

It is hoped these excerpts from *JFK and the Unspeakable* are useful and informative to students of history, younger generations who were not alive before 1963, as well as everyone who wants to know what *did* happen to cause the assassination of a peace-making president by his own national security state, carried out with impunity from then to now. Hyperlinks and introduction by [David Ratcliffe](#) with the approval of Jim Douglass. Of special note are links throughout the [endnotes](#) to sources online (or to books in a library near you) of the specific references compiled and correlated by Jim Douglass.

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## Oswald's Doubles: How Multiple Lookalikes Were Used to Craft One Lone Scapegoat

The following segments of Jim Douglass' *JFK and the Unspeakable - Why He Died and Why It Matters* examine the composite scapegoat served up to the world in the guise of Lee Harvey Oswald and the domestic intelligence network that was writing his story. Recently I read Norman Cousins remarkable "Asterisk to the History of a Hopeful Year, 1962-1963," [The Improbable Triumvirate: John F. Kennedy, Pope John, Nikita Khrushchev](#). In it, Cousins describes his experiences as an emissary between President Kennedy, Pope John XXIII, and Nikita Khrushchev.

In an April 1963 meeting with Khrushchev at his retreat in Gagra, Cousins asked, "What would you say your principal achievement has been during your years in office?" Khrushchev replied, "Could I talk about two achievements and not just one? The first was telling the people the truth about Stalin. There was a chance, I thought, that if we understood what really happened, it might not happen again. Anyway, we could not go forward as a nation unless we got the poison of Stalin out of our system. He did some good things, to be sure, and I have acknowledged them. But he was an insane tyrant and he held back our country for many years." (pp. 108-109).

Just as Khrushchev chose to reveal to the people of Russia what had truly occurred during Stalin's reign of terror so they could all move forward, it is of utmost necessity for all of us in America to finally choose to know the facts concerning why our President was publicly executed in 1963 for becoming, in the eyes of his national security state managers, a traitor and a national security risk. John Kennedy was turning toward peace in the critical imperatives of seeking to end the Cold War with the enemy, his Russian counterpart, and a rapprochement with Cuba's Fidel Castro, the "thorn in the side" of the American military-industrial-intelligence complex.

The following truth-telling of [Butch Burroughs](#), [Bernard Haire](#), [T. F. White](#), [Wes Wise](#), [Robert G. Vinson](#), and [Ralph Leon Yates](#) allows us to peel back layers of obfuscation and unspeakable deception that have been directed at this country's people for fifty years about why their beloved President was murdered by elements of U.S. national security state personnel that evermore direct the affairs of this corporate empire state. Peace *is* possible and *can* manifest when we are willing to see and acknowledge the unspeakable.

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**W**arren Commission counsel David Belin wrote: "The Rosetta Stone [the key to Egyptian hieroglyphics] to the solution of President Kennedy's murder is the murder of Officer J. D. Tippit."[\[391\]](#) From the Warren Commission's standpoint, the killing of Tippit, who presumably challenged the assassin's flight after he killed Kennedy, was said to prove "that Oswald had the capacity to kill."[\[392\]](#)

Warren Commission critic Harold Weisberg saw Tippit's murder instead as the government's way of poisoning the public mind against Lee Harvey Oswald: "Immediately the [flimsy] police case [against Oswald] required a willingness to believe. This was provided by affixing to Oswald the opprobrious epithet of 'cop-killer.'"[393]

According to the [Warren Report](#), the tracking of Oswald from Dealey Plaza to Tippit's murder began with eyewitness Howard Brennan, a forty-five-year-old steamfitter who was standing across the street from the Texas School Book Depository watching the presidential motorcade. Brennan told a police officer right after the assassination that he saw a man standing in a sixth-floor window of the Depository fire a rifle at the president's car.[394] The *Warren Report* says Brennan described the standing shooter as "white, slender, weighing about 165 pounds, about 5' 10" tall, and in his early thirties," a description matching Oswald that was radioed to Dallas Police cars at approximately 12:45 P.M.[395] Yet, as Mark Lane pointed out, "There could not have been a man standing and firing from [the sixth-floor window] because, as photographs of the building taken within seconds of the assassination prove, the window was open only partially at the bottom, and one shooting from a standing position would have been obliged to fire through the glass." [396] Moreover, Brennan's testimony that the man firing the rifle "was standing up and resting against the left windowsill"[397] was also impossible because the windowsill was only a foot from the floor, with the window opened about fourteen inches.[398] So if it was impossible for key witness Howard Brennan to have provided such a description, and if the Warren Commission could cite only him as a source for the 12:45 P.M. police description, who put out that Oswald-like alert if not the conspirators?

Supposedly on the basis of nothing more than that radioed description, Officer Tippit stopped his car at 1:15 P.M. to confront a man walking on East 10th Street in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas. The man then shot Tippit to death. The murderer fled the scene on foot. Half an hour later, the man was reported sneaking into the Texas Theater, which the Dallas police then stormed, arresting a man who was soon identified as Lee Harvey Oswald.

As Weisberg pointed out, the killing of Tippit provided a dramatic reinforcement of Oswald's assumed killing of Kennedy. At the same time, the killing of a fellow police officer helped motivate the Dallas police to kill an armed Oswald in the Texas Theater, which would have disposed of the scapegoat before he could protest his being framed.

Once again, however, the assassination script was imperfectly carried out. Oswald survived his arrest in the theater. And as in a flawed movie where scene variations are shot, doubles are used, and the director is in a hurry, the final version of this film for our viewing doesn't add up. The Warren Commission's attempt to squeeze it all into a lone-gunman explanation has resulted in an implausible narrative.

According to the [Warren Report](#), between President Kennedy's assassination at 12:30 P.M. and Officer Tippit's murder at 1:15 P.M., Lee Harvey Oswald did the following:

After the lone assassin shot the president to death and wounded Governor Connally from a sixth-floor window in the Texas School Book Depository,[399] he hid his rifle and stepped quickly down four flights of stairs to the lunchroom, where he was seen calmly preparing to buy a bottle of Coca Cola from a vending machine.[400] He escaped from the building and walked seven blocks.[401] He took a bus that was headed back toward the Texas School Book Depository, got stuck with the bus in a traffic jam, and got off it. He walked three to four blocks to hire a taxi.[402] He offered to give up his taxi to an old lady when she asked his driver for help finding a cab (an offer she refused, allowing him to continue his escape without changing taxis).[403] He rode 2.4 miles in the taxi, taking him five blocks too far past his rooming house.[404] He paid his fare, got out, and walked five blocks back to his rooming house.[405] "He went on to his room and stayed about 3 or 4 minutes,"[406] picked up his jacket and a revolver, and departed.[407] The housekeeper saw him standing in front of the house by the stop for a *northbound* bus.[408] He apparently gave up on the bus and instead walked *south* another remarkably brisk nine-tenths mile.[409] All of these actions, following his killing of the president, were, by the Commission's timetable, accomplished in forty-five minutes.[410] Oswald then, we are told, used his revolver to calmly murder Officer J. D. Tippit on a quiet street in the Oak Cliff neighborhood of Dallas, "removing the empty cartridge cases from the gun as he went,"[411] helpfully leaving a trail of ballistic evidence for the police to collect. He thereby aborted his escape and became a magnet for a massive police chase. The police arrested him in the Texas Theater at 1:50 P.M.[412]

This jam-packed scenario was created by more than one man bearing Oswald's likeness, with help from behind the scenes. At 12:40 P.M., exactly the same time that Deputy Sheriff Roger Craig and Helen Forrest saw Oswald get into a Rambler station wagon in front of the Book Depository, Oswald's former landlady, Mary Bledsoe, saw him board a bus seven blocks east of the Depository.[413] Oswald told Captain Will Fritz he rode the bus, until its holdup in traffic made him switch to a taxi.[414] A bus transfer found in his shirt pocket at his arrest seemed to confirm the short bus trip.[415] Yet when Fritz told Oswald that Craig had seen him depart by car, Oswald said defensively, "That station wagon belongs to Mrs. Paine. Don't try to drag her into this." [416]

When he added dejectedly, "Everybody will know who I am now," Oswald seemed to imply that his (or a double's) departure in the station wagon, and the vehicle's association with Mrs. Paine, were keys to his real identity.

If he was not the man picked up by the station wagon, then Roger Craig and Helen Forrest had seen, in Forrest's words, "his identical twin." [417] The man spirited away by the Nash Rambler had been either Oswald or a double; driven, Craig said, by "a husky looking Latin." [418]

Besides the mysterious Nash Rambler that was in the end spotted by so many mutually supportive witnesses—Craig, Forrest, Pennington, Carr, Robinson, and Cooper—there may have been two more cars even more deeply in the shadows that helped Lee Harvey Oswald make his otherwise unlikely transitions that climactic afternoon in the assassination plot. Another car appeared out of nowhere when he arrived at his rooming house.

After Oswald went to his room at 1:00 P.M., the housekeeper, Mrs. Earlene Roberts, saw a police car stop directly in front of the house. She told the Warren Commission that two uniformed policemen were in the car. The driver sounded the horn, “just kind of a ‘tit-tit’—twice,”<sup>[419]</sup> an unmistakable signal, then eased the car forward and went around the corner.<sup>[420]</sup>

After “about three or four minutes,”<sup>[421]</sup> Oswald returned from his room and went outside. Before Mrs. Roberts turned her attention elsewhere, she saw him standing in front of the house by a northbound bus stop—to be heard from next in the [Warren Report](#) twelve minutes later as the apparent killer of Officer Tippit near the corner of Tenth and Patton, almost one mile away in the opposite direction. How he got there in time to kill Tippit, or even *if* he did, has never been clearly established.<sup>[422]</sup>

He may have been picked up by the Dallas police car that parked briefly in front of the house, beeped its horn twice lightly—tap, tap—in an apparent signal, and drove around the corner (perhaps only to circle the block and return for him). Earlene Roberts told the Warren Commission that the number on the police car was 107.<sup>[423]</sup> As the Commission’s staff would discover, the Dallas Police Department no longer had a car 107. It had sold its car 107 on April 17, 1963, to a used car dealer. The Dallas Police would not resume using the number 107 until February 1964, three months after the assassination.<sup>[424]</sup> If Mrs. Roberts had the car’s number right, then the horn signal to Oswald came from two uniformed men in a counterfeit police car. Their likely destination, with Oswald as their passenger, was the Texas Theater, where they would drop off Oswald for a setup for his arrest and murder—while the Oswald impostor in the Nash Rambler was being let off for a short walk to meet Officer Tippit in a fatal encounter at Tenth and Patton.

The *Warren Report* describes the murder of Officer Tippit “at approximately 1:15 P.M.,” after he confronted a man walking east along the south side of Patton: “The man’s general description was similar to the one broadcast over the police radio. Tippit stopped the man and called him to his car. He approached the car and apparently exchanged words with Tippit through the right front or vent window. Tippit got out and started to walk around the front of the car. As Tippit reached the left front wheel the man pulled out a revolver and fired several shots. Four bullets hit Tippit and killed him instantly. The gunman started back toward Patton Avenue, ejecting the empty cartridge cases before reloading with fresh bullets.”<sup>[425]</sup>

As the gunman walked and trotted away from the murder scene while still holding the revolver, the *Warren Report* says he was seen by at least twelve persons: “By the evening of November 22, five of them had identified Lee Harvey Oswald in police lineups as the man they saw. A sixth did so the next day. Three others subsequently identified Oswald from a photograph. Two witnesses testified that Oswald resembled the man they had seen. One witness felt he was too distant from the gunman to make a positive identification.”<sup>[426]</sup>

The fleeing man identified later as Oswald was seen finally by Johnny Calvin Brewer, manager of Hardy’s Shoestore, located a few doors east of the Texas Theater. After spotting the man acting suspiciously in the recessed area in front of his store, Brewer went outside. He saw the man ducking into the theater up the block. The ticket-seller, Julia Postal, confirmed to Brewer that the man had not bought a ticket. She called the police.<sup>[427]</sup>

However, the man who shot Tippit, fled the murder scene, sneaked into the Texas Theater just before 1:45 P.M., and was identified as Lee Harvey Oswald, posed another bi-location problem. Oswald once again seemed to be in two places at the same time.

According to Warren H. “Butch” Burroughs, the concession stand operator at the Texas Theater, Lee Harvey Oswald entered the theater sometime between 1:00 and 1:07 P.M., several minutes before Officer Tippit was slain seven blocks away.<sup>[428]</sup> If true, Butch Burroughs’s observation would eliminate Oswald as a candidate for Tippit’s murder. Perhaps for that reason, Burroughs was asked by a Warren Commission attorney the apparently straightforward question, “Did you see [Oswald] come in the theater?” and answered honestly, “No, sir; I didn’t.”<sup>[429]</sup> What someone reading this testimony would not know is that Butch Burroughs was unable to see anyone enter the theater from where he was standing at his concession stand, unless that person came into the area where he was working. As he explained to me in an interview, there was a partition between his concession stand and the front door. Someone could enter the theater, go directly up a flight of stairs to the balcony, and not be seen from the concession stand.<sup>[430]</sup> That, Burroughs said, is what Oswald apparently did. However, Burroughs still knew Oswald had come into the theater “between 1:00 and 1:07 P.M.” because he saw him inside the theater soon after that. As he told me, he sold popcorn to Oswald at 1:15 P.M.<sup>[431]</sup>—information that the Warren Commission did not solicit from him in his testimony. When Oswald bought his popcorn at 1:15 P.M., this was exactly the same time the *Warren Report* said Officer Tippit was being shot to death<sup>[432]</sup>—evidently by someone else.

Butch Burroughs was not alone in noticing Oswald in the Texas Theater by then. The man who would soon be identified as the president’s assassin drew the attention of several moviegoers because of his odd behavior.

Edging into a row of seats in the right rear section of the ground floor, Oswald had squeezed in front of eighteen-year-old Jack Davis. He then sat down in the seat right next to him. Because there were fewer than twenty people in the entire nine-hundred-seat theater, Davis wondered why the man chose such close proximity to him. Whatever the reason, the man didn’t stay there long. Oswald (as Davis would later identify him) got up quickly, moved across the aisle, and sat down next to

someone else in the almost deserted theater. In a few moments, he stood up again and walked out to the lobby.<sup>[433]</sup>

Davis thought it obvious Oswald was looking for someone.<sup>[434]</sup> Yet it must have been someone he didn't know personally. He sat next to each new person just long enough to receive a prearranged signal, in the absence of which he moved on to another possible contact.

Back out in the lobby at 1:15 P.M., Oswald then bought popcorn from Butch Burroughs at the concession stand.<sup>[435]</sup> Burroughs told author Jim Marrs and myself that he saw Oswald go back in the ground floor of the theater and sit next to a pregnant woman<sup>[436]</sup>—in another apparently fruitless effort to find his contact. Several minutes later, “the pregnant woman got up and went to the ladies washroom,” Burroughs said. He “heard the restroom door close just shortly before Dallas police came rushing into the theater.”<sup>[437]</sup> Jack Davis said it may have been “twenty minutes or so” after Oswald returned from the lobby (when Burroughs saw Oswald sit by the pregnant woman) that the house lights came on and the police rushed in.<sup>[438]</sup>

The police arrested Oswald in a curious way. They entered the theater from the front and back, blocking all exits and surrounding Oswald. Officer M. N. McDonald and three other officers came in from behind the movie screen. With the theater lights on, McDonald scanned the audience.<sup>[439]</sup> Johnny Brewer, who had seen the man who looked like Oswald duck into the theater, showed McDonald where the man was sitting—in the third row from the rear of the ground floor.<sup>[440]</sup>

With the suspect identified and located, McDonald and an accompanying officer, instead of apprehending the man in the rear of the theater, began searching people between him and them.<sup>[441]</sup> As the police proceeded slowly toward Oswald, it was almost as if they were provoking the suspected police-killer to break away from his seat. His attempt to escape would have given Tippit's enraged fellow officers an excuse to shoot him.<sup>[442]</sup>

When McDonald finally reached his suspect in the third row from the back, Oswald stood up and pulled out his pistol. While he struggled with McDonald and the other officers who had converged on the scene, they heard the snap of the hammer on his gun misfiring.<sup>[443]</sup> However, Oswald, instead of being shot to death on the spot, was wrestled into submission by the police and placed under arrest. The police hustled him out to a squad car. They drove him to Dallas Police Headquarters in City Hall.

Butch Burroughs, who witnessed Oswald's arrest, startled me in his interview by saying he saw a second arrest occur in the Texas Theater only “three or four minutes later.”<sup>[444]</sup> He said the Dallas Police then arrested “an Oswald lookalike.” Burroughs said the second man “looked almost like Oswald, like he was his brother or something.”<sup>[445]</sup> When I questioned the comparison by asking, “Could you see the second man as well as you could see Oswald?” he said, “Yes, I could see both of them. They looked alike.”<sup>[446]</sup> After the officers half-carried and half-dragged Oswald to the police car in front of the theater, within a space of three or four minutes, Burroughs saw the second Oswald placed under arrest and handcuffed. The Oswald look-alike, however, was taken by police not out the front but out the back of the theater.<sup>[447]</sup>

What happened next we can learn from another neglected witness, Bernard Haire.<sup>[448]</sup>

Bernard J. Haire was the owner of Bernie's Hobby House, just two doors east of the Texas Theater. Haire went outside his store when he saw police cars congregating in front of the theater.<sup>[449]</sup> When he couldn't see what was happening because of the crowd, he went back through his store into the alley out back. It, too, was full of police cars, but there were fewer spectators. Haire walked up the alley. When he stopped opposite the rear door of the theater, he witnessed what he would think for decades was the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald.

“Police brought a young white man out,” Haire told an interviewer. “The man was dressed in a pullover shirt and slacks. He seemed to be flushed, as if he'd been in a struggle. Police put the man in a police car and drove off.”<sup>[450]</sup>

When Haire was told in 1987 that Lee Harvey Oswald had been brought out the *front* of the theater by police, he was shocked.

“I don't know who I saw arrested,” he said in bewilderment.<sup>[451]</sup>

Butch Burroughs and Bernard Haire are complementary witnesses. From their perspectives both inside and outside the Texas Theater, they saw an Oswald double arrested and taken to a police car in the back alley only minutes after the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald. Burroughs's and Haire's independent, converging testimonies provide critical insight into the mechanics of the plot. In a comprehensive intelligence scenario for Kennedy's and Tippit's murders, the plan culminated in Oswald's Friday arrest and Sunday murder (probably a fallback from his being set up to be killed in the Texas Theater by the police).

There is a hint of the second Oswald's arrest in the Dallas police records. According to the Dallas Police Department's official Homicide Report on J. D. Tippit, “Suspect was later arrested *in the balcony* of the Texas theatre at 231 W. Jefferson.”<sup>[452]</sup>

Dallas Police detective L. D. Stringfellow also reported to Captain W. P. Gannaway, “Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested *in the balcony* of the Texas Theater.”<sup>[453]</sup>

To whom are the Homicide Report and Detective Stringfellow referring? Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested in the orchestra, not the balcony. Are these documents referring to the Dallas Police Department's second arrest at the Texas Theater that afternoon? Was Butch Burroughs witnessing an arrest of the Oswald look-alike that actually began in the balcony? That would

have likely been the double's hiding place, after he entered the theater without paying, thereby drawing attention to himself and leading the police to the apprehension of his likeness, Lee Harvey Oswald (who was already inside). As Butch Burroughs pointed out, anyone coming in the front of the theater could head immediately up the stairs to the balcony without being seen from the concession stand.

The Oswald double, after having been put in the police car in the alley, must have been driven a short distance and released on higher intelligence orders. Unfortunately for the plotters, he was seen again soon. With the scapegoat, Lee Harvey Oswald, now safely in custody, we can presume that the double was not supposed to be seen again in Dallas—or anywhere else. Had he not been seen, the CIA's double-Oswald strategy in an Oak Cliff shell game might have eluded independent investigators forever. But thanks to other key witnesses who have emerged, we now have detailed evidence that the double was seen again—not just once but twice.

At 2:00 P.M., as Lee Harvey Oswald sat handcuffed in the back seat of a patrol car boxed in by police officers on his way to jail, Oswald knew what final role had been chosen for him in the assassination scenario. That night, while being led through police headquarters, he would shout out to the press, "I'm just a patsy!"<sup>[454]</sup>

Also at about 2:00 P.M., a man identified as Oswald was seen in a car eight blocks away from the Texas Theater, still very much at large and keeping a low profile.<sup>[455]</sup> A sharp-eyed auto mechanic spotted him.

T. F. White was a sixty-year-old, longtime employee of Mack Pate's Garage in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas. While White worked on an automobile the afternoon of the assassination, he could hear police sirens screaming up and down Davis Street only a block away. He also heard radio reports describing a suspect then thought to be in Oak Cliff.<sup>[456]</sup> The mechanic looked out the open doors of the garage. He watched as a red 1961 Falcon drove into the parking lot of the El Chico restaurant across the street. The Falcon parked in an odd position after going a few feet into the lot. The driver remained seated in the car.<sup>[457]</sup> White said later, "The man in the car appeared to be hiding."<sup>[458]</sup> White kept his eye on the man in the Falcon.

When Mack Pate returned from his lunch break a few minutes later, T. F. White pointed out to his boss the oddly parked Falcon with its waiting driver who seemed to be hiding. Pate told White to watch the car carefully, reminding him of earlier news reports they had heard about a possible assassination attempt against President Kennedy in Houston the day before involving a red Falcon.<sup>[459]</sup>

T. F. White walked across the street to investigate. He halted about ten to fifteen yards from the car. He could see the driver was wearing a white t-shirt.<sup>[460]</sup> The man turned toward White and looked at him full face. White stared back at him. Not wanting to provoke a possible assassin, White began a retreat to the garage. However, he paused, took a scrap of paper from his coveralls pocket, and wrote down the Texas license plate of the car: PP 4537.<sup>[461]</sup>

That night, while T. F. White was watching television with his wife, he recognized the Dallas Police Department's prisoner, Lee Harvey Oswald, as the man he had seen in the red Falcon in El Chico's parking lot. White was unfazed by what he did not yet know—that at the same time he had seen one Oswald sitting freely in the Falcon, the other Oswald was sitting handcuffed in a Dallas police car on his way to jail. Mrs. White, fearing the encompassing arms of a conspiracy, talked her husband out of reporting his information to the authorities.<sup>[462]</sup> Thus, the Oswald sighted in the parking lot might have escaped history, but for the fact White was confronted by an alert reporter.

On December 4, 1963, Wes Wise, a Dallas newscaster whose specialty was sports, gave a luncheon talk to the Oak Cliff Exchange Club at El Chico's restaurant. At the urging of his listeners, he changed his topic from sports to the president's assassination, which Wise had covered. He described to his luncheon audience how he, as a reporter, had become a part of Jack Ruby's story. Wise's encounter with the man he knew as a news groupie came on the grassy knoll, the day before Ruby shot Oswald. Wise had just completed a somber, day-after-the-assassination radio newscast from the site banked with wreaths.

While he sat in his car in silent reflection beside the Texas School Book Depository, he heard a familiar voice call out, "Hey, Wes!"

As Wise told the story, "I turned to see the portly figure of a man in a dark suit, half-waddling, half-trotting, as he came toward me. He was wearing a fedora-style hat which would later become familiar and famous." Jack Ruby was making his way along the grassy knoll "from the direction of the railroad tracks," precisely where the day before, as Ed Hoffman watched, another man in a suit had fired a rifle at the president—an hour and a half after Julia Ann Mercer saw a man, dropped off by Jack Ruby, carry a rifle up the same site.

Ruby leaned into Wise's car window and said, his voice breaking and with tears in his eyes, "I just hope they don't make Jackie come to Dallas for the trial. That would be terrible for that little lady."<sup>[463]</sup>

In retrospect, Wise wondered if Ruby was trying to set him up for a radio interview—to go on record the day before with his famous "motive" for murdering Oswald. Although Wise had no interest then in interviewing Jack Ruby, he had already just been told enough for him to be called as a witness in Ruby's trial. He would be subpoenaed as a Ruby witness by both the prosecution and the defense.<sup>[464]</sup> His testimony at the trial, quoting what Ruby said to him the day before Ruby murdered Oswald, would then be cited in *Life* magazine.<sup>[465]</sup>

At the end of Wise's talk to his absorbed audience at the Oak Cliff Exchange Club, Mack Pate, who had walked across the street from his garage to listen, gave the newscaster a new lead. He told Wise about his mechanic having seen Oswald. Wise asked to go immediately with Pate to speak with his employee.<sup>[466]</sup>

As Wes Wise told me in an interview four decades later, he then "put a little selling job on Mr. White" to reveal what he had seen. Wise said to the reluctant auto mechanic, "Well, you know, we're talking about the assassination of the president of the United States here."<sup>[467]</sup>

Convinced of his duty, T. F. White took Wise into El Chico's parking lot and walked him step by step through his "full face" encounter with Oswald. Wise realized the car had been parked at the center of Oswald's activity in Oak Cliff that afternoon: one block from where Oswald got out of the taxi, six blocks south of his rooming house, eight blocks north of his arrest at the Texas Theater, and only five blocks from Tippit's murder on a route in between.<sup>[468]</sup>

Taking notes on his luncheon invitation, Wise said, "I just wish you had gotten the license number."

White reached in his pocket and took out a scrap of paper with writing on it. He handed it to Wise.

"This is it," he said.<sup>[469]</sup>

Newscaster Wes Wise notified the FBI of White's identification of Oswald in the car parked in the El Chico lot, and cited the license plate number. FBI agent Charles T. Brown, Jr., reported from an interview with Milton Love, Dallas County Tax Office: "1963 Texas License Plate PP 4537 was issued for a 1957 Plymouth automobile in possession of Carl Amos Mather, 4309 Colgate Street, Garland, Texas."<sup>[470]</sup> Agent Brown then drove to that address. He reported that the 1957 Plymouth bearing license plate PP 4537 was parked in the driveway of Mather's home in Garland, a suburb of Dallas.<sup>[471]</sup> Thus arose the question of how a license plate for Carl Amos Mather's Plymouth came to be seen on the Falcon in El Chico's parking lot, with a man in it who looked like Oswald.

The FBI had also discovered that Carl Amos Mather did high-security communications work for Collins Radio, a major contractor with the Central Intelligence Agency. Three weeks before Kennedy's assassination, Collins Radio had been identified on the front page of the *New York Times* as having just deployed a CIA raider ship on an espionage and sabotage mission against Cuba.<sup>[472]</sup> Collins also held the government contract for installing communications towers in Vietnam.<sup>[473]</sup> In 1971, Collins Radio would merge with another giant military contractor, Rockwell International.<sup>[474]</sup> In November 1963, Collins was at the heart of the CIA-military-contracting business for state-of-the-art communications systems.

Carl Mather had represented Collins at Andrews Air Force Base by putting special electronics equipment in Vice President Lyndon Johnson's Air Force Two plane.<sup>[475]</sup> Given the authority of his CIA-linked security clearance, Carl Mather refused to speak to the FBI.<sup>[476]</sup> The FBI instead questioned his wife, Barbara Mather, who stunned them. Her husband, she said, was a good friend of J. D. Tippit. In fact, the Mathers were such close friends of Tippit and his wife that when J. D. was murdered, Marie Tippit phoned them. According to his wife, Carl Mather left work that afternoon at 3:30 and returned home.<sup>[477]</sup> Carl and Barbara Mather then drove to the Tippit home, where they consoled Marie Tippit on the death of her husband (killed by a man identical to the one seen a few minutes later five blocks away in a car bearing the Mathers' license plate number).

Fifteen years after the assassination, Carl Mather did finally consent to an interview for the first time—with the House Select Committee on Assassinations, but on condition that he be granted immunity from prosecution.<sup>[478]</sup> The electronics specialist could not explain how his car's license number could have been seen on the Falcon with its Oswald-like driver in the El Chico lot.<sup>[479]</sup>

The HSCA dismissed the incident as "the Wise allegation,"<sup>[480]</sup> in which a confused auto mechanic had jotted down a coincidentally connected license plate, as "alleged" by a reporter. The odds against White having come up with the exact license plate of a CIA-connected friend of J. D. Tippit were too astronomical for comment, and were given none.

What kept "the Wise allegation" from sinking into total oblivion over the years was the persistent conscience of Wes Wise, who in 1971 was elected mayor of Dallas. During his two terms as mayor (1971-76), Wise guided Dallas out from under the cloud of the assassination and at the same time saved the Texas School Book Depository from imminent destruction, preserving it for further research into the president's murder.<sup>[481]</sup>

In the fall of 2005, I interviewed Wes Wise, who recalled vividly T. F. White's description of his confrontation with a man looking like Oswald in the El Chico parking lot. Wise said he was so struck by the incident that he returned to the El Chico lot on a November 22 afternoon years later to reenact the scene with similar lighting and a friend sitting in an identically parked car. Standing on the spot where T. F. White had and with the same degree of afternoon sunlight, Wise confirmed that one could easily recognize a driver's features from a "full face" look at that distance, irrespective of whether the car's window was up or down.<sup>[482]</sup>

The possible significance of what he had learned stayed with Wise during his years as a reporter and as Dallas mayor, in spite of its repeated dismissal by federal agencies. Knowing the value of evidence, Mayor Wise preserved not only the Texas School Book Depository but also the December 4, 1963, luncheon invitation on which he had immediately written down T. F. White's identification of the license plate on the Oswald car. Producing it from his files during our interview, Wise read to me over the

phone T. F. White's exact identification of the license plate, as the auto mechanic had shown it to the reporter on the scrap of paper taken from his coveralls pocket, and as Wise had then copied it down on his luncheon invitation: "PP 4537."[\[483\]](#)

At the end of our conversation, Mayor Wise reflected for a moment on the question posed by Lee Harvey Oswald's presence elsewhere at the same time as T. F. White saw him in El Chico's parking lot (in a car whose license plate could now be traced, thanks to the scrupulous note-taking of White and Wise, to the employee of a major CIA contractor).

"Well," he said, "You're aware of the idea of two Oswalds, I guess?"[\[484\]](#)

**I** was especially aware of "the idea of two Oswalds" from the testimony of U.S. Air Force sergeant Robert G. Vinson of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).[\[485\]](#) Vinson not only saw the second Oswald on the afternoon of November 22 soon after T. F. White did. He actually witnessed the Oswald double escaping from Dallas in a CIA plane. Sergeant Vinson was already on the CIA getaway plane when the second Oswald boarded it. Vinson also got off the plane at the same CIA base as Oswald's double did, a few moments after him. Robert Vinson is a unique witness to the CIA's secret movement of an Oswald double out of Dallas on the afternoon of the assassination.

On November 20, 1963, Sergeant Robert Vinson took a trip to Washington, D.C., from Colorado Springs, where he was stationed at Ent Air Force Base on the staff of NORAD. The thirty-four-year-old sergeant had decided for the first time in his sixteen-year military career to go over his superiors' heads. His purpose in traveling to Washington was to ask why he had not received an overdue promotion. Vinson's rise in rank had been delayed in spite of his having received outstanding job evaluations at NORAD, where he served as administrative supervisor of the electronics division and held a crypto security clearance.[\[486\]](#) Sergeant Vinson was known by his NORAD commanders as a mild-mannered subordinate who could be counted on not to raise uncomfortable questions. But after discussing at length the problem of his stalled promotion with his wife, Roberta, Robert Vinson decided now was the time to depart from his usual pattern of compliance.[\[487\]](#)

On Thursday, November 21, in a basement office of the Capitol Building, Sergeant Vinson met with a Colonel Chapman, who served as a liaison officer between Congress and the Pentagon. While he looked over Vinson's papers, Chapman engaged in a phone conversation Vinson would not forget.

Col. Chapman told the person on the other end of the line he "would highly recommend that the President not go to Dallas, Texas, on Friday because there had been something reported."[\[488\]](#) Chapman said the president should cancel his Dallas trip, even though an advance group of Congressmen whom Chapman was coordinating had already left the capital.[\[489\]](#) Vinson did not hear what the "something" was that moved Col. Chapman to urge the last-second cancellation of President Kennedy's Dallas trip (that would have followed by less than three weeks the last-second cancellation of his Chicago trip, where a four-man sniper team and an assassination scapegoat had been discovered).

Col. Chapman referred Sergeant Vinson's promotion question to an office at the Pentagon. A personnel officer there scanned Vinson's records. The officer was puzzled at why he hadn't been promoted. He assured him their office would look into the situation.

The next day, November 22, Vinson took a bus to Andrews Air Force Base. He planned to hitch a ride home on the first available flight going to Colorado Springs or its vicinity.

When an airman at the check-in counter told him there was nothing scheduled that day going his way, Vinson still wrote his name and serial number on the check-in sheet. He said he was going for breakfast in the cafeteria and asked the airman to let him know "if anything should come through that you don't have a notice on."[\[490\]](#) A loudspeaker paged him fifteen minutes later. He left his breakfast sitting on the table, grabbed his bag, and ran for a plane that was pointed out by the airman, who said it was about to depart for Lowry Air Force Base in Denver.

The plane down the runway that Vinson climbed aboard was a propeller-driven C-54, a large cargo plane. Unlike all the other planes Vinson had hitched a ride on, the C-54 bore no military markings or serial numbers. Its only identification was on its tail—a rust-brown graphic of an egg-shaped earth, crossed by white grid marks.[\[491\]](#)

The plane's door was open. When Vinson got in the C-54, he found it empty. He took a seat over the right wing. Through the window, he could see two men in olive drab coveralls walking around under the plane. Their coveralls bore no markings.

In a minute, the two men got on the plane. They walked past Vinson without saying a word. The men closed the cockpit door. The engines started up, and the plane took off.

Looking out the window at the runway disappearing beneath him, Vinson reflected on the flight's strange beginning and his own anonymity. Whenever he had hitched a ride before with the Air Force, the crew chief had always asked him to sign the "manifest," or log. This flight didn't even have a crew chief, much less a manifest.[\[492\]](#) Nor did the pilot or co-pilot (if that's what the second man in the cockpit was) give him the usual friendly greeting. His reception had been total silence from the two men now flying the C-54 due west.

At a location Vinson thought was somewhere over Nebraska, he suddenly heard an unemotional voice say over the intercom:

“The president was shot at 12:29.”[\[493\]](#)

Immediately after the flatly given announcement, the plane banked into a sharp left turn. It began heading south.

About 3:30 P.M. Central Time, Vinson saw on the horizon the skyline of a city he was familiar with: Dallas.

The plane turned and came in over Dallas in a southeast direction. It landed abruptly in a rough, sandy area alongside the Trinity River. It was not a runway. Vinson thought it looked like a road under construction. Dust blew up, as the C-54 taxied around in a U-turn and came to a stop. The engines kept running.

Through the window Vinson saw a tool shed of the type used by highway construction crews, perhaps four by six feet in size, in a large, open, sandy area. Low cliffs stood at a distance. Across the river to the north was the Dallas skyline. Two men were running toward the plane from a jeep, which then backed out of Vinson’s sight.[\[494\]](#)

One of the plane’s pilots came back and unlatched the passenger door. The two men came aboard. Vinson watched as the men passed his seat without looking or speaking to him. They were wearing off-white, beige coveralls, the type used by highway workers. They carried nothing. The men sat down right behind the cockpit. They said nothing to the man who let them on the plane or to each other. To Vinson it was obvious they were following orders, which must have included keeping silent about what they were doing.[\[495\]](#)

The taller of the two men, 6’ to 6’1”, weighing 180 to 190 pounds, looked Latino. Vinson thought he was Cuban. The shorter man, 5’7” to 5’9”, weighing about 150 to 160 pounds, was Caucasian. When Vinson watched the televised events from Dallas later that weekend, he recognized Lee Harvey Oswald as identical to the shorter man he had seen board the plane.[\[496\]](#)

Without ever having stopped its engines, the C-54 took off from the sandy area in a northwest direction. Carrying the man who looked like Oswald, the plane soon left Dallas—and the jailed, about-to-be-killed Lee Harvey Oswald—far behind.

A little after dusk, the C-54 landed on a runway. Going by what he was told at Andrews, Robert Vinson continued to think the plane’s destination was Lowry Air Base in Denver.

As soon as the C-54’s engines were shut off, the two men in the cockpit emerged quickly. They rushed past Vinson out the door of the plane. The two passengers from Dallas hastened after them. Vinson was left alone in the aircraft, just as he had been at the beginning.

“That was strange, very strange,” Vinson said years later in an interview. “I couldn’t understand why they were in such a rush. They just bailed out.”[\[497\]](#)

Robert Vinson descended from the plane into the gathering darkness. There was no one in sight. Nothing looked familiar. Across the runway he could see a building with lights in it. Inside he found a lone Air Policeman on duty.

“Hi,” said Vinson, “Can you tell me where I am?”

“You’re at Roswell Air Force Base in New Mexico,” the AP said.[\[498\]](#)

“I thought I was going to Denver, Colorado. How can I get downtown and catch a bus?”

The Air Policeman told him he couldn’t go anywhere because the base was on alert. No one could come in or go out.

Vinson thought that was strange because the C-54 had just come in. How had their plane managed to enter a base that no one was allowed to enter? It didn’t occur to him that the arrival of their plane could have been the reason for the base’s closure to everyone else. That would explain why Vinson found the runway area deserted. At least one of the C-54 passengers was not supposed to be seen by anyone. But Vinson had seen him and had even flown out of Dallas with him, though he didn’t know the significance of the man whom he had seen.

The AP said there was nothing for Vinson to do except take a seat in the waiting room until the alert was lifted. After a couple of hours, the AP told him the alert was over and gave him directions to a bus stop.[\[499\]](#)

By the next morning, Saturday, November 23, Robert Vinson was at home in Colorado Springs, telling Roberta the story of his strange flight. Although they didn’t understand what lay behind it all, they both felt it could be dangerous. They agreed not to discuss it with anyone else.

That night, while watching the TV coverage from Dallas, Robert shook his head in disbelief. He said to Roberta, “That guy looks



just like the little guy who was on the airplane.”

“Are you nuts?” she said. “It couldn’t be him. He’s in jail.”

“I swear that’s the little guy who got on the plane.”

“Well,” she said, “keep quiet about it.”[\[500\]](#)

After Lee Harvey Oswald was murdered the following day, Robert Vinson kept quiet for thirty years about the little guy he saw get on the plane in Dallas. However, his silence could not erase the name and serial number he had given the airman at the Andrews check-in counter the morning of November 22. No doubt the two men who got on the plane in Dallas, and the two in the cockpit, were thoroughly debriefed. They would have referred to the other member of their team, a man as silently obedient to the plan as they had been, who was on the C-54 before any of them got on and until after they got off. One can imagine the debriefer’s shock: What other man?

The subsequent discovery that it was Air Force Sergeant Robert Vinson who was the unauthorized passenger in the flight from Dallas led, the Vinsons suspected, to further developments in their lives.

In the spring of 1964, after Vinson was promoted to technical sergeant, a friend told Robert and Roberta that their neighbors were being questioned by the FBI about what kind of people the Vinsons were and what they talked about. Not long after, Robert was ordered by his commanding officer to sign a new secrecy agreement. Roberta was also asked to fill out a personal history statement and sign a secrecy agreement, the first time she was ever required to do so as an Air Force wife.[\[501\]](#)

On November 25, 1964, Robert Vinson received orders to go to Washington, D.C., and report to a telephone number “in conjunction with a Special Project.”[\[502\]](#) When he arrived in D.C. and phoned the number, he received instructions that resulted in his spending five days at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia. The CIA put him through a series of psychological and physical tests. At their conclusion, he was interviewed in a conference room by a half-circle of men in semi-darkness. They asked Vinson to work for them. He refused, saying he wanted to retire from the Air Force and take a job in Colorado Springs. The CIA men offered him lucrative inducements, which he again refused. They finally let him go.[\[503\]](#)

As it turned out, they had not let him go at all.

Three months later, Robert Vinson was again ordered to report to a telephone number for the CIA, this time in Las Vegas, Nevada. The difference was he was no longer being *asked* to work for the CIA. He was *told* to work for the CIA. The Air Force had reassigned him to a top-secret CIA project, the Blackbird SR 71 spy plane, at an air base hidden in the Nellis Mountains, forty miles northwest of Las Vegas.[\[504\]](#) In more recent years, after the base was closed especially because of radioactive contamination from the Nevada Test Site, this former CIA testing area was identified as Site 51.[\[505\]](#)

On his new assignment, Vinson would soon learn that the CIA’s projects out of Site 51 included experimental aircraft shaped like saucers. The same was true at the CIA’s other base at Roswell, New Mexico, where the C-54 carrying the second Oswald had landed. Both Site 51 and Roswell were home to the “flying saucers” that people saw periodically in the area. They in fact came not from outer space but from the CIA, which encouraged the flying saucer reports as a convenient cover story for U.S. experimental aircraft.[\[506\]](#)

For the final year and a half of his Air Force enlistment, Vinson served as the administrative supervisor for base supply of the CIA’s SR-71/Blackbird spy plane project at Site 51.[\[507\]](#) It was obvious to Vinson he was not so uniquely qualified for this position that the CIA would for that reason alone pluck him out of the NORAD staff in Colorado Springs, only eighteen months before his retirement, and insert him into their Nevada project. The Agency had other reasons for asking the Air Force to reassign him. He and Roberta agreed the CIA was keeping both of them under close observation, while paying Vinson off for his continuing silence with the CIA’s monthly cash payments as a bonus to his Air Force salary.[\[508\]](#) Nothing explicit, however, was ever said to him about his inadvertent presence on the flight from Dallas.

While Robert Vinson was working at Site 51, he saw a C-54 like the one that flew the second Oswald out of Dallas. On its tail was the same rust-brown graphic of an egg-shaped earth, crossed by white grid marks, that he had seen on the C-54 he boarded at Andrews. An Air Force sergeant at Site 51 confirmed the source of the plane he was looking at.

“CIA,” he said.[\[509\]](#)

Robert Vinson’s CIA employment ceased with his retirement from the Air Force on October 1, 1966.[\[510\]](#) Although the CIA had paid him well to keep silent, he and Roberta “felt as if they’d been freed from a plush prison.”[\[511\]](#)

Out of fear for his life and concern for his military retirement benefits, Vinson maintained his silence during the twenty years he worked in Wichita, Kansas, first as an accountant, then as an administrative assistant and supervisor in the Wichita Public Works Department. In 1976 when he asked a lawyer friend in Wichita if he should reveal his secret, the lawyer said, “Don’t tell a soul. For your own safety.”[\[512\]](#) Yet Vinson’s conscience continued to push him toward speaking out on what he knew.

After Congress passed the [JFK Records Act in 1992](#), mandating the disclosure of government records on the assassination, Vinson consulted with his member of Congress. Representative Dan Glickman of Wichita said to his relief that the new law freed him from his secrecy agreement when it came to assassination information.[\[513\]](#)

On November 23, 1993, [Robert Vinson told the story of his flight from Dallas to news anchor Larry Hatteberg](#) on Wichita's KAKE-TV Channel 10 News. Viewers gave "an incredible response" to Vinson's story, Hatteberg told me, as they have to its several re-runs on the Wichita channel.[\[514\]](#) One of those responding initially to Vinson was Wichita civil liberties lawyer James P. Johnston, who had studied the Kennedy assassination. Johnston volunteered his legal assistance to Vinson to help bring his testimony to the public's and the government's attention. Vinson then offered to testify before the [Assassination Records Review Board](#) created by the JFK Act, but was never called to do so. In 2003 James Johnston and journalist Jon Roe co-authored their book [Flight from Dallas](#), describing Robert Vinson's experience in detail.

On a Dallas map sent to him by Johnston, Vinson identified the C-54's landing area as "the Trinity River Flood Plain just south of downtown Dallas."[\[515\]](#) The particular location he marked out as the landing strip, between Cadiz Street Viaduct and Corinth Street Viaduct, was 4,463 feet long.[\[516\]](#)

James Johnston found a C-54 expert to consult, retired Air Force Major William Hendrix, who flew the C-54 on over one hundred missions during the Berlin airlift. In response to Johnston's query on what the C-54 could do, Hendrix wrote: "It is my personal opinion that a C-54 could easily have landed in the Trinity Flood Plain and have taken off therefrom, the depicted area."[\[517\]](#)

In a colossal CIA blunder, Robert Vinson's providential presence on the second Oswald's flight from Dallas has enabled us to see the planning for the Oak Cliff follow-up to the assassination. First, in Dealey Plaza, came the killing of JFK by snipers firing from the grassy knoll and the Texas School Book Depository. Then in Oak Cliff, the scenario continued with Oswald's "escape" in a taxi, while the second Oswald was driven into the same area in the Rambler station wagon by the man Roger Craig described as "a husky looking Latin"[\[518\]](#)—corresponding to Robert Vinson's description of the Oswald companion who got on the C-54, standing 6' to 6'1", weighing 180 to 190 pounds, whom Vinson, like Craig, said looked Latino, probably Cuban.[\[519\]](#) Officer J. D. Tippit was then shot to death by a man who witnesses said looked like Oswald. After Tippit's murder and Oswald's capture, in a shell game featuring the Oswald lookalike, he and his Cuban-looking companion flew out of Oak Cliff on the CIA plane.

The C-54's landing strip by the Trinity River was on the perimeter of Oak Cliff. Where the CIA plane taxied in a half-circle and paused to pick up the second Oswald and his Cuban-looking partner was 1.3 miles from El Chico's parking lot. The man like Oswald whom T. F. White saw sitting in the CIA-connected car on El Chico's lot at 2:00 P.M. was a five-minute drive from the point where the CIA plane would meet him at 3:30 P.M. He had plenty of time to reconnect with his handler, change into his highway worker coveralls, and rendezvous with the C-54, while his more visible counterpart went to jail—and two days later, to death.

Robert Vinson has said that since November 22, 1963, "Every time I'd see an article on the assassination, I stop and wonder if I have the answer to this puzzle. Could this small piece of information fit into the larger picture to help us learn what happened?"[\[520\]](#) Thanks to the pieces of information presented by Mayor [Wes Wise](#), auto mechanic [T. F. White](#), concession stand operator [Butch Burroughs](#), hobby shop owner [Bernard Haire](#), and Air Force Sergeant [Robert Vinson](#), we now have a larger picture of the way in which two men played the role of Lee Harvey Oswald in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas on the afternoon of November 22, 1963. The interlocking testimonies of Wise, White, Burroughs, Haire, and Vinson have given us a back-stage view of the double Oswald drama directed by the CIA.

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**T**he assassination of President Kennedy continued to suck innocent people into its whirlwind. One was a man who was kind enough to pick up a hitchhiker in Dallas. He was then caught up in darkness for the rest of his life.

Ralph Leon Yates was a refrigeration mechanic for the Texas Butcher Supply Company in Dallas, making his rounds to meat outlets on Wednesday, November 20, 1963. At 10:30 A.M. Ralph Yates was driving on the R. L. Thornton Expressway. He noticed a man hitchhiking in Oak Cliff near the Beckley Avenue entrance to the expressway. Yates stopped to pick up the man.

When the hitchhiker got into Yates's pickup truck, he was carrying what Yates described later, in a statement to the FBI, as "a package wrapped in brown wrapping paper about 4 feet to 4½ feet long."[\[762\]](#)

Yates told the man he could put the package in the back of the pickup. The man said the package had curtain rods in it, and he would rather carry it with him in the cab of the truck.[\[763\]](#)

Yates mentioned to the man that people were getting excited about the president's upcoming visit. He had broached a subject the man was eager to talk about. The man had a remarkable sense, as seen later, of what would become the government's case against Lee Harvey Oswald. The man also looked so much like Oswald that he was in effect his double. Or was he actually Oswald?

As cited by the FBI, Ralph Yates recalled the hitchhiker's comments: "Yates stated the man then asked Yates if he thought a person could assassinate the President. Yates replied that he guessed such a thing could be possible. The man then asked Yates if it could be done from the top of a building or out of a window, high up, and Yates said he guessed this was possible if one had a good rifle with a scope and was a good shot.

"Yates advised about this time the man pulled out a picture which showed a man with a rifle and asked Yates if he thought the President could be killed with a gun like that one. Yates said he was driving and did not look at the picture but indicated to the man that he guessed so.

"Yates said that the man then asked if he knew the President's route for the parade in Dallas and Yates replied that he did not know the route but that it had been in the paper. He said the man then said that he had misunderstood him and that actually he had asked Yates if he thought that the President would change his route. Yates said he replied that he doubted it unless they might for safety reasons."[\[764\]](#)

The hitchhiker asked to be let off along Houston Street. Yates dropped him off at Elm and Houston, the stoplight by the Texas School Book Depository. He last saw the man carrying his package of "curtain rods" across Elm Street—perhaps into the Book Depository.[\[765\]](#)

When Ralph Yates returned to his workplace at the Texas Butcher Supply Company, he told his co-worker, Dempsey Jones, about his strange conversation with the man he picked up in Oak Cliff and dropped off at Elm and Houston who was carrying the package. Dempsey Jones thereby became a supporting witness to Yates's account. He confirmed in an FBI interview that it was before President Kennedy was assassinated that Yates described picking up the hitchhiker, "who discussed the fact with him that one could be in a building and shoot the President as he, the President, passed by."[\[766\]](#)

After Yates saw the pictures in the media of Lee Harvey Oswald, he said the man he gave the ride to was "identical with Oswald."[\[767\]](#)

However, the FBI was not happy with the statement Ralph Leon Yates volunteered to them on November 26, repeated at the FBI's request on December 10, and repeated yet again at their further requests on January 3 and 4, 1964, finally during an FBI polygraph examination. Although Yates's statement seemed to be a thorough incrimination of the now dead Oswald, once again—as in other "Oswald" appearances—it proved too much for the government's case, even placing that case in jeopardy. As the FBI would make clear, the witness wasn't wanted. They kept recalling him only in order to discredit his story.

What was so unacceptable about Ralph Yates's testimony?

In terms of the hitchhiker's looks, itinerary, and comments, he was either Lee Harvey Oswald or a well-informed double. The Beckley Avenue entrance to the Thornton Expressway was on the same street as Oswald's rooming house, located at 1026 North Beckley. The man looking like Oswald had hitched a ride from the vicinity of Oswald's rooming house to the location of Oswald's workplace, the Texas School Book Depository.

The man's comments were, like "Oswald's" behavior in the series of self-incriminating incidents we have already seen, an obvious attempt to draw attention to himself as a potential presidential assassin.

Most significant in this instance was the package in brown wrapping paper that the man insisted on keeping with him in the cab, which he said contained "curtain rods." The package of "curtain rods" carried by Yates's hitchhiker corresponds to Oswald's notorious cover story in the *Warren Report* for sneaking his rifle into the Book Depository.

As the *Warren Report* describes this incident, it was on Thursday, November 21, that Lee Oswald asked his co-worker, Buell Wesley Frazier, if he could ride home with him that afternoon. Frazier lived in Irving half a block from Ruth Paine's house, where Oswald's wife, Marina, and their two daughters were then staying. Frazier asked Oswald why he wanted to ride with him on Thursday rather than Friday, when Lee normally went to the Paine household to stay with his family over the weekend. Lee's answer reportedly was: "I'm going home to get some curtain rods . . . [to] put in an apartment."[\[768\]](#)

According to Frazier and his sister, Linnie Mae Randle, the next morning Oswald brought a brown paper package "about 2' long"[\[769\]](#) with him when he rode in Frazier's car back to the Book Depository. Frazier told the Warren Commission that when he asked Oswald what was in the package, he replied, "Curtain rods."[\[770\]](#)

Despite the fact that the package Frazier and Randle claimed they saw was too small to hold even a rifle that was broken down, and although no one else saw Oswald with any package at all that morning, the Warren Commission concluded that Oswald must have used such a ruse to smuggle his rifle from Ruth Paine's garage into the Depository Building. In the *Warren Report*, the "curtain rod story" is the critical lie that supposedly enabled Oswald to carry secretly the weapon he then used to murder the

president.[771]

What, then, are we to make of Ralph Yates's Oswald-like hitchhiker who prophetically acted out the "curtain rod story" two days before Lee Oswald reportedly reenacted it, in his ride with Buell Wesley Frazier to the Texas School Book Depository the morning of November 22?

Had there been no second curtain rod/rifle delivery by Oswald to the Depository, the first as done by the "Oswald" Ralph Yates picked up could have served the *Warren Report* quite well. Oswald could have been portrayed as smuggling the rifle into the Depository on Wednesday, then hiding it on the sixth floor of the building until he used it to shoot the president on Friday. In that version of the story, Yates could have been a valuable witness for the government against an already dead, media-convicted assassin.

However, just as there was once again a problem of too many Oswalds—with one working his regular hours in the Book Depository, while the other was hitchhiking with Yates—so, too, was there a problem of too many curtain rod deliveries to account for one rifle being smuggled into the building. The trail of duplicating curtain rod stories led not to a lone assassin but to an intelligence operation tripping over itself while working overtime to scapegoat Oswald.

Ralph Yates was a stubborn witness to what turned out to be unwanted evidence. On his second trip to the Dallas FBI office on December 10, 1963, he repeated and signed his statement about picking up the hitchhiker with the curtain rods. From his first contact with the FBI, Yates, who had pointed out that he was married with five children, said he "would appreciate not receiving any type of publicity from the fact he was furnishing this information." [772] About that concern he need not have worried. The FBI would make certain his testimony to another Oswald with a second curtain rods story would be buried from public view.

On January 2, 1964, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover sent a teletype marked "URGENT" to Dallas Special Agent in Charge J. Gordon Shanklin on Ralph Leon Yates. Hoover noted that a previous FBI investigation into whether Yates may have been at his company at the same time he said he picked up the Oswald-like hitchhiker provided insufficient evidence "to completely discredit Yates' story." Hoover therefore ordered the Dallas FBI office to "reinterview Yates with polygraph," [773] the instrument more commonly known as a "lie detector."

On January 4 in another "URGENT" teletype, Shanklin reported back to Hoover on Yates's polygraph examination that day: "Results of test were inconclusive as Yates responded to neither relevant or control type questions." [774] Because his lie-detector test was inconclusive, Yates had still not been discredited. But there was more to come.

During his final, January 4 trip to the FBI office, Ralph Yates was accompanied by his wife, Dorothy. He had asked her to come with him. In an interview forty-two years later, she told me what happened next to her husband. After he completed his (inconclusive) lie-detector test, she said, the FBI told him he needed to go immediately to Woodlawn Hospital, the Dallas hospital for the mentally ill. He drove there with Dorothy. He was admitted that evening as a psychiatric patient. From that point on, he spent the remaining eleven years of his life as a patient in and out of mental health hospitals. [775]

A crucial transition in the psychic health of Ralph Yates seems to have occurred at the FBI office on January 4, 1964. Something the FBI said after Ralph's polygraph test puzzled and disturbed Dorothy:

"They told me that he was telling the truth [according to the polygraph machine], but that basically he had convinced himself that he was telling the truth. So that's how it came out. He strongly believed it, so it came out that way." [776]

According to what the FBI told Dorothy Yates, the data that registered on the polygraph machine, as then read in the normal way by the polygraph examiner, showed that Ralph Yates was telling the truth. His test was officially recorded as "inconclusive" (meaning the examiner wasn't sure if Yates was telling the truth) only because J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI had decided what the truth had to be for Yates. The FBI-defined truth was that Yates had not picked up the Oswald-like hitchhiker with the "curtain rods" package, because for the FBI there could be no such hitchhiker. Therefore Ralph Leon Yates, by being so definitive (as shown by his polygraph chart) in knowing that he did precisely that—picked up a nonexistent hitchhiker—could only have lost touch with reality. What for any other polygraphed person would serve as proof of truth-telling was, in the case of Yates, proof only of an illusory divorce from reality. The wrenching but undeniable truth for Yates, that he helped a man he thought was the president's assassin deliver what could have been his weapon to the Book Depository, was what compelled him to contact the FBI in the first place. Now he was being told his experience was nothing but an illusion. The FBI said so. Because of Yates's unswerving, polygraphed conviction to the contrary, that he knew what really happened, J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI knew what they had to do. They told him to report at once to a psychiatric hospital.

Exactly what happened to Ralph Yates in the following days as a patient at Woodlawn Hospital, Dorothy Yates did not witness and does not know. [777] She does know that early one morning about a week later, Ralph broke out of Woodlawn. At 4:00 A.M. she opened the front door of their house to find Ralph standing barefoot on the steps in his white hospital clothes. Snow was swirling around him. Ralph told Dorothy he had escaped from the mental institution. He said he tied sheets together and climbed down from a window. He had then stolen a car and driven home. [778]

Ralph was tormented by fear in a way Dorothy would see repeated for years. He told his wife someone was trying to kill them and their children because of what he knew about Oswald. She quickly bundled up their five sleepy children, the oldest of whom was six. Ralph drove his family away from their house in the stolen car. Within a few hours, Dorothy was more alarmed by her

husband's frantic efforts to evade their murder at every turn than she was by any unidentified killers. She returned the car and reported his whereabouts to the Woodlawn Hospital authorities.<sup>[779]</sup>

Ralph was picked up and returned to Woodlawn. He was soon transferred to Terrell State Hospital, a psychiatric facility about thirty miles east of Dallas, where he lived for eight years. He was then transferred to the Veterans Hospital in Waco for a year and a half, and finally to Rusk State Hospital for the final year and a half of his life. While a patient at all three hospitals, he spent intermittent periods of from one to three months at home with his wife and children. He was never able to work again.

In the course of Ralph's psychiatric treatment, Dorothy said, he was given the tranquilizing drugs Thorazine and Stelazine to the point where "they made him walk around like a zombie."<sup>[780]</sup> He learned to resist the process. Just as Abraham Bolden had done in the Springfield Penitentiary psychiatric unit, Ralph faked swallowing the pills.

More difficult to avoid were the shock treatments. He received over forty of them. The impact of the shock treatments on his long-range memory was, his wife said, "evidently nothing, because he didn't forget what he was there for," his encounter with the hitchhiker he had dropped off at Elm and Houston.<sup>[781]</sup>

Ralph told Dorothy, "I don't know if they're trying to make me forget what's happened, or what. But I'm always going to say those things happened."<sup>[782]</sup>

To the end of his life Ralph held on to the truth of his experience with the hitchhiker carrying the curtain rods. "He never backed down," Dorothy said.<sup>[783]</sup>

Ralph died at Rusk State Hospital on September 3, 1975, from congestive heart failure. He was thirty-nine years old.

Over three decades later, Dorothy continues to ponder her husband's stubborn adherence to a strange story that in effect made him a prisoner in mental hospitals, took him away from a family he loved, and impoverished all of them. He was haunted by an experience he couldn't forget, for which he then suffered the rest of his life because of his unwillingness to recant it.

Other relatives and friends dismissed Ralph's account of the Oswald-like hitchhiker with the curtain rods package as pure fantasy.

His uncle, J. O. Smith, who went with him on his first trip to the FBI office, said of his nephew's story, "I really thought that was all just imagination."<sup>[784]</sup>

His cousin, Ken Smith, remembers Ralph before Kennedy's death as nothing more than "a chain-smoker who watched football games."<sup>[785]</sup> Once Ralph had what he thought was his Oswald experience, Ken said, he became a man obsessed:

"He wouldn't let it go. He believed it to be true. This consumed Ralph. His thinking didn't go beyond that afterwards. This just totally destroyed his life.

"Ralph blamed himself for Kennedy's assassination. He said, 'I was the reason the President got killed.'

"If he had shut up, his life wouldn't have been so bad. Everybody thought he was crazy. So he became crazy."<sup>[786]</sup>

Even Ralph's co-worker and corroborating witness, Dempsey Jones, who confirmed to the FBI that Yates told him at least one day before the assassination about the hitchhiker's talk on shooting the president, was skeptical. As the FBI liked to point out, he added a disclaimer: "[Jones] said Yates is a big talker who always talks about a lot of foolishness."<sup>[787]</sup>

Only the FBI knew why Ralph Yates needed to be taken seriously. Not even Yates himself, who had no sense of an Oswald double, understood the significance of what he felt compelled to say for the rest of his life. Only the Federal Bureau of Investigation recognized the importance of his testimony, with the threat it posed to the government's case against Oswald. If evidence surfaced of the Oswald-like hitchhiker, who delivered his "curtain rods" to the Depository two days before the assassination, it would have preempted and brought into question the government-endorsed curtain rods story, as given by Buell Wesley Frazier. Thanks to the bungling redundancy of cover stories, the plot to kill the president was again in danger of exposure.

There were too many Oswalds in view, with too many smuggled rifles, retelling a familiar story to too many witnesses. At least one curtain rods story, and the disposable witness who heard it, had to go. The obvious person to be jettisoned was the hapless Ralph Yates. His stubborn insistence on what he knew he had seen and heard, from the man he had given a ride, had to be squelched.

Ralph Yates then went through eleven years of hell. Yet he could not forget, and would not stop speaking about, what he witnessed when he picked up the man he thought was Lee Harvey Oswald. Without ever understanding the full meaning of the experience he refused to renounce, Ralph Leon Yates was a witness to the unspeakable.

## Notes

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391. David W. Belin, [\*November 22, 1963: You Are the Jury\*](#) (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Co., 1973), p. 466.
392. Ibid. Also David W. Belin, [\*Final Disclosure: The Full Truth about the Assassination of President Kennedy\*](#) (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988), p. 204.
393. Harold Weisberg, [\*Whitewash II\*](#), p. 24.
394. [\*Warren Report\*, p. 144.](#)
395. Ibid.
396. Mark Lane, [\*Rush to Judgment\*](#) (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1992), p.83.
397. [[\*Warren Commission Hearings And Exhibits\*](#)] *WCH*, [vol. 3, p. 144.](#)
398. [\*Commission Exhibit No. 1311\*](#), *WCH*, [vol. 22](#), p. 484. Gerald D. McKnight, [\*Breach of Trust: How the Warren Commission Failed the Nation and Why\*](#) (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), pp. 109-10. Given the sixth-floor window’s physical facts, the Warren Commission conceded finally that its star witness, Howard Brennan, was wrong and that “most probably” the man in the window was “either sitting or kneeling.” [\*Warren Report\*, p. 144.](#) Nevertheless, the [\*Warren Report\*](#) asserted valiantly that Brennan, looking up at the sixth-floor window, could still have determined that a less visible shooter was 5’10” tall: “Brennan could have seen enough of the body of a kneeling or squatting person to estimate his height.” Ibid., [p. 145.](#)
399. Ibid., pp. [19](#), [156.](#)
400. Ibid., pp. [151](#), [154.](#)
401. Ibid., [p. 157.](#)
402. Ibid., p. [157-63.](#)
403. Ibid., [p. 162.](#)
404. Ibid., pp. [162-63.](#) *WCH*, [vol. 22](#), p. 86, [Commission Exhibit 1119-A.](#)
405. [\*Warren Report\*, p. 162.](#) *WCH*, [vol. 22](#), [p. 86.](#)

406. [WCH, vol. 6, p. 438.](#)
407. [Warren Report](#), pp. [163-65](#), [653-54](#).
408. Ibid., [p. 165](#). [WCH, vol. 7, p. 439](#); [vol. 24](#), pp. [432-33](#), [Commission Exhibit 2017](#).
409. [Warren Report](#), [p. 648](#).
410. Ibid., pp. [5-6](#).
411. Ibid., [p. 6](#).
412. Ibid., pp. [176-79](#). [WCH, vol. 22, p. 86](#).
413. [Warren Report](#), pp. [159](#), [252](#).
414. Ibid., [p. 604](#).
415. Ibid., pp. [157-59](#).
416. Roger Craig interview by Mark Lane, VHS video [Two Men in Dallas](#) (Longwood, FL: Andrew Thompson Inc., 1987).  
[On YouTube in 5 parts: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#), [Part 5](#)]
417. [from endnote 330: “Helen Forrest interview by Michael L. Kurtz, May 17, 1974,”] Michael L. Kurtz, [Crime of the Century: The Kennedy Assassination from a Historian’s Perspective](#) (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1993), p. 132.
418. Roger Craig, [When They Kill a President](#), [p. 9](#). What was the plotters’ purpose in making “Lee Harvey Oswald” so visible at this point—by his departing from the front of the Texas School Book Depository minutes after the assassination in a vehicle driven by “a husky looking Latin”? We can recall that Oswald was set up as a Cuban-and-Soviet-connected assassin, by the introduction of false evidence to implicate him step by step, from Mexico City to Dallas, as a Communist conspirator. His being driven away from the Depository by a “husky looking Latin” was consistent with his having Cuban connections. After the new president Lyndon Johnson pulled back from exposing such a CIA-doctored Communist conspiracy, Oswald’s faked Cuban and Soviet connections had to be suppressed or read innocently: his visits and phone calls to the Cuban and Soviet consulates in Mexico City, his letter received on November 18 by the Soviet Embassy in Washington, his accompanying two friends who tried to charter a plane from Wayne January for a November 22 flight toward Cuba, and his departure from the Depository with a “husky looking Latin” driving the car. As we shall see, even Jack Ruby’s (now little-known) involvement in the 1950s as a gunrunner to Fidel Castro could be used, if necessary, to implicate the young man (a second Oswald?) who carried the gun case from Ruby’s truck up the grassy knoll. Yet every such connection with a jettisoned Communist conspiracy scenario had to be covered up in the end for the sake of the Warren Commission’s lone-assassin story. It all said too much about both the composite scapegoat and the domestic intelligence network that was writing his story.
419. [WCH, vol. 6, p. 444](#).
420. Ibid., [p. 443](#).
421. Ibid., [p. 438](#).
422. An FBI agent walked the distance from Oswald’s boarding house, 1026 North Beckley, to the point where Tippit was shot, near Tenth and Patton, in twelve minutes. [WCH, vol. 24, p. 18](#), CE 1987. A Secret Service

agent also did it in twelve minutes. [Commission Document 87](#) in Dale Myers, [With Malice: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Murder of Officer J. D. Tippit](#) (Milford, Mich.: Oak Cliff Press, 1998), p. 514. The [Warren Report](#), barely including the three or four minutes Oswald spent in his room, states: "If Oswald left his roominghouse shortly after 1 P.M. and walked at a brisk pace, he would have reached 10th and Patton shortly after 1:15 P.M. [just in time to shoot Tippit]" ([p. 165](#)). If, as subsequent investigation would show, Oswald was spotted walking west on 10th just a minute before the shooting, an additional 1.5 minutes would have been needed to put him in position to do so, making the minimum walk time 13.5 minutes. Myers, p. 665. All these Warren-Commission-derived calculations assume, however, that there was only one Oswald involved in "Oswald's Oak Cliff movements." That this is a false assumption can be seen from the testimony of Butch Burroughs, Bernard Haire, Wes Wise, T. F. White, and Robert G. Vinson in the pages that follow.

423. *Ibid.*, p. 444. When Earlene Roberts saw that the police car that stopped and honked was 107, instead of 170 (a car that she was familiar with), she was able to remember the number from its having the same digits as the car she knew. She said she confused the number in her retelling (CE 2781 in [WCH](#), [vol. 26](#), [p. 165](#); [vol. 6](#), [p. 443](#)), but was clear in the end (from its having the same digits in a different order) that the correct car number was 107.

424. [WCH](#), [vol. 24](#), p. 460, [Commission Exhibit 2045](#). Norman Redlick of the Warren Commission staff followed up Earlene Roberts's identification of the police car as number 107 by phoning the Dallas Police Department with an inquiry "as to the location of police car number 107 on November 22, 1963." *Ibid.* In an August 4, 1964, letter in response, Charles Batchelor, Dallas Assistant Chief of Police, informed Redlick:

"Investigation reveals that the Dallas Police Department did not have a car with this number on the date in question. We had a 1962 model Ford carrying this number which was sold on April 17, 1963, to Mr. Elvis Blount, a used car dealer in Sulphur Springs, Texas. Before sale, all signs and numbers were removed from the car and the areas involved were repainted.

"We did not resume using this number (107) until February, 1964." *Ibid.*

425. [Warren Report](#), [p. 165](#).

426. *Ibid.*, [p. 166](#).

427. *Ibid.*, [p. 178](#).

428. Warren H. "Butch" Burroughs interview, [The Men Who Killed Kennedy, Part 4, "The Patsy."](#) (1991) produced and directed by Nigel Turner. The History Channel.

429. [WCH](#), [vol. 7](#), [p. 15](#).

430. Butch Burroughs tried to explain to the Warren Commission why Lee Harvey Oswald, on entering the theater, must have gone directly up the stairs to the balcony. If so, it was impossible for Burroughs to see his entry from the concession stand. Burroughs said he was in the process of counting stock candy and putting it in his candy case: "if he had come around in front of the concession out there, I would have seen him, even though I was bent down, I would have seen him, but otherwise—I think he sneaked up the [balcony] stairs real fast." Burroughs knew that, if he had not seen Oswald come in, he must have gone immediately up the balcony stairs on entering the theater. *Ibid.* Julia Postal, the ticket-seller for the Texas Theater, also tried to explain this logistical fact in her Warren Commission testimony: "You can go up in the balcony and right straight down, those steps come back down, and that would bring you into [the orchestra seating]. He wouldn't have to go by Butch at all." [WCH](#), [vol. 7](#), [p. 13](#).

431. Author's interview of Warren H. "Butch" Burroughs, July 16, 2007.

432. [Warren Report](#), pp. [6-7](#).



433. Jack Davis interview by Jim Marrs, fall 1988, Jim Marrs, [Crossfire: The Plot That Killed Kennedy](#) (New York: Carroll & Graff, 1990), p. 353. Author's interview of Jim Marrs, January 14, 2006.
434. Jack Davis interview by John Armstrong, [Harvey & Lee: How The CIA Framed Oswald](#), (Arlington, Tex.: Quasar, 2003), p. 841.
435. Warren H. "Butch" Burroughs interview by Jim Marrs, summer 1987, [Crossfire](#), p. 353. Author's interview of Jim Marrs, January 14, 2006.
436. Burroughs interview by Marrs, [Crossfire](#), p. 353. Author's interview of Burroughs, July 16, 2007.
437. Ibid. It is possible the pregnant woman gave Oswald the sign he seemed to need, confirming that she was the contact he was seeking. He apparently sat by her longer than he did by anyone else. It was she, not he, who got up and left. Burroughs said of her, "I don't know what happened to that woman. I don't know how she got out of the theater. I never saw her again." Marrs, *ibid.*
438. Davis interview by Marrs, [Crossfire](#), p. 353.
439. [WCH, vol. 3](#), pp. [298-99](#).
440. Myers, [With Malice](#), pp. 172-73.
441. [WCH, vol. 3](#), p. [299](#).
442. Warren Commission member Senator John Sherman Cooper was especially puzzled by Officer McDonald's circuitous way of approaching the suspected murderer and questioned him closely about it. [WCH, vol. 3, p. 303](#).
443. *Ibid.*, p. [300](#). Also [WCH, vol. 7](#), pp. [32, 39](#).
444. Author's interview of Burroughs, July 16, 2007. Butch Burroughs is a man of few words. When asked a question, he answers exactly what he is asked. Burroughs told me no one had ever asked him before about a second arrest in the Texas Theater. In response to my question, "Now you didn't see anybody else [besides Oswald] get arrested that day, did you?" he answered, "Yes, there was a lookalike—an Oswald lookalike." In response to further questions, he described the second arrest, that of the "Oswald lookalike." *Ibid.* Because Butch Burroughs saw neither Oswald nor his lookalike enter the Texas Theater, each must have gone directly up the balcony stairs on entering. Oswald crossed the balcony and came down the stairs on the far side of the lobby. There he entered the orchestra seats and began his seat-hopping, in apparent search of a contact. His lookalike sneaked into the theater at 1:45 P.M. and, like Oswald, went immediately up the balcony stairs. By the time Burroughs witnessed the Oswald double's arrest, he had also come down the balcony stairs on the far side of the lobby, either on his own or already accompanied by police who had been checking the balcony.
445. *Ibid.*
446. *Ibid.*
447. *Ibid.*
448. In [the data base of the JFK Records Act at the National Archives](#), there is no record of Bernard Haire. Archivist Martin F. McGann to James Douglass, July 20, 2007.
449. In a photo taken about 1:50 P.M., November 22, 1963, that shows people gathering around the police cars in front of the Texas Theater, Bernard Haire can be seen at the edge of the crowd, leaning on a parking

meter and trying to see. Photo by Stuart L. Reed; on p. 68, Myers, [With Malice](#).

450. Bernard J. Haire interview by Jim Marrs, summer 1987. [Crossfire](#), p. 354.
451. Ibid.
452. Dallas Police Department Homicide Report on J. D. Tippit, November 22, 1963. Reproduced in [With Malice](#), p. 447 (emphasis added).
453. [Letter from Detective L. D. Stringfellow to Captain W. P. Gannaway, November 23, 1963](#), Dallas City Archives. Cited in [Harvey & Lee](#), p. 871 (emphasis added).
454. Reporter Seth Kantor jotted down in his notebook Oswald's November 22 remark, "I'm just a patsy," and the time he made it: 7:55 P.M. Kantor Exhibit 3, [WCH](#), vol. 20, p. 366.
455. FBI Memorandum by Dallas Special Agent Charles T. Brown, December 14, 1963. Warren Commission Document 205. JFK Record Number 180-10108-10231.
456. Author's interviews with Wes Wise, October 31 and November 13, 2005.
457. Bill Pulte interviews with Mack Pate, October 1989. Notes and map from Bill Pulte/Gary Shaw interview with Mack Pate, October 10, 1989. I am grateful to Bill Pulte for alerting me to these interviews and to Gary Shaw for sharing with me his records of them.
458. Wes Wise citing mechanic T. F. White, "[The Wise Allegation](#)," in "Oswald-Tippit Associates," Staff Report of the [House Select Committee on Assassinations](#) (March 1979), [Appendix to Hearings - Volume XII](#), p. 38.
459. Ibid. Mack Pate identified the vehicle T. F. White had spotted in the El Chico parking lot as a 1961 red Falcon in his October 10, 1989, interview with Gary Shaw and Bill Pulte.
460. HSCA Memorandum from Andy Purdy to Bob Tanenbaum, February 19, 1977, p. 3. JFK Record Number 180-10108-10134.
461. Wise interviews, October 31 and November 13, 2005.
462. Wise interview, November 13, 2005.
463. Wes Wise retold the story of his encounter with Jack Ruby in a book he published in 2004, co-authored with three other Dallas newscasters who also covered the Kennedy assassination. Bob Huffaker, Bill Mercer, George Phenix, and Wes Wise, [When the News Went Live: Dallas 1963](#) (New York: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2004), pp. 125-26.
464. Ibid., p. 126.
465. Ibid.
466. Wise interviews, October 31 and November 13, 2005.
467. Wise interview, October 31, 2005.
468. Wise interviews.
469. Ibid.

470. Report by FBI Special Agent Charles T. Brown, Jr., December 14, 1963. JFK Record Number 180-10108-10237.
471. Report by FBI Special Agent Charles T. Brown, Jr., December 14, 1963. JFK Record Number 180-10108-10235.
472. "[Castro Says C.I.A. Uses Raider Ship](#)," *New York Times* (November 1, 1963), p. 1.
473. [Harvey & Lee](#), p. 872.
474. "Rockwell Collins, Inc. Company Timeline," [www.collinsclubs.com/history/timeline.html](http://www.collinsclubs.com/history/timeline.html). At the Rockwell-Collins merger in 1971, Art Collins, the founder of Collins Radio, was named president and board chairman of Rockwell International. Ibid.
475. [HSCA interview with Carl Amos Mather, March 20, 1978](#), p. 4. JFK Record Number 180-10087-10360.
476. Wise interview, October 31, 2005.
477. HSCA Memorandum from Purdy to Tanenbaum, February 19, 1977, p. 3.
478. In a May 31, 1978, letter to the HSCA chief counsel G. Robert Blakey, the U.S. Attorney General's Office extended a grant of immunity to Carl Amos Mather. Reproduced in CD-ROM for [Harvey & Lee, Tippit-33](#).
479. Mather interview, p. 3.
480. "[Wise Allegation](#)," pp. [37-41](#). Given T. F. White's identification of the license plate and his and Mack Pate's identification of the red Falcon driven by the Oswald double, a question arises concerning the government's "counter evidence." The disassociation of license plate PP 4537 and the Falcon arose from the FBI's and the Dallas County Tax Office's "official verification" that PP 4537 was issued instead for a 1957 Plymouth owned by Carl Mather. However, we have reached a point in this story where the FBI, and other official sources subject to FBI pressures (such as a county tax office), cannot simply be assumed to be telling the truth in anything relating to President Kennedy's assassination. As we shall soon see, the FBI lied and even destroyed vital evidence, when it came to Oswald's note to FBI agent James Hosty. Given the FBI's consistent record in covering up, falsifying, and destroying evidence that might incriminate the government in the assassination, it is reasonable to ask if that may be going on again here. After the Oswald double's quick release following his Texas Theater arrest by the Dallas Police, he may have been given a Mather car to use that had a state-of-the-art Collins Radio for effective communications. The Oswald double keeping a low profile in the El Chico parking lot was apparently waiting to receive an order. Thanks to T. F. White's jotting down the license plate that was on the double's car, the government then had to disassociate that license as much as possible from Mather. But fortunately it was done clumsily, and White's documentation of the license plate provided a trail that led back to the CIA.
481. Huffaker, Mercer, Phenix, and Wise, [When the News Went Live](#), pp. 129-30.
482. Wise interview, October 31, 2005.
483. Wise interview, November 15, 2005. Wes Wise showed the House Select Committee on Assassinations his luncheon invitation bearing his original notes, which the HSCA copied for its records. JFK Record Number 180-10108-10261.
484. Wise interview, November 15, 2005.
485. Retired Air Force sergeant Robert G. Vinson has told his story in a book co-authored by his lawyer, James P. Johnston, a fifty-two-page affidavit by Vinson to Johnston, a one-hour-and-fifteen-minute video, and a television interview whose substance was adapted into a chapter in a book: (1) James P. Johnston and Jon

Roe, [\*Flight from Dallas: New Evidence of CIA Involvement in the Murder of President John F. Kennedy\*](#) (Bloomington, Ind.: 1stBooks, 2003). (2) [Affidavit of Robert Griel Vinson to James P. Johnston](#), September 28, 1994. (3) Videotaped Statement of Robert G. Vinson (DVD-R), November 2, 1996. [on [youtube.com](#): [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)] (4) [Larry Hatteberg's interview of Robert Vinson](#), KAKE-TV Channel 10 News, November 23, 1993. (5) Larry Hatteberg, Suzanne Perez Tobias, and Vada Snider, "The Kennedy Connection," in [More Larry Hatteberg's Kansas People \[for sale on amazon\]](#) (Wichita, Kans.: Wichita Eagle and Beacon Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 134-35. I am grateful to Robert Vinson for answering further questions during our phone conversations of November 26, 2005, and January 10, 2006.

486. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 19; [Vinson videotape](#), Nov. 2, 1996.
487. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 19.
488. [Vinson affidavit](#), [p. 14](#).
489. Ibid.
490. Ibid., [p. 17](#).
491. Ibid., p. 18. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 23.
492. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 24. [Vinson affidavit](#), pp. [19-20](#).
493. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 24. [Vinson affidavit](#), pp. [21-22](#).
494. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), pp. 25, 28.
495. Ibid., p. 26.
496. [Vinson affidavit](#), pp. [22-28](#), [44](#). Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), pp.25-26, 29.
497. [More Larry Hatteberg's Kansas People](#), p. 134.
498. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 27. Roswell Army Air Field, New Mexico, was redesignated Walker Air Force Base on January 13, 1948. Until the base was closed in 1967, it apparently was referred to commonly as "Roswell Air Force Base," although its official designation was Walker AFB. Topographic maps obtained by James P. Johnston, Robert Vinson's former attorney, show that Walker Air Force Base was located five to eight miles south of Roswell, New Mexico. Author's interview of James P. Johnston, February 4, 2008. *Joe McCusker's List of Air Force Bases*. See <http://www.airforcebase.net/usaf/joeslist.html>.
499. Ibid., pp. 27-28.
500. Ibid., p. 29.
501. Ibid., pp. 32-33.
502. Orders from Major Blake A. Smith, USAF, to R. G. Vinson, November 25, 1964: "For interview at Hq USAF in conjunction with a Special Project." Document reproduced in Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 52.
503. Ibid., pp. 33-36. [Vinson affidavit](#), pp. [33-39](#).
504. [Vinson affidavit](#), pp. [39](#), [41-43](#). Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), pp. 37, 66-67
505. *Area 51: The Real Story*, Discovery Channel. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 68.

506. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), pp. 67-68.
507. [Vinson affidavit](#), pp. 42-43.
508. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 69.
509. Ibid., p. 68. [Vinson affidavit, p. 43](#).
510. Technical Sergeant R. G. Vinson Air Force Retirement Order, June 1, 1966; effective October 1, 1966.
511. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 69.
512. Ibid., p. 71.
513. Ibid., pp. 73-74.
514. Larry Hatteberg to the author; December 20, 2005, phone conversation.
515. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 90.
516. Ibid., p. 91.
517. Ibid., p. 92.
518. Craig, [When They Kill a President, p. 9](#).
519. [Vinson Affidavit, p. 26](#). [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 26.
520. Johnston and Roe, [Flight from Dallas](#), p. 106.

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762. Statement by Ralph Leon Yates to FBI special agent Ben S. Harrison, November 26, 1963, Dallas, Texas. Reproduced by John Armstrong on his CD-Rom for [Harvey & Lee: How The CIA Framed Oswald](#) (Arlington, Tex.: Quasar, 2003), "1963 November 1-21," [image 22](#).
763. Ibid.
764. Ibid., [image 23](#). In his first FBI interview, Ralph Yates said the man raised a question that (if seen later in retrospect) would suggest a connection between the hitchhiker and Jack Ruby: "Yates stated as they drove along, the man had asked him if he knew a certain party, whose name Yates cannot recall now, and he had indicated to this man he did not. He said the man then asked if he had ever been to the Carousel Club [owned by Jack Ruby] and Yates had replied that he had serviced refrigerators in the past in a number of clubs and that possibly he had been to this one, but he did not recall." Ibid., [image 22](#).

In his second FBI interview, in which he made and signed a first-person statement, Yates remembered that the "certain party" mentioned by the hitchhiker was in fact Jack Ruby: "The man then asked me if I knew a Jack Rubenstein, and I said, 'Who?' The man then said that Jack Rubenstein was more commonly known as Jack Ruby, and Ruby ran the Carousel Club. I then asked the man if Ruby ran Jack's Branch Office Lounge on Industrial, and the man said that he didn't. I told the man that I had serviced refrigerators in a number of clubs, in the past, and had possibly been to the Carousel Club, but did not remember it." Yates, December 10, 1963, [image 24](#).

The hitchhiker's remarks pointing toward Ruby, whether implicitly or explicitly, were apparently part of the fallback, Mob-connected part of the scenario. The purpose, as we shall see, was to draw on Ruby's Mob involvements to implicate Organized Crime as a second-level (false) sponsor of the assassination. A Mob conspiracy to kill Kennedy was then used to replace the first-level, lone-assassin portrayal of Oswald when it inevitably fell to pieces. The "exposure" of a Mob plot, with Ruby and Oswald as its tools, would again leave the CIA and the Cold War system it represented safely in the shadows.

765. Ibid.

766. Statement by Dempsey Jones to FBI special agent Arthur E. Carter, November 27, 1963, Dallas, Texas. CD-Rom for [Harvey and Lee](#), "1963 November 1-21," [image 27](#). Dempsey Jones said Ralph Yates told him "the day before the President was shot" [November 21, 1963] about the hitchhiker "who discussed the fact with him that one could be in a building and shoot the President as he, the President, passed by." Yates stated in his first FBI interview that he picked up the hitchhiker "at approximately 10:30 AM on either November 20 or 21, 1963." Yates, November 26, 1963, [image 22](#). In his second FBI interview, Yates said he picked up the man "on a date that I now believe was Wednesday, November 20, 1963." Yates, December 10, 1963, [image 24](#). Yates and Jones agreed that their initial conversation about the hitchhiker took place at least one day before the president was shot.

767. Yates, November 26, 1963, [image 22](#).

768. [Warren Report](#), p. 130. [WCH](#), vol. 2 pp. 222-23. [Commission Exhibit 2003](#), p. 25. [WCH](#), vol. 24, p. 209. Lee Harvey Oswald denied to Captain Will Fritz that he ever talked to Frazier about curtain rods. He also said that the only thing he carried with him in Frazier's car on Friday morning was his lunch. [WCH](#), vol. 4, pp. 218-19.

769. [Commission Exhibit 2003](#), p. 25. [WCH](#), vol. 24, p. 209.

770. [Warren Report](#), p. 133. [WCH](#), vol. 2, p. 226. Buell Wesley Frazier's curtain rods story, supported in part by his sister, Linnie Mae Randle, who claimed she saw Oswald carrying a brown package Friday morning ([WCH](#), vol. 2, pp. 248-51), was called into question by George O'Toole in [The Assassination Tapes: An Electronic Probe into the Murder of John F. Kennedy and the Dallas Coverup](#) (New York: Penthouse Press, 1975). Using a voice-measuring, lie-detection machine, the Psychological Stress Evaluator (PSE), O'Toole processed for his book the recorded statements of more than forty persons with direct knowledge of Kennedy's assassination. One of them was Buell Wesley Frazier relating his curtain rods story soon after Kennedy was killed. The stress in Frazier's voice was so great that one lie-detection analyst remarked, "On a scale of ten, this stress is somewhere near eleven." O'Toole, p. 172.

Buell Wesley Frazier was an early focus of investigation in the Kennedy assassination. The evening of November 22, he was arrested by Dallas Police. At the same time, the police confiscated his British 303 rifle. It was the same kind of rifle that the media first said had been found in the Book Depository. O'Toole, p. 205, citing Tom Webb of WBAP-TV, Fort Worth, Texas, *News Coverage of the Assassination of President Kennedy*, MR 74-52:1 (tape), JFK Library. If JFK was killed by more than one person, the most logical second suspect at the time, in addition to Lee Harvey Oswald, was his friend and fellow Book Depository worker, Buell Wesley Frazier.

Oswald witness Garland Slack, whose shooting target Oswald (or an impostor) had provocatively fired into on November 17 at the Sports Drome Rifle Range, said Oswald had been brought to the Sports Drome "by a man named 'Frazier' from Irving, Texas"—which Frazier denied doing in a statement to the FBI. [Commission Exhibit No. 3077](#), [WCH](#), vol. 26, p. 681. In any case, from his undeniable situation as Oswald's driver to the Book Depository, the nineteen-year-old Frazier was in an unenviable position, where he was especially vulnerable to government pressures.

On the night of November 22 at Dallas Police headquarters, Buell Wesley Frazier was given a polygraph test. According to Detectives G. F. Rose and R. S. Stovall, who witnessed Detective R. D. Lewis conducting

the polygraph, “the examination showed conclusively that Wesley Frazier was truthful.” [Commission Exhibit No. 2003](#), [WCH](#), [vol. 24](#), [p. 293](#). However, O’Toole’s PSE-measured interviews ten years later produced hard stress in Stovall when he denied being present at Frazier’s polygraph test and in Frazier, Rose, and Lewis when they said the test showed Frazier was telling the truth. According to the PSE, all four men were lying. O’Toole, pp. 168-206.

771. [Warren Report](#), pp. [130](#), [137](#).
772. Yates, November 26, 1963, [image 26](#).
773. “To SAC [Special Agent in Charge] Dallas from Director, FBI (105-82555),” January 2, 1964. JFK Record Number 180-10033-10242.
774. “To Director, FBI (105-82555) from SAC, Dallas (100-10461),” January 4, 1964. JFK Record Number 180-10027-10351.
775. Author’s interview of Dorothy Walker (formerly Dorothy Yates, widow of Ralph Leon Yates), August 12, 2006.
776. Author’s interview of Dorothy Walker, October 16, 2006.
777. Author’s interview of Dorothy Walker, October 6, 2006.
778. Walker, August 12, 2006; October 6 and 16, 2006.
779. Ibid.
780. Ibid.
781. Ibid. Dorothy Walker said the number of shock treatments Ralph Yates received was either forty-one or forty-two.
782. Ibid.
783. Ibid.
784. Author’s interview of James Orvis Smith, uncle of Ralph Leon Yates, October 9, 2006. “J. O.” Smith, as he was known, helped the poverty-stricken Yates family for years by bringing them groceries. Author’s conversation with Ken Smith, cousin of Ralph Leon Yates, October 9, 2006.
785. Ken Smith, October 9, 2006.
786. Ibid.
787. Jones, November 27, 1963. In J. Edgar Hoover’s January 2, 1964, teletype to J. Gordon Shanklin, the FBI director made a point of repeating Dempsey Jones’s disclaimer. However, Hoover avoided citing Jones’s corroboration in the same FBI report that Ralph Yates had told him before the president’s assassination about the hitchhiker he dropped off at Elm and Houston, who talked about shooting the president from a building. Jones, November 27, 1963. Also JFK Record Number 180-10033-10242.