

KENNEDY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Name James Herbert Sawyer

Date 5 24 78 Time 9:30AM

Address Rt. 1, Box 192A
Frisco, Texas

Place 3254 Irving Boulevard
Dallas, Texas

Interview: Mr. Sawyer was interviewed by Staff Investigator Joseph J. Basteri at his restaurant, Jan's Coffee Shop, located at 3254 Irving Boulevard, Dallas, Texas. He has owned and operated this restaurant since his retirement from the Dallas Police Department in 1967. Sawyer recalls that on November 22, 1963, he was assigned to be in charge of a detail of men on the upper portion of the Presidential Motorcade. A few minutes after the President had passed him, he heard over the radio that shots were fired from the Texas School Book Depository. Sawyer, who held the rank of Inspector, immediately rushed to this building and had it secured. He then organized a group of law-enforcement officers from the Dallas Police Department, FBI, Secret Service and the Sheriff's Office instructing them to find witnesses and possible suspects. These witnesses were brought to the Sheriff's office where affidavits were taken. Sawyer had also sent a team to search the railroad yards as there were reports that shots may have come from that direction and also it was good investigative procedure to cover all surrounding areas. He recalls his men finding the three

Interviewer Signature

Joseph J. Basteri

Typed Signature Joseph J. Basteri

Date transcribed 6 16 78

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hobos in a box car. Sawyer did not personally interrogate these men, but said that they did look like hobos. Sawyer did remark that a few years ago a writer had called him challenging several details of a photo he saw of the police officer escorting the three hobos. The writer was puzzled as to the type of shoes, gun and a hearing device the police officer had. Sawyer's answer to the writer was that the hearing device was in fact cotton for an ear infection the police officer had. This fact was documented by Staff Investigator Harold Rose. The only requirement the DPD makes as to shoes is that they must be black and this officer was wearing black shoes. Lastly, DPD requires only that officers must be armed with a 38 calibre or more gun. This officer was armed with a 45 automatic which is not an uncommon weapon for Dallas police officers. This police officer was later identified as Marvin Wise.

Although Sawyer was picked to head the unit investigating the operational security involving the transfer of Lee Harvey Oswald, he had very little to do with it as he was hospitalized a week after it was formed. Sawyer did state that he was kept well apprised of the progress of the investigation and did assist Captain Baker who prepared the final report on the conclusion of the investigation. Sawyer had received periodic information from his men and after reading all reports submitted concerning the investigation, he was positive that the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby was not planned because of the following reasons:

1. Ruby was told by Karen "Little Lynn" Bennett to mail her the Western Union money order by 11 AM on November 24th.
2. Ruby was attracted by the crowd he saw milling outside the Main Street ramp.
3. The armored car got stuck in the Commerce Street ramp forcing Lt. Pierce's auto to exit out Main Street ramp against traffic, causing Police Officer Roy Vaughn to leave his post momentarily enabling Ruby to enter the basement through the unguarded ramp.
4. Ruby had entered the basement at almost the precise moment that Oswald was brought down. According to Sawyer, there was no way that Ruby could have timed this so perfectly as no one knew the exact time Oswald would be brought down. Sawyer stated that to his knowledge no one had objected to this unit being formed and it was terminated only after the investigation had been fully completed.

As a Lieutenant, Sawyer was in charge of the Vice Squad and as such came to know Ruby quite well. He had heard rumors that Ruby was connected with mob figures while in Chicago, but nothing has ever come to his attention to prove this rumor. Sawyer had also heard that Ruby had to leave Chicago because of a dispute he had with the Chicago mob. Sawyer further stated that he was not aware that any organized criminal element exerted any strong influence in the city of Dallas. The only group, to his

knowledge, that could be loosely classified as organized crime was the Lois Green outfit. Dallas, continued Sawyer, was relatively a clean town with the minimum of crime or corruption. Sawyer admits that in the late thirties and in the early forties Dallas had more than its share of slot machines, bookie parlors, gambling establishments and a certain part of the city was designated as the "red light district."

With the advent of World War Two, Dallas was deemed off limits by the armed services until the city fathers could clean up the city. Carl Hanson was appointed Chief of Police and he formed a Special Service Bureau to clean up the vice, narcotics and gambling that was flourishing in the city. George Lumpkin was the captain in charge of this unit. Sawyer was a lieutenant in heading the vice squad under Lumpkin. During this clean-up campaign, which took several years to fully clean up Dallas, Sawyer stated that in no way was Ruby's name ever linked with this criminal element. Sawyer attributed the control of gambling, in the forties, in the control of Benny Binion, Harry Urban and Lloyd Sinclair. Lois Green and his group were known to concentrate mostly on safe jobs, narcotics and prostitution. They would frequently meet in the office of Harry Hoxsey, and Sawyer always suspected that these meetings were to discuss narcotics and fencing stolen property.

Sawyer had informed me that he had set up the Intelligence Unit for the Dallas Police Department and also instituted a filing system to properly record all pertinent facts.

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One of the functions of this office was to arrange a system where police officers would not list their informants by name, but numbers would be assigned to the informant. It was against a police officer's principle to reveal the name of his informant as such. Sawyer stated that it would be difficult to say if Ruby had been an informant as there would be no official record of it. Sawyer said he had heard that Ruby had passed on information to various police officers, but the information received was of little importance.

Sawyer remarked that Ruby had come to Dallas in the late forties and during this period the clean-up of Dallas was almost complete. Ruby's name never came up at any time with regards to Ruby's having ever been connected or associated with these criminal figures. Sawyer always considered Ruby as a small time night club operator who would have loved to have persons think he was more important than he was. Ruby's places, as well as other night spots, were well supervised by the vice-squad, and it never came to his attention that Ruby had made bribe payments to any Dallas police officer.

Reference copy, JFK Collection: HSCA (RG 233)