

TESTIMONY OF JAMES N. CRAWFORD

The testimony of James N. Crawford was taken at 11:15 a.m., on April 1, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Joseph A. Ball, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. BALL. Mr. Crawford, I'm Joe Ball and this is Lillian Johnson.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Glad to know you. I know Lillian Johnson. How is Irving, by the way?

Mr. BALL. Will you stand up, please, and hold up your right hand?

Mr. CRAWFORD (complying).

Mr. BALL. Do you solemnly swear the testimony you will give before this Commission shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I swear.

Mr. BALL. My name is Joe Ball. I'm staff counsel with the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy and I have been authorized to question you and ask you to give us such information as you have as to the facts of the assassination and those things that you observed on November 22, 1963. Will you state your name for the court reporter?

Mr. CRAWFORD. My name is James N. Crawford.

Mr. BALL. What is your occupation?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I am deputy district clerk.

Mr. BALL. You received a request from the Commission in writing, did you not, requesting you to give this testimony?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I did.

Mr. BALL. You received it some time last week?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Actually, it came to the office Saturday. I did not receive it until Monday.

Mr. BALL. That will be Monday, March 30?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes.

Mr. BALL. Where were you born?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I was born in Greenville, Texas.

Mr. BALL. What was your general education?

Mr. CRAWFORD. High school in Greenville, Texas, and college at Texas A. & M.

Mr. BALL. What did you do after that, just a general sketch of some of your occupations?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I worked for the Texas Company in New Orleans and have been in and out of the furniture business and in the oil business here in Dallas until I went with the county.

Mr. BALL. How long have you been with the county of Dallas?

Mr. CRAWFORD. About 10 years.

Mr. BALL. You are a deputy county clerk there?

Mr. CRAWFORD. District clerk.

Mr. BALL. On November 22, 1963, about around 12 o'clock or so, where were you?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I was in the office of the district clerk.

Mr. BALL. Did you later leave and go out into the street?

Mr. CRAWFORD. About 12:25, we left the office and went out to the corner of Houston and Elm.

Mr. BALL. You went with whom?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mary Ann Mitchell.

Mr. BALL. She works in the office with you?

Mr. CRAWFORD. She is in the office with me.

Mr. BALL. What is her occupation in the office?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Assistant to the district clerk.

(At this point, Mr. James Underwood enters the hearing.)

Mr. BALL. Where is your office located in Dallas?

Mr. CRAWFORD. It's located on the ground floor of the Records Building.

Mr. BALL. What street?

Mr. CRAWFORD. That's Record and Elm—that's Commerce, isn't it, Jim?

Mr. UNDERWOOD. What's that?

Mr. CRAWFORD. What is the street just north of the courthouse—that's Elm.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. It's bordered by Elm, Main, Record, and Houston.

Mr. BALL. You are located on the corner of—

Mr. CRAWFORD. Elm.

Mr. BALL. Elm and—

Mr. CRAWFORD. And Record.

Mr. BALL. And Record, and then you walked which direction?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Well, actually, the courthouse is—I suppose our office would be considered on Elm and Houston.

Mr. BALL. When you left your office, you walked on what street?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Walked on Elm to Houston, rather than Record.

Mr. BALL. In other words, you walked west on Elm towards Houston?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Right.

Mr. BALL. To what corner of Elm and Houston?

Mr. CRAWFORD. That would be the corner of the courthouse. Do you want the direction of the intersection?

Mr. BALL. Yes, where was it? Southeast, northwest corner of Elm?

Mr. CRAWFORD. It's the northwest corner of the courthouse.

Mr. BALL. The northwest corner of the courthouse—it's the southeast corner of the intersection?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Southeast corner of the intersection.

Mr. BALL. Where were you when you watched the President pass?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I was at that location.

Mr. BALL. Which corner of the intersection?

Mr. CRAWFORD. The southeast corner of the intersection.

Mr. BALL. Where was the Texas School Book Depository Building from where you were standing?

Mr. CRAWFORD. It would be on the northwest corner of the intersection.

Mr. BALL. Directly across?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes; right.

Mr. BALL. Did you have a good view at that point of the south exposure of the Texas School Book Depository?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I had a very good angle.

Mr. BALL. Did you see the President's car pass?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I did.

Mr. BALL. And just tell me in your own words what you observed after that?

Mr. CRAWFORD. As I observed the parade, I believe there was a car leading the President's car, followed by the President's car and followed, I suppose, by the Vice President's car and, in turn, by the Secret Service in a yellow closed sedan. The doors of the sedan were open. It was after the Secret Service sedan had gone around the corner that I heard the first report and at that time I thought it was a backfire of a car but, in analyzing the situation, it could not have been a backfire of a car because it would have had to have been the President's car or some car in the cavalcade there. The second shot followed some seconds, a little time elapsed after the first one, and followed very quickly by the third one. I could not see the President's car—

Mr. BALL. At that time?

Mr. CRAWFORD. That's right; I couldn't even see the Secret Service car, at least I wasn't looking for it. As the report from the third shot sounded, I looked up. I had previously looked around to see if there was somebody shooting fire-

crackers to see if I could see a puff of smoke, and after I decided it wasn't a backfire from an automobile and as the third report was sounded, I looked up and from the far east corner of the sixth floor I saw a movement in the only window that was open on that floor. It was an indistinct movement. It was just barely a glimpse.

Mr. BALL. Which window?

Mr. CRAWFORD. That would be the far east window—

Mr. BALL. On the—

Mr. CRAWFORD. On the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository. I turned to Miss Mitchell and made the statement that if those were shots they came from that window. That was based mainly on the fact of the quick movement observed in the window right at the conclusion of the report.

Mr. BALL. Could you give me any better description than just a movement? Could you use any other words to describe what you saw by way of color or size of what you saw moving?

Mr. CRAWFORD. If I were asked to describe it, I would say that it was a profile, somewhat from the waist up, but it was a very quick movement and rather indistinct and it was very light colored. It was either light colored or it was reflection from the sun. When the gun was found, or when a gun was found, I asked the question if it was white, simply because if it was a gun I saw, then it was either white or it was reflecting the sun so it would appear white or light colored.

Mr. BALL. Did you see any boxes in that window?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes, directly behind the window, oh possibly three feet or less, there were boxes stacked up behind the window and I believe it was the only place in the building that I observed where boxes were stacked just like that.

Mr. BALL. Did you see any boxes in the window?

Mr. CRAWFORD. No, I didn't see any. There wasn't any boxes in the window.

Mr. BALL. Did you stay there at that point very long, the southeast corner?

Mr. CRAWFORD. No; as I said, I couldn't observe the President's car and I had no actual knowledge that he had been shot, so realizing that we should get the information almost immediately from the radio which had been covering the motorcade—we had been listening to it prior to going on the street—I thought our best information would come from that, so we went, Miss Mitchell and I, went back into the office. I have no way of knowing the time. I would say it was a minute or—I would say a minute.

Mr. BALL. After you heard the shots, did you return to the office?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes.

Mr. BALL. The movement that you saw that you describe as something light and perhaps a profile from the waist up, you mean it looked like a profile of a person?

Mr. CRAWFORD. That was—I had a hard time describing that. When I saw it, I automatically in my mind came to the conclusion that it was a person having moved out of the window. Now, to say that it was a brown haired, light skinned individual, I could not do that.

Mr. BALL. Could you tell whether it was a man or woman?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I could not.

Mr. BALL. You made a report to the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the 10th of January?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes.

Mr. BALL. Before I ask you about your report, did you have any impression as to the source of the sound, from what direction the sound came, the sound of the explosions?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes; I do. As I mentioned before, the sound, I thought it was a backfire in the cavalcade from down the hill, down the hill toward the underpass.

Mr. BALL. You mean west on Elm?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes, and that was a little confusing and in analyzing it later, evidently the report that I heard, and probably a lot of other people, the

officers or the FBI, it evidently was a sound that was reflected by the underpass and therefore came back. It did not sound to me, ever, as I remember, the high-powered rifle sounding. It was not the sharp crack.

Mr. BALL. What caused you to look up at the Texas School Book Depository Building?

Mr. CRAWFORD. The sound had to be coming from somewhere; the noise was being made at some place, so I didn't see anyone shooting firecrackers or anything else and I thought "this idiot surely shouldn't do such a thing," but if they were, where were they, and if they were shots, where were they coming from, and that caused me to search the whole area on Houston Street and in front of the Texas Depository on Elm Street and then up and that's how I happened to be looking up at the time, rather than observing things in the street, probably.

Mr. BALL. Did you ever see any smoke?

Mr. CRAWFORD. No, sir; I did not.

Mr. BALL. In your remark to Mary Ann Mitchell, did you say "if those were shots, they came from that window"?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes.

Mr. BALL. That is what you reported to the FBI agent, also?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes, I suppose; at that time, I was still not absolutely sure that they were shots and that's why I said if they were shots. I was basing that, I am sure I was basing that mainly on the fact of this quick movement that I observed. In other words, if I were firing the shots, I would have jumped back immediately at the conclusion of them.

Mr. BALL. Later on, did you go back in the street and talk to someone?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes.

Mr. BALL. Did you talk to a deputy sheriff?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Allen Swett.

Mr. BALL. What did you tell him?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I told him to have the men search the boxes directly behind this window that was open on the sixth floor—the window in the far east corner.

Mr. BALL. Did you tell him anything of what you had seen?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I don't think so. I think I was so amazed that I could walk across the street and walk up to this building that was supposedly under surveillance and the man had not been—I say "the man"—there had not been anyone apprehended.

Mr. BALL. How long was it after you heard the shots that you walked up to Allen Swett and talked to him?

Mr. CRAWFORD. My guess is it could have been anywhere from 10-20 minutes. My guess would be around 15-20 minutes.

Mr. BALL. In the statement you made to the FBI agent, he reports you said you walked to the Texas School Book Depository where you contacted Deputy Sheriff Allen Swett and advised him of the movement you had seen in the sixth floor window?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I must have said something about the movement. I did tell him to search those windows, I think.

Mr. BALL. Could you in your own words give us your memory of what you told Allen Swett?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I would probably have said, as I remember it, that to have the men search—have someone search the boxes directly behind that window. I had seen some movement directly after the shots. That was, I think, all I said. I did not—there was no conversation and at the conclusion of my statement, he directed several men up there.

Mr. BALL. Did you ever go in the building yourself?

Mr. CRAWFORD. I did not and I still have not been in there.

Mr. BALL. I think that's all, Mr. Crawford. Thanks very much.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Thank you, Mr. Ball.

Mr. BALL. Incidentally, will you waive signature on this?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Yes; I will.