do the interrogation it would have produced a much better result. He said the Dallas Police Department didn't know what to do when under the spotlight.

Protecting the Oswald Family

Soon, Howard got another assignment. President Johnson had called to say he had decided the Oswald family needed protection from potential harm. "I was the only person available

and the place went crazy. "It was bedlam. Many of the women were standing on their chairs to get a look at Jackie to see what she was wearing," Howard said.

After the breakfast, Howard and others took the presidential party back to Carswell AFB for the short flight to Dallas. Howard said he had deputized hundreds of police officers to provide security, covering every street corner, overpass, intersection and other locations along the route. While going down Hwy 377 there were many children and a couple of teachers along the road. Mrs. Kennedy had the car stopped so she and the president could get out and meet them.

Once the flight was on its way, Howard and the others returned to the Texas Hotel where he and another agent did a "sweep" of the presidential suite. A sweep picks up everything that is loose in the room so nothing is left behind for souvenir seekers. To do this two Secret Service agents circle the room in opposite directions over and over in a tighter and tighter circle until they meet in the middle of the room. Then everything is put in trash bags and taken away.

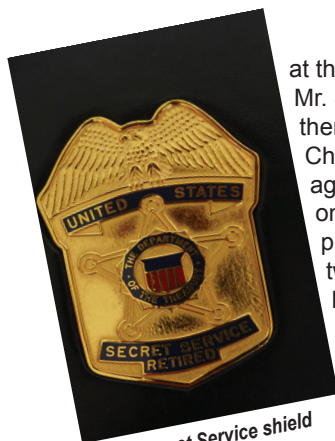
"....shots fired in Dallas..."

JFK had three televisions in the room so he could watch ABC, CBS and NBC. Just as Howard was about to leave the room he heard the TV say "shots fired in Dallas." "We immediately went downstairs and jumped in the first (official) car we could find," Howard said. As fast as they could, they drove to Dallas. I asked Howard what his first thoughts were. "It was the worst thing in the world. We thought, my gosh I hope it was a firecracker," he said.

The two-way radio was on in the sheriff's car and it was then he heard the motorcade was going to Parkland Hospital and that "we've been hit." "When they say we've been hit, that means the president has been hit," Howard said.

He and the others arrived at Parkland where he saw Dallas P.D. officers with pistols in their hands. He and other agents entered the hospital and spread out. He asked one of the agents (perhaps Jack Ready) how Kennedy was doing. "It's bad, he's really hit," said the agent to Howard.

A few minutes later it was announced Kennedy was dead.



Howard's Secret Service shield

at that time. I was just standing there and Mr. Sorrels said to go find them and put them in protective custody," Howard said. Charles Kunkel, a Washington, D.C. agent, came to town and joined him on the assignment. So together they protected Oswald's wife Marina, their two very young children, June and Rachel, Oswald's mother Marguerite (about whom Howard didn't have much good to say) and Oswald's brother Robert.

The agents found out "Life" magazine reporters had the Oswald's holed up in a hotel room. They waited outside for the reporters to leave, then rushed in, scooped them up and took them to a secret location. A mutual friend of the Oswald's and the Secret Service, Peter Gregory, was brought in as an interpreter because Marina spoke little English. Over the next several days they spoke with the family, put a report together and sent it to Washington. Part of what they reviewed was Oswald's notebook. Howard said it contained statements that Oswald would kill FBI agent James Hosty, John Connelly, Gen. Edwin Walker and vice president Nixon. I asked Howard of his impression of Marina. "She was a scared little girl, but more intelligent than Oswald ever dreamed of," he replied. Howard understood her to be a registered pharmacist in Russia and wanted to come to the U.S. "That's why she married Lee Oswald. She knew she made a mistake after she'd been married to him for a week," Howard said.

Marina told him that Oswald would have blackouts, come out of it and slap her. He added that Oswald had mental problems, tantrums, according to the impressions Marina gave him. Asked why she stayed with him, Marina told the agents she felt she didn't have a choice; didn't have anywhere else to go (eventually she moved in with Irving, Texas, resident Ruth Paine where she lived at the time of the assassination, while Oswald lived in a rooming house at 1026 N. Beckley St. in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas).

Of that week long experience Howard said, "That was a hundred years of my life." Marina and Howard eventually became friends, a person who she would turn to for advice from time to time. Like when the English attorney/author Michael Eddowes sought her permission to exhume Oswald's body. Eddowes theorized that the Oswald that came back to the U.S. in 1962 was not the Oswald that arrived in Russia in 1959. Instead, a Russian agent came to America. Howard advised her to allow the exhumation to end the matter. This took place on Oct. 5, 1981, and proved the body was the real Oswald.

I asked him where he was when he heard nightclub owner Jack Ruby killed Oswald in the Dallas Police Department basement. "I was with Marina at that time. We were in a car going to Ruth Paine's to pick up some things for Marina. They heard it over the radio," said Howard. Marina wanted to go to the hospital to see the body, which they did.

Howard helped with getting a casket, vault and preacher for the Oswald funeral. Media personnel served as pallbearers.

I asked Howard about Warren Commission documents that stated that a few minutes after the assassination, two local law enforcement officers encountered Secret Service agents behind the picket fence atop the grassy knoll; that they said they were Secret Service agents and showed credentials. The problem with that is that Secret Service agent Sorrels, according to his statement to the Commission, said he was the first agent back

at Dealey Plaza, about 20 to 25 minutes after the shooting. So how could agents have been encountered in just a few minutes? Were they impostors? Howard said, "We didn't have anybody up there behind that fence. That's my opinion. There wouldn't have been Secret Service agents there behind that fence. There should have been." He then added that some people like to have attention. "Everybody wants to get into a book," he said.



Howard's autographed photo of Jacqueline Kennedy.

Do you have any reservations about the Commission's findings I asked? "Oh no. They tried their best with what information they had. They failed to put one thing in there that was a dead ringer and that was what was in his notebook, where someone had torn out the page where he said he was going to kill these people. Someone tore that page out between the time it left our hands and when it got to the Warren Commission. It (the notebook) went through the FBI, which is who we turned it over to.



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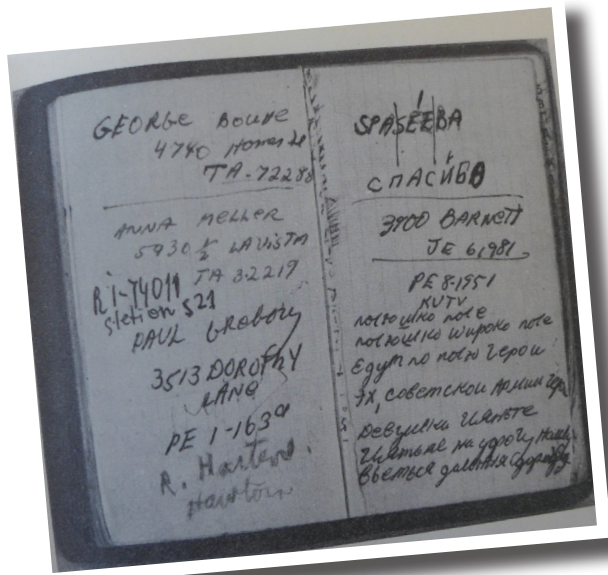
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Howard Reveals Missing Page in Lee Harvey Oswald Notebook

Mike Howard and Charles Kunkel obtained the Oswald notebook one day when they took Marina to Ruth Paine's home in Irving, Texas, to pick up some clothes for Marina's baby. Dallas Police and the FBI had already been there to collect evidence but didn't see the Oswald notebook. This is because Marina had put it on a shelf between some cookbooks. She pointed it out to Howard and Kunkel who took custody of it. "So, the police and FBI missed it," said Howard of the find.

Now back at their secret location, the agents and Marina began looking through the notebook pages. Howard said Marina was very cooperative in making sense of many notations in the notebook.

In that notebook was the name of FBI agent James Hosty. Howard said, when Marina noted the name she told him he (Hosty) was mean and no good. Lee would come home and beat her because of Hosty's visits.

Howard said Hosty's job was to keep track of people who'd come to America from other countries, which the Oswald's did, from Russia, in summer 1962. Hosty would interview them and report his findings. This is how Marina came to know Hosty, who left his business card with Marina with a message for Lee to contact him.

In the notebook Howard revealed what he saw, that has not been seen since. "I will kill him," it said on a page that had the names of Hosty, John Connally and Gen. Edwin Walker on it, as well as the notation "the vice president."

Why Walker? Because Oswald saw him as un-American (remember Oswald was thought to be the alleged shooter at Walker in his home in April 1963).

Why Connally? Because back when he was the Secretary of the Navy (remember Connally was in the Nov. 22 motorcade, seated in front of President Kennedy and wounded during the shooting) and it was Connally's Secretary of the Navy office that gave Oswald an undesirable discharge from the Marine Corps because he was a defector in 1959. Connally's signature was at the bottom of that discharge-related document.

Howard learned from Robert Oswald that when Lee came home from Russia with Marina and their first child, June, Lee thought he'd be greeted as a hero at the airport. But family was all that was there to greet him. Later at Marguerite's house, Lee was shown the letter

from the Navy. Howard said, when this happened back in 1962, Robert said his brother Lee said, "I outta kill that so and so," referring to Connally.

Robert then helped Lee draft a letter to Connally trying to get the discharge designation changed. The handwritten letter, dated Jan. 30, 1962, is in Warren Commission Volume 19, page 713. In that letter Oswald said, "I shall employ all means necessary to right this gross mistake.....". Weeks later Lee received a letter saying the discharge stays as stated.

"He said it right then and put it in his little notebook, that he would kill this S.O.B. Connally. James Hosty because he was messing with his wife, the vice president and Gen. Edwin Walker, who was un-America, according to Lee," said Howard.

It was this page with the "I will kill..." statements on it that later disappeared. The notebook is in Warren Commission Volume 16, page 43, Commission Exhibit 18. Look closely and you'll see a sliver of a page, but the rest of that page torn out (see photo).

So, what happened to that page? It remains a mystery. Howard said the Secret Service turned the notebook and other evidence over to the FBI. Howard feels the page was removed so it would look like the FBI did not know about Oswald before the assassination.

(Editor's note: This makes sense because there is irrefutable proof of another piece of evidence about Oswald that was destroyed. Oswald dropped off a note for Hosty at Dallas FBI headquarters just days before the assassination. After the assassination Hosty was told to get rid of the note. He did so by flushing it down a toilet. This escapade came to light 12 years after the assassination, when in 1975 Congressional hearings delved into the rumor and learned the truth about the note. Hosty, under orders, had destroyed it).

Was Gov. Connally the Oswald target?

After a break for lunch I point blank asked Howard this question: Are you saying Lee Harvey Oswald was shooting at Gov. Connally, not President Kennedy? Howard said yes, that was his opinion.

Howard's not alone with this thought. Oswald's wife, Marina, told the Warren Commission (Hearings, Volume 5, page 607) that she thought Lee was aiming at Connally because of the Marine Corps discharge-related letters.

Howard added that Oswald had threatened Connally, not Kennedy and nowhere has anyone found evidence that Oswald disliked JFK. "Not once did he ever say anything derogatory about John Kennedy to his wife (Marina)," said Howard. Referring back to the talk when Oswald came home to Russia, Howard said, "Now that's the way she said it and that's the way his brother said it."

Howard didn't realize the page was missing until after the Sept. 1964 publication of the Warren Report and the 26 volumes of evidence. "Someone tore that page out. It (the notebook) went directly to the FBI, directly to J. Edgar Hoover, directly from J. Edgar Hoover to Lyndon Johnson and from there to the Warren Commission. And the Warren Commission said it wasn't there."

Howard told me the notebook, Agent Kunkel's notes, and reels of tape-recorded interviews were put in a box, sealed and sent to the FBI.

Why did it disappear I asked? Howard said because Hoover didn't want anything derogatory to come out about his FBI having anything to do with Lee Harvey Oswald. They didn't want it seen because it involved an FBI agent (Hosty). "You can draw your own conclusions one way or the other, but that's the evidence we have," he said. Howard also referred me to a 2016 book called "Tragic Truth," by Pierre Sundborg. Chapter 20 of the book delves into this missing evidence mystery. Copies of this book are very limited. Only 300 copies were printed of this 615-page book with 3,481 footnotes.

Bill and Gayle Newman fell on the grass sheltering their children, north of Elm Street seconds after the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, fearing that they were in the line of fire. Photographer Frank Cancellare urged them to stay prone while he took this photo less than a minute later.



Bill and Gayle Newman Remember Witnessing the Kennedy Assassination

Then the Newmans raced off to Dealey Plaza, parked and looked

Dallas residents Bill and Gayle Newman went about everyday life like thousands of others in Texas until that fateful day of Nov. 22, 1963. That afternoon they witnessed, up close, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dealey Plaza. From that day until today, they are sought after to interview about the horrifying experience, which they did for me on May 3 in their Texas home.

Bill met Gayle while working at a frozen custard shop when in high school. She and some friends stopped in and before long they began dating, then married in 1958 and raised two children, Billy and Clayton. The four of them can be seen in many photos taken in the aftermath of the assassination.

In 1963 Dallas was a conservative city, not particularly Kennedy country, but the President wanted a trip to Texas to mend some political fences. The planned schedule was for stops in San Antonio and Fort Worth on Nov. 21, then Air Force One would land at Dallas' Love Field on Nov. 22 for a parade through the city, then lunch at the Trade Mart, then on to Austin to close out the day.

Some were worried about the Dallas stop. Posters had been going around that said "JFK: Wanted for Treason" and some newspaper articles were negative as well. On Nov. 22, Bill was working as an electrician and had the day off to work on a paper for his masters' license. "I was off from work and that's how we ended up at Love Field, then later on at the (Dealey) Plaza to get a view of the President. The reason we went to see the president is we had two small children (Clayton age two and Billy age four) and, you know, it's not every day the President of the United States comes to your city. So, we just wanted our children to be able to say they saw President Kennedy," Bill said.

The Newmans got in their car and off they went to the airfield. They arrived in time to see the President's blue and white jet land and watched as the Kennedys made their way to their limousine, with Bill getting a closer look than Gayle who was behind him. Remembering 11.22.63

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Left: Bill and Gayle Newman tell of their witnessing the assassination of President John F. Kennedy

Bottom: The Newman's on the ground in Dealey Plaza immediately after the shots were fired "Cecil Stoughton. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston"



for an area where the crowd had thinned out. "We just walked down the north side of Elm St. toward the triple underpass and about halfway we stopped along the curb. We had been there less than five minutes and you could hear the parade coming down Main St., hear the people cheering and I recall seeing the President's car turn right onto Houston St.," Bill said.

Gayle's uncle, Steve Ellis, was a Dallas Police Department motorcycle officer and in the motorcade ahead of the presidential limo. As he passed by they acknowledged each other.

"As he came towards us about 100 plus feet away from us the first shot rang out, like a boom, boom, about like that. I thought to myself that's a pretty poor joke, somebody throwing firecrackers beside the car. I remember seeing his arms go up like he was trying to protect his face. As the car got closer to us you could tell something was wrong. You could even see the protruding eyes of Governor Connally and the blood on his shirt," Bill told me.

"And just as the car passed in front of us the third shot rang out and I remember seeing the side of President Kennedy's head blow off. At the time I thought his ear blew off. It was just a ball of white going up and you could see the red and he fell over into Mrs. Kennedy's arms more or less."

I asked Bill if he heard anything said from inside the car. "I heard Mrs. Kennedy say 'Oh my God, no, they've shot Jack.' That's what I believe I heard at the time."

Bill turned to Gayle and said to hit the ground, which they did as can be seen in photos. "The reason I responded like that was because the ground behind us was a higher elevation and I had the sensation that the third shot came from over the top of our heads, which would have meant we were in the line of gunfire."

Moments later Jerry Haines and Jay Watson of WFAA – TV asked if they'd interview back at the television station, so off they went. At the station the talk was that Kennedy had been shot in the back. The Newmans knew better. They were just feet away when

the head shot occurred.

They were put on the air, interviewed and then went to the Sheriff's Department to write out an affidavit.

That evening they finally returned home. "That night we kept the kids in our room," said Bill. He feared he may have seen someone he might later have to testify against in court. "So, I laid an old 20-gauge shotgun down by my bed that night and for the next two or three nights after that." Looking back on it he said the thought was silly. If someone could shoot the President, they could certainly get to Bill Newman.

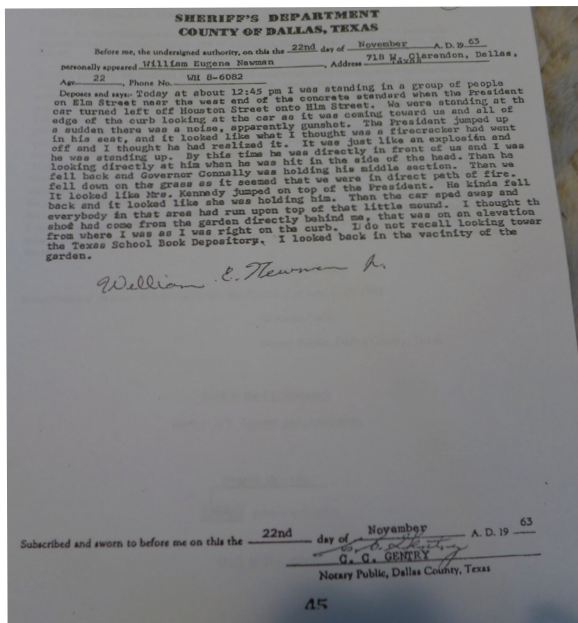
"I remember seeing the side of President Kennedy's head blow off" – Bill Newman

On Sunday, Nov. 24, FBI agents came to their home to review their statements to see if they were accurate or needed clarification. "They were very polite," Newman said of the agents.

Also, on Sunday, Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald. "We were in church when it happened. I was surprised anyone had access to him (Oswald)," said Bill. He then added an afterthought about the shooting saying, "that is a whole other chapter by itself."

Life went on and in Sept. 1964, the Warren Report was issued. It did not include any testimony by the Newmans. He said he was told by Vincent Bugliosi that was probably because others with similar testimony had given their statements to the Commission.

I asked Bill what he thought happened on Nov. 22, 1963. He was hesitant to answer at first, saying he shares what he saw, not what he thinks. But later Bill said, "A thought that goes through my mind is when you talk conspiracy, multiple shooters, to me if Lee Harvey Oswald was the shooter and in fact he was the only shooter, there very well could have been other people in the background. That's always been a curiosity to me." Later in the interview Bill added



Newman's statement to the FBI.

another thought. If it was just Oswald alone, why are documents still being withheld or heavily redacted 55 years later?

In 1967, New Orleans District attorney Jim Garrison stunned the world with the announcement he had solved the Kennedy assassination. In doing so he charged Clay Shaw. The Newmans were subpoenaed to testify. Bill was ill with the flu when the time came so Gayle went first, on her own, to New Orleans. Bill followed the next day. He said the courtroom was jammed with media and others and that he was questioned by Garrison, who asked what he saw and where he was, that was all.

Remember that with Bill and Gayle were their two little boys. I asked if either has any recollection of the event. Bill said Clayton doesn't, but Billy later asked Gayle why someone shot that man and "did you see all that blood". "So, he actually saw the head shot," Bill said.

In later years, do they talk about the assassination as a family, I asked. "Very little. We've moved on with our lives," Bill replied.

When asked about the Oct. 2017, release of thousands of previously classified JFK assassination documents, Bill said he was disappointed because many are blacked out. "What does the FBI or Secret Service have to fear if there's nothing to it in terms of national security. To me that's what keeps the assassination of President Kennedy such an active event. It makes me wonder more today that it ever has before because if it's what the Warren Report says then what does our government have to fear?"

Bill opened up about his thoughts. He said he believes Oswald was in the sixth-floor window, but he also believes someone else was involved, maybe not at the scene, but behind the scenes.

I asked him about the theory that Oswald was trying to kill Connally, not the President. "That's possible, but the reason I would question that is he could have gotten the governor nearly any day of the week somewhere around Austin when he was in the Capital. The governor is much more accessible than the President of the United States. I think President Kennedy was the primary target and Governor Connally just happened to take a bullet."

"I heard two noises and thought they were firecrackers." – Gayle Newman

memories. She said the morning of the assassination they put on their best Sunday clothes. Their little boys had on matching tan corduroy pants, striped shirt and red sweaters. They left for Love Field and watched as the Kennedys came in and departed in the motorcade. In Dealey Plaza she said they wanted to see her Uncle Steve pass by, which they did.

"As the (president's) car turned I heard two noises and thought they were firecrackers and thought it was pretty rude to do something like that. I didn't realize anything was wrong until they got directly in front of us when that third shot rang out. You could see bits of flesh flying up in the air. Bill turned to me and said 'That's it. Hit the Ground.' So, we put the children on the ground and shielded them with our body. I was sort of frozen. Bill looked around and saw more than I did. I was just terrified," Gayle said. She recalls no reaction from the children at the time. Pictures show them looking around. "They didn't cry or anything like that," said Gayle.

Gayle, too, was called to testify at the Clay Shaw trial in New Orleans. She was scared about leaving town on her own. "I had to go by myself. Bill had the flu. They (the New Orleans authorities) told me to be sure that the persons that picked me up showed their identification," he said.

Gayle checked into a hotel and later left for the trial. There she was asked where she was during the shooting and what happened.

Later, with another eyewitness, she went to see Bourbon St. The next morning, she and Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Zapruder (the man who famously filmed the assassination) went in the same car to the airport to return to Dallas. On the way, a tractor-trailer truck slammed into their car at an intersection. Officers arrived and thankfully no one was seriously hurt. One officer said to them that had they been killed, the incident would have been headline news. And probably their names would have been added to the JFK assassination-related "mysterious deaths" list.

Another interesting experience Gayle shared was when they were taken to London, England, in 1986, for the mock trial of Lee Harvey Oswald. The flamboyant Gerry Spence, famous for defending Karen Silkwood vs. Kerr-McGee, squared off against Vincent Bugliosi, famous for the Charles Manson conviction in 1970-1971.

The program was aired on British television and today one can obtain a DVD copy from various sources. Twelve jurors deliberated for approximately eight hours. They unanimously found no evidence of conspiracy, Oswald alone assassinated President Kennedy. The Newmans gave their testimony and then returned home. That, they thought, was the end of it, but Gayle said something strange happened. She said a few weeks later in the middle of the night, they received a long-distance phone call. They said they would accept the charges and then the man on the other end of the line wanted to know how to get in touch with one of the mock trial attorneys. The Newmans had no idea how to contact either of them. Gayle said what was strange about it was there was never a charge on their phone bill for accepting that long distance call.

The Newmans live a quiet life in an east Dallas suburb. During my visit they were preparing for a visit from their two boys the following day but were kind enough to take the time to share their extraordinary experience with me, for which I'm grateful.

As I was putting my recording equipment and notebook away, Bill asked me if I'd like to have a scotch and water before I left. I said, wow, I don't think anyone has ever offered me a drink after an interview. Bill said, "Well you haven't interviewed any from Texas, have you?" and gave a hearty laugh.



Dr. Walter Wyrick remembers Nov. 22, 1963, at Parkland Hospital

This is a story told in print for the first time. It's the memories of Hot Springs Village resident Dr. Walt Wyrick, who found himself at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, Texas, on Nov. 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was brought in after being gunned down in Dealey Plaza. Wyrick said he never brought the story to anyone's attention because he didn't think it was significant. I think you'll agree with me when you read it, that it's not only significant, but unique.

Wyrick grew up in Texarkana, Texas, and after completing high school he went to the University of Texas at Austin. "At that time I had no clue what I wanted to do," Wyrick said. Two-and-a-half years later he was accepted into dental school and was close to graduation. But he hesitated and decided he wasn't ready to make a commitment to move forward with that plan. He hitchhiked to New York, went to Europe in Jan. 1960, bought a motorcycle and traveled all over, including Africa.

While on a ship coming back he noticed a paperback book, "Understanding Surgery." "I read that thing about 20 times. I decided I'd go into pre-med," said Wyrick, who soon returned to the University of Texas.

He finished the two-and-a-half year program in one year, graduating in 1961. He was accepted at Texas medical schools and chose UT's Southwest Medical School attached to Parkland Hospital in Dallas, which served as the school's teaching hospital. Now a junior medical student, he attended classes and got a night job in the blood bank at Parkland to earn some money.

On Nov. 22, 1963, Wyrick was working at the hospital in orthopedic surgery and attending lectures once a week. He began that day making early rounds. At 1 p.m. he was required to attend a dermatology lecture at the hospital in an upper floor classroom.

Wyrick and a friend were on their way to the lecture upstairs and as they stepped into an elevator they heard Kennedy had been shot and was on the way to Parkland. They dashed out of the elevator to get to the emergency area, but as they approached, there was a large man wearing sunglasses blocking the door. He stopped them and said they were not coming through that door. Wyrick and his friend knew another route to the ER, through the morgue, chemistry lab and into the hallway that led to the blood bank.

The blood bank was across the hall from Trauma Room One where Kennedy had been taken. Wyrick began drawing blood from donors when a person came into the room saying two units of O-negative blood were needed. Wyrick got the units and headed for Trauma Room One. He started to go in, but a nurse took the blood units from him and a second nurse told him he could not enter the room. "So I kind of backed off and stood there, then realized Kennedy was in there. I thought, this is history," said Wyrick.

Secret Service agents and others were also in the hall and about this time. Vice President Lyndon Johnson's wife, Lady Bird, appeared and wanted to know where the PBX operators were (meaning the switchboard room). "I said I know where it is and she says, 'can you get me there without going through all this crowd?' I said yeah, I know a back way." So Wyrick and Lady Bird went up to the first floor and walked into the switchboard room. "She told them there will be no incoming or outgoing calls," Wyrick remembers. The operators hesitated until Johnson said to pull out all the plugs and shut it down. "And she said it in a way that, as I later learned while in the military, was in a command voice, and they did (shut it down)."



Emergency entrance at Parkland Hospital.

Wyrick started to walk back to the blood bank. "And she grabbed me by the shoulder, and this is what I remember more vividly than anything. She said, 'Where you goin' sonny?'"

Lady Bird then asked him if he knew of a place that was big enough to hold a press conference. He did, and took her to a large conference room. "I took her down there and showed her that room and she set a podium up and opened up the doors to make the room bigger and she said this (room) would work. I knew better than to walk off again so she asked me to take her to the surgery area (where Gov. John B. Connally was being treated for five wounds)," said Wyrick.

Lady Bird helped set up chairs in a hospital hall and Wyrick remembers seeing Texas Senator Ralph Yarbrough sitting in a chair crying like a baby. "She went over to him and grabbed him by the shoulders and told him to straighten up. With that, I was dismissed," Wyrick said. He then returned to the blood bank to draw many more units of blood, perhaps as many as 230 or more that day from volunteers.

Wyrick knew all the doctors that worked on JFK, including Dr. Malcolm Perry and Dr. Robert McClelland, two of the doctors that were in Trauma Room One. The talk in the surgical department after the assassination included a comment made by Dr. Kemp Clark to Perry as he was trying to resuscitate Kennedy. Wyrick said he was told Kemp said to Perry, "What the hell are you trying to do, resurrect him?" "Now whether that actually happened or not, I was not in the room, but that was the scuttlebutt," Wyrick said.

I asked him if he knew anything about a scuffle that broke out in the hospital when Secret Service agents were removing Kennedy's

body for transport back to Washington, D.C. They were briefly stopped by Dallas County Medical Examiner Dr. Earl Rose, who told them by Texas law, the autopsy had to take place in Texas seeing as the murder took place in Texas. The agents were having none of it and barged through anyway. Wyrick said all he knew about the incident was what he'd read in the newspapers.

I also asked him about the finding of a bullet on a stretcher. This was the bullet, Warren Commission Exhibit 399, that was later termed "the magic bullet" because it had caused seven total wounds on Kennedy and Connally, yet looked nearly pristine. The bullet was found by hospital engineer Darrell Tomlinson, but circumstances made it was unclear upon which stretcher it was found. Wyrick said he was told about the bullet by another medical student, Jody Goldstrich, but knew nothing about the matter other than that.

Two days later on Nov. 24, Lee Harvey Oswald was killed by Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby in the basement of the Dallas Police Department. Oswald was rushed to Parkland, but died soon thereafter at 1:07 p.m., almost exactly 48 hours after Kennedy was pronounced dead at Parkland. Wyrick said he was home at that time trying to get some sleep after being up all day and night. "From that point on I watched TV just like anyone else," he said.

Later, after Connally was recovering, Wyrick would sit in on conversations between Connally and others at the hospital. Connally would come in on Thursdays for a 1 p.m. appointment with Dr. Charles Gregory, the head of orthopedics. Connally would come in early, around 12:30 p.m. and chat with George Peacock, president of the medical center. Connally would tease about the hospital getting better doctors for his wrist which was still bothering him, more so than his other wounds. Wyrick would listen in and noted that Connally was just kidding, upbeat, jovial and entertaining, like it was just a bunch of guys getting



This is the plaque that indicates the precise location of Parkland Hospital's Trauma Room 1 bed on November 22, 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was taken there. (JPotter Photo)

together to have fun.

Time passed on at Parkland, but Wyrick said they didn't talk much about the assassination. "We were busy all the time. There was no room to sit around (and talk)," he explained. He knew all the doctors that worked on the Governor and President, but they worked in the present, not in the past, Wyrick said of the never-ending natural of ER work.



Photo courtesy Tina Towner-Pender

Tina Towner-Pender Films JFK Motorcade in Dealey Plaza

Tina Towner Pender was only 13 years old on Nov. 22, 1963. She and her family lived in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas and on the day of President Kennedy's visit, she and her parents, James and Patricia Towner, decided to see the motorcade.

Her school was allowing students to leave for the event, so Towner-Pender turned in the

required parental permission slip and hopped in the car with her Mom and Dad. Her father had taught her how to use the family's movie camera. While she would film, he would snap still photos of the motorcade procession. I asked her if she was excited about seeing the President of the United States. Towner-Pender said she was probably more excited about getting out of school.

The family parked their car at a train station, walked to Dealey Plaza and decided on a viewing location. "Daddy thought it would be the best place to take photos as they turned around the corner (of Houston and Elm streets)," Towner-Pender told me. Turns out that corner was directly across the street from the Texas Schoolbook Depository (TSBD). Her father noticed a man in a white coat on the sixth floor of the TSBD and told a nearby policeman what he'd seen.

Minutes later they could hear the crowd getting louder as the motorcade approached the Plaza. As can be seen in footage taken that day, Towner-Pender in her white bobby socks, her parents and others stepped out a short distance into the street to get a better angle for photos and film.

And then it happened, the president's limo came into view and she followed the limo's movement with her movie camera as it rounded the intersection. "I quit taking film when I couldn't see anything but the back of the limousine in front of the crowd," she said. Looking at the footage, it appears that First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy is looking right at Towner-Pender. "It sure felt like it. It looked like she was looking right at me," she said.

Suddenly, shots rang out and Towner-Pender, like many others that day, thought the sound was from firecrackers. "Then someone pulled me down to the ground, a man, I don't know who it was, and when he thought it was safe to get up he let go of my arm, then I reconnected with my parents who were not far away. Daddy knew

right away someone fired a high powered rifle and he thought somebody had tried to kill the President," she said.

Her father moved toward the grassy knoll farther down the motorcade route on Elm Street, and took more photos while Towner-Pender used the rest of the movie film to pan the area.

Soon the Towners drove home, had a sandwich and took her back to school. There, she said, things were awkward. "It was chaotic because no one was having classes and we were listening to the radio," she explained.

The media put out a request for film and still footage, so her father turned in what they had. Later he learned the items had been given to the federal government. "So all we could do was wait," said Towner-Pender. When the film and stills were finally returned, they got their first look at what they recorded. Much later they learned that a splice had been made in the film.

In 1968, "Teen" magazine contacted her to write about her experience, which she did. "View from the Corner" appeared in the magazine's June issue that year. Towner-Pender also later visited JFK's gravesite in Arlington National Cemetery. "I can't even describe how I felt. It was like it had happened a long time ago even though it had only been a few years. I think it was then I realized the significance of it," she explained.

In the late 1970s the House Select Committee on Assassinations contacted her. It was the first time the government had spoken with the Towners. The committee wanted to borrow the original film footage, which they returned months later.

Towner-Pender developed a great relationship with the Sixth Floor Museum in Dealey Plaza and its then-curator Gary Mack. She said they helped her with questions and even invited her to participate on discussion panels.

She has written a book, "Tina Towner: My Story as the Youngest Photographer at the Kennedy Assassination." I asked her about a reference on page 80 that came from her brother-in-law in 2003, that said Lee Harvey Oswald was seen getting out of a car, going into the laundromat on Seventh Street, which was behind the Texas Theater (which is where Oswald was apprehended by Dallas Police), make a phone call and leave. Towner-Pender said she has no other information about the allegation.

Asked what she thinks happened that day, she said her only thought is that she doesn't know. Then she added, "I don't think we've been told everything. It might not be anything like we've been told officially. I just don't think we know. I don't know if we ever will."



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Stephen Fagin Lives His Dream as Curator of The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

"I don't remember a time when I wasn't interested in the Kennedy assassination," said Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza curator Stephen Fagin during an interview earlier this year. The museum is inside the Texas School Book Depository (TSBD) where on Nov. 22, 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald is said to have fired three shots, wounding Texas Governor John Connally and killing President John F. Kennedy.

He began as an intern at the Museum in 2000 and followed Gary Mack as curator in 2016. "I knew then this was the place where I wanted to live, breathe and die. It's an honor to be here. I never lose sight of the fact that I am the trusted custodian of this site. To me the Kennedy assassination is still relevant, and I want others to understand its relevance as well," said Fagin. "It's a huge honor, something I take very seriously. We try to construct a narrative out of the chaos of history," Fagin told me while we sat in the Museum's interview room where he's done approximately 1,500 oral histories for their oral history project program. The museum doesn't take a position on "who done it." Instead the focus is on the assassination's impact and why it's meaningful.

Fagin attended SMU and earned degrees in history and English. At the University of Oklahoma, he worked on his master's degree and thesis, which in 2013, turned into a remarkable book, "Assassination and Commemoration: JFK, Dallas, and the Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza." The book is outstanding, as it shares the trials and tribulations of saving the Depository from the wrecking ball, the building renovation, the housing of Dallas County offices on the lower floors and creation of a fantastic museum, full of information, all done in a tasteful manner. It's estimated 400,000 people per year go through the museum.

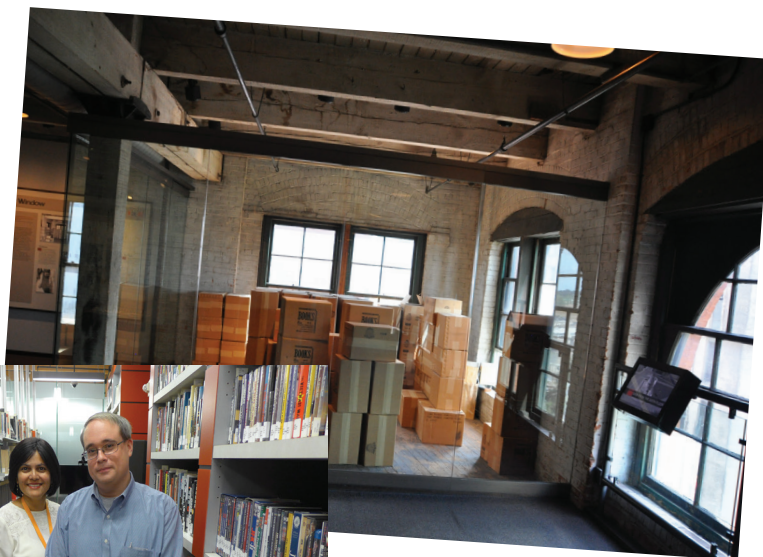
Fagin's mother had many books on the assassination. He can remember looking at the bookshelves and reading about it. One of his favorites is the 1967 book, "Six Seconds in Dallas," by Josiah Thompson, even today considered one of the best-ever books on the assassination.

Of the 50,000+ artifacts at the museum related to the Kennedy killing, what's the most significant item I asked? "The building. It's important to have that connection," Fagin answered.

Some artifacts are on loan from the National Archives and others continue to show up out of the blue. Like photographs and slides for example. Fagin said they got a group of slides as recently as 2002 from Jay Skaggs that had never been seen before. And a never-before-seen film came to them in 2006, shot in Dealey Plaza by George Jeffries. I asked if he thought more items would be found. "Absolutely. Every couple of years or so someone comes in with something. There's stuff out there and that's exciting," Fagin said.

Some readers may recall the "Hertz" sign atop the TSBD, which was removed in May 1979. It is now kept with the museum in more than 120 pieces. The sign had to come down because it was destroying the top two floors, as brick and mortar disintegrated under the weight of the sign.

Fagin said it was a battle to keep the building in place. Many



Top: The sniper area on the sixth floor



Bottom: From left, Sixth Floor Museum librarian Krishna Shenoy and Museum curator Stephen Fagin in the museum's library (Jeff Meek photo, courtesy of The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza)

saw it as a painful reminder of the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination, "the epicenter of a nightmare," he said.

He sees the then-public works director, Judson Shook as the man who started the effort to keep the TSBD and to use it for some purpose. Shook got historian Conover Hunt and others on board, which eventually became what's in the building today, county offices and the wonderfully done museum.

As I toured the museum for the second time, I found it as equally interesting as it was the first time. I found it encouraging to see perhaps 85 people in line waiting to get in, by far most of them not alive on Nov. 22, 1963. Here at the museum, history was still alive.

The museum is full of many exhibits that begin with the 1960 presidential campaign and follow Kennedy's White House years, his programs, the communist threat, the "Space Race," the family, his arrival in Dallas, the assassination and the aftermath, including the government investigations thereafter. The actual sniper's nest on the sixth floor is enclosed, you can't get into that corner. But peering through the glass at the stacked boxes and window, takes you back to that horrible day. For me it also provoked questions, like was Lee Harvey Oswald in this corner, alone, firing those shots? Was anyone else up here with him (an eyewitness swore he saw two men on the sixth floor shortly before the shooting). The exhibits faithfully capture the event and the pandemonium that followed.

There is a fine research library also at the museum, carefully taken care of by librarian Krishna Shenoy. Gaining access to it requires making an appointment.

"Is that the grassy knoll over there?" I heard a teenage girl ask her father. "Yes," he said as he explained the significance of the area, which many people feel was the location of a second gunman.

Here was a family touring the museum, interested in our past and what happened that day in Dallas. There were many others doing the same outside the building, where I overheard more conversations, some pro conspiracy, some not. No matter what you think happened on Nov. 22, 1963, this museum is well worth the cost of a visit. If you haven't been there, I'd suggest you give it a look.

For more information go to jfk.org or call 214-747-6660. The building/museum is at 411 Elm Street in downtown Dallas.

Donna Rector Views Motorcade

Photo courtesy Donna Rector



Hot Springs Villager Donna Rector remembers quite clearly that dark day in Dallas. She grew up in Altheimer, Arkansas, and later moved to Dallas due to her then-husband's job at Texas Instruments, where he had an office on Lemmon Avenue. When they learned President Kennedy was coming to Dallas they thought that along Lemmon Avenue might be a good location to

view the motorcade because the crowd would not be too thick. On Nov. 22, with one-year-old son, Bryan, with them, they drove into the city via a route near Love Field, and saw Air Force One coming in overhead, gleaming in the now-sunny late morning weather. "It was a magnificent site," Rector said.

They parked the car and walked to their pre-determined area on Lemmon Avenue, arriving approximately 30 minutes before the motorcade was scheduled to pass by. Rector said, back in those days, everything was in black and white on television, so it was a real eye-opener to see the President and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy in color. "I was so enthralled with seeing President Kennedy and Jackie that I didn't even notice Governor Connally (who was in the same vehicle as the Kennedys) or Vice President Johnson. I was just oblivious to everybody else. They were a gorgeous couple," she said.

After the motorcade had passed, Rector heard some ladies nearby say something to the effect that Jackie wasn't all that beautiful. "I didn't say anything, but I was thinking 'she's not Miss America, she's our First Lady'. I thought she looked wonderful. I never in my life ever saw anything like that fuchsia suit she had on," Rector told me.

Her husband drove her and the baby back home where she put her baby son down for a nap and turned on the television. Immediately she heard that the President had been shot. "I also turned on the radio and all the talk was that shots had come from a grassy knoll. That's all they were talking about," Rector said.

Like millions of others across the nation, she was glued to the television for the entire weekend. Rector said Dallas became a ghost town. No one was out and about as usual.

Rector couldn't believe it when she saw Jack Ruby shoot Lee





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Harvey Oswald in the Dallas Police Department basement. When asked what she thought about the JFK assassination she answered that she feels it will remain a mystery. Rector said she can't believe Lee Harvey Oswald pulled off the assassination all by himself. "I'm not convinced," she said.

Approximately five or six years later, now living in Richardson, Texas, she and their son were at a community pool. She noticed a young child in the pool and from behind, heard a woman with a thick accent speak to the child. Rector turned around and there was Marina Oswald. That little girl, Rector said, was Lee and Marina's daughter, June Oswald. "She looked just like her daddy," Rector noted.

Still later, in 1972, when Rector was working for AAA, she met Karen Leavelle, a niece of Jim Leavelle, the man handcuffed to Oswald when Ruby shot him.

Looking back on that dreadful weekend Rector said, "I think that's when we lost all of our innocence. Things changed. Those kinds of memories are stamped on your brain. It sure doesn't seem like 55 years ago, that's for sure."

Georgia Riddle's Dealey Plaza Experience

Photo courtesy Georgia Riddle



Hot Springs Village resident Georgia Riddle also saw the motorcade and heard the shots.

"I worked at Southern Supply Company next door to the school book depository. In fact, we parked behind the depository and walked over the tracks to the office. We were excited that the motorcade was going to come right past us so when it was time, we walked to the corner, were

standing on the corner, right side, as the motorcade turned and started down the hill (Elm Street had a downward slope) the shots rang out, and people hit the ground, people were yelling and running."

"We were not sure where the shots came from, but it seemed like on the side of the hill where there were lots of people. We saw Jackie climbing on the back of the convertible and then they took off down the hill," said Riddle. "There was a motorcycle policeman right in front of us and his radio said Kennedy was hit."

Continuing, "We all ran back to work and within seconds our building was surrounded by men with guns pointing toward us. I called my husband. I told him Kennedy was shot and he said that was not funny. I assured him it was no joke."

"Plain clothes officers came and asked us all our names and searched all of our cars, even took the seats out before we could go home. That took a long time. They detained us for hours. They said when the searching was completed we would be free to go." Riddle concluded, "It was a day I will never forget. The excitement continued the rest of the day and evening as they got Oswald and then he was shot."

Bill Veal Witnesses JFK Motorcade



The morning of Nov. 22 dawned with rainy skies, yet several thousand admirers in Fort Worth turned out for a JFK speech outside the Hotel Texas on that fateful day. After speaking, Kennedy went in the hotel where he and Jackie spoke to 2,000 guests assembled for a Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce-sponsored breakfast.

Then at 11:25 a.m. Air Force One left Fort Worth for Love Field in Dallas.

Again, a large crowd was on hand cheering for the President and desperately looking for Jackie Kennedy. Along the route was Hot Springs Village resident Bill Veal.

"I lived in Fort Worth and worked in Dallas. I'd met my car pool to drive the 32 miles on the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike to our office at 912 Commerce St. in downtown Dallas," Veal recalled for the Voice.

"We'd discussed JFK and his procession that was to drive through Dallas about noon that day. We all agreed it was a good chance to see the President."

"At 11:15 a.m. several of us had decided to have a quick lunch and to walk the block and a half to Elm Street to see Kennedy and his motorcade. I waved to the President as he went by," Veal said. "Shortly after 12:00 I went back to the office. Most of the men and women were standing around in shock. There was a lot of crying and shaking of heads. It took a few minutes for me to understand what had just happened." For the next three days it seemed like the clock stopped ticking and the world stopped spinning," Veal said.

Interestingly, just six days later Veal was present at an event in which Federal Judge Sarah Hughes was guest speaker. She was the judge that swore-in Lyndon Johnson as President. And years later he was in Los Angeles on June 6, 1968, when Robert Kennedy was assassinated.

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Robert Groden Unveils Zapruder film, Serves as Government Photo Expert on Panel

Robert J. Groden grew up in New York City, attended the University of Maryland, and since childhood, had a passion for history and the process of photography; preserving memories was important to Groden. Little did he know that interest would one day lead him into investigating the "crime of the century." "I had no idea how it would change my life," Groden said. As you will see, it was Groden who first brought the Abraham Zapruder film to a national audience and he would later become a member of the panel that looked at photographs, films and acoustics for the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) investigation in the late 1970s. Nov. 22, 1963, was his 18th birthday, and he was immediately interested in what happened in Dealey Plaza. He began reading everything he could about JFK's murder and cited "Six Seconds in Dallas," as an early example of an excellent book he learned from. "That really piqued my interest," said Groden of the book. Groden, himself, has authored several books on the assassination including, "The Killing of a President: The Complete Photographic Record of the JFK Assassination, the Conspiracy, and the Cover-Up," published in 1993. On March 6, 1975, on the late-night television show, "Goodnight America," hosted by Geraldo Rivera, the Zapruder film was seen for the very first time by a national audience. Seeing as the film was owned by "Life" magazine, I asked him how that showing came about. How did he obtain a copy, I asked?

"...there was an extra copy made..."

In 1966, he was working for a New York company called EFX Unlimited and they had the capability to make an 8 mm film into 35 mm film. The company had done so with footage of Woodstock, so "Life" approached them to do the same with their Zapruder film. "Needless to say there was an extra copy made they didn't know about," said Groden, who diligently studied the footage of Kennedy being shot. He was horrified by what he saw and was afraid because, he felt, he had evidence of conspiracy; that Kennedy was shot from the front, not the rear where Lee Harvey Oswald was alleged to be shooting from the Texas School Book Depository. "I was afraid," Groden told me, so he just sat on it for years. He later shared the footage with a few other researchers, then in 1973, was convinced to go public with the film, which he did at Georgetown University at a 10th anniversary symposium. It was nearly midnight before Groden showed the film so there was no media present at that time. He also showed other JFK assassination films done by witnesses like Orville Nix, for example. Two days later he showed the film again, but again, no press was on site to cover the event. In Jan. 1975, he was asked to present the film at a symposium in Boston, Massachusetts. Groden went, showed the film and the next day it was all over the newspapers. That evening he received a call from activist Dick

Gregory who found out about the showing and then met with Groden. The men and others discussed what to do and decided to announce their decision at a press conference in Chicago. Groden said, "We presented it there and told the newspapers and TV that we were going to present the evidence to the Rockefeller Commission in two days in Washington, D.C. They (the commission) were investigating the CIA activities within the United States." Groden testified for the committee and then got a call from Rivera's office in February.

News of the showing continued to travel and Groden then testified before Congress, followed by a call from Sen. Thomas Downing to re-open the investigation of the JFK assassination. Later as the investigation ramped up, Downing asked Groden to be a photo consultant for the HSCA.

So, on March 6, 1975, Groden and Gregory appeared on Rivera's program, but not without a few sparks flying first. "Life" magazine lawyers contacted ABC television, warning them of consequences if they showed the film. Groden said ABC almost caved in but Rivera insisted the show go on, which it did.

I remember seeing that very show and can still hear Rivera saying of the Zapruder film, "That's the most horrifying thing I've ever seen in the movies." Groden said, "When the show aired it created a huge public outcry."

Groden now a committee staffer

Groden, now a HSCA staff consultant went out on his first assignment - to investigate whether or not a photo showed Oswald or Billy N. Lovelady standing in the entrance of the TSBD at the time of the shooting. Everyone agreed it was not Oswald; it was Lovelady. During the next two years, Groden examined many films and photos and testified before the HSCA on Sept. 7, 1978 (HSCA Vol. 1, pages 61-140).

Then came the matter of the acoustics, the sounds heard on a Dallas Police dictabelt which recorded sounds and voices that came in from police officers to a dispatcher. Groden's job was to see if the sounds matched up to Kennedy and Connally's reactions seen on the Zapruder film, thus creating a sound version of the film in the hopes that would clear up questions of the number, timing and the origin of the shots.

Groden said they found evidence of at least seven shots as he and Dr. James Barger of Bolt, Beranek and Newman (BBN) analyzed the tape. BBN had gained fame for their analysis of a tape running during the 1970 shootings at Kent State University.

In July 1978, the committee had contacted the Acoustical Society of America to recommend persons qualified to review BBN's work. Prof. Mark Weiss and his assistant, Ernest Aschkenasy were chosen. Their findings said there was a 95 percent, or better, probability of a fourth shot, thus proving there was a second gunman, thus proving a conspiracy. Why? Because the recording showed shots fired 1.2 seconds apart, yet Oswald's rifle could not be fired faster than 2.3 seconds. Committee Chief Counsel G. Robert Blakey, according to Groden, did not want to admit a shot had come from the front. "That was nonsense," Groden said.

Those acoustical findings have since been disputed by some and affirmed by others, so there the matters remain at present. Groden said to me if the sounds were not shots, then what were those sounds heard on the recording? Later another expert determined the probability to be 98 percent or greater.

Asked who he thought killed Kennedy, Groden's answer is brief. "Not Lee Harvey Oswald." How can you say that, I asked? Because of a little known witness Geraldine Reid (also seen spelled as Jeraldean) who he interviewed in 1971. She told Groden that she worked in the office across from the TSBD break-room. One minute before the assassination, Oswald came in and asked for change for a dollar. "She actually saw Oswald as the shots were fired," Groden said. Oswald then walked across the hall to the break-room and bought a Coke. Just then Dallas Police Officer Marion Baker came in with TSBD boss Roy Truly. Baker approached Oswald, gun drawn and asked Truly if he knew Oswald. Truly said yes, he works here, and then the two men raced off looking for a gunman.

Oliver Stone's movie "JFK"

Remember Oliver Stone's blockbuster movie, "JFK"? Groden was selected as the movie's technical advisor and re-creation consultant. Groden said he wrote about one-third of the movie and had four roles: two as a doctor, one as a projectionist and as a photo expert.



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