

DEALEY PLAZA WITNESSES

HSCA VOLS. 4, 6, 12

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SUMMARY

After a nationwide search, Louie Steven Witt of Dallas is identified as the mysterious "Umbrella Man" seen in films of the assassination holding an open umbrella as the president was shot. He testifies that he was in the Plaza at the spur of the moment and was opening the umbrella to taunt JFK (the umbrella was allegedly a symbol of Joe Kennedy Sr.'s support of Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy regarding Nazi Germany). He said that after the shooting, he felt ashamed of having done so as the president was being killed, and so never identified himself to police or researchers. The HSCA, after a humorous examination of the umbrella in question, concludes that no sinister significance is held by Mr. Witt or his umbrella.

Photographic experts studied many photos taken of the assassination sequence in order to determine the answers to many questions regarding the case. About a dozen witnesses whose photographs were used are listed in this section, but no further mention of who these people were or what they thought they saw or heard is made.

The testimony, either before the HSCA, FBI, or other sources, of approximately 30 witnesses is considered. These 30 witnesses are significant because their testimony contradicts the conclusion that Oswald acted alone and that there was no gunman on the grassy knoll (they are listed as "conspiracy witnesses.").

Their stories are related by the HSCA, which concludes that given the HSCA's determination that there was one shot fired from the knoll, these witnesses could have seen smoke or other indications of gunfire in that area and are credible.

BACKGROUND

For years, researchers have wondered about the identity of a man holding an open umbrella on the side of Elm St. as the president passed by. The unlikelihood of having an umbrella on a sunny day is interpreted by many as proof of a sinister connection to the assassination; concluding either that the umbrella itself was a weapon, or that the umbrella was a signal to the unseen gunmen that Kennedy was not yet fatally wounded. The HSCA produced sketches and photographs of "Umbrella Man" and distributed them nationwide; after a search, Louie Steven Witt was identified as the man in question and subpoenaed by the Committee. [Note: Witt's claim to be "Umbrella Man" and his testimony are considered dubious by many in the research community.]

Many witnesses in Dealey Plaza on the day of the assassination believed that they witnessed something other than Lee Harvey Oswald firing three shots from the TSBD. It has always been a troubling aspect of the Warren Commission investigation that few of these witnesses were called to testify before the WC. Critics have charged that if a witness didn't see what the government told them they saw, their testimony was ignored by the Warren Commission. The HSCA airs some of the accounts of the assassination that conflict with the official conclusion.

Volume 4

429-453 Testimony of Louie Steven Witt.

Volume 6

12 List of those witnesses whose photographs were used by the HSCA for its photographic analysis of the events in Dealey Plaza.

Volume 12

Testimony of:

3 Ruby Henderson.

4 Carolyn Walther.

4-6 Arthur Rowland.

7-8 Phillip, Louisa, and Rosemary Willis.

8-9 Richard Randolph Carr.

9 James Richard Worrell.

10-12 Jean Hill.

12 Jesse C. Price.

12-13 *Lee Bowers.*

13-14 *Malcolm Summers.*

14-15 *Jack Watson and James C. Bradley.*
15-16 *Tom Tilson.*

16-17 *Julia Ann Mercer.*

17-18 *Roger Craig.*

18 *Marvin Robinson.*

18-19 *Earle Brown.*

19-20 *James Lomax.*

20 *Virgie Baker (nee Rackley).*

20-21 *Royce Skelton.*

21-22 *James Tague.*

22 *Richard Randolph Carr.*

22-23 *Charles Rodgers, Mike Nally*

23 *Starvis Ellis.*

23 Austin Miller

23 Clemon Earl Johnson.

23-24 S.M. Holland

24 James Simmons.

24 Norman Potter.

24-25 Conclusion: Those witnesses who saw smoke on the knoll could conceivably have been correct; gunfire, even "smokeless ammunition," does cause smoke visible to the eye. This smoke, if the testimony is correct, would have come from the area of the grassy knoll.