

Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy

TESTIMONY OF JOHNNY CALVIN BREWER

The testimony of Johnny Calvin Brewer was taken at 3:15 p.m., on April 2, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. David W. Belin, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. BELIN. Will you stand and raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. BREWER. I do.

Mr. BELIN. Would you please state your name for the record?

Mr. BREWER. Johnny Calvin Brewer.

Mr. BELIN. How old are you, Mr. Brewer?

Mr. BREWER. Twenty-two.

Mr. BELIN. Where do you live?

Mr. BREWER. 512 North Lancaster, apartment 102.

Mr. BELIN. What city and state?

Mr. BREWER. Dallas, Tex.

Mr. BELIN. Were you born in Texas?

Mr. BREWER. Born in Miami, Okla.

Mr. BELIN. In Oklahoma?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. When did you move to Texas?

Mr. BREWER. About 2 years after I was born. My father was foreman on a construction company and we moved to Texas.

Mr. BELIN. Where did you go to school in Texas, please, sir?

Mr. BREWER. I went first year in Lockhart. The second year we moved to Houston, for a year, and we moved back to Lockhart, and I went there 10 years in Lockhart.

Mr. BELIN. You graduated from high school?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Did you go to school after you graduated from high school?

Mr. BREWER. I went to Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos a year, and a year in Nixon Clay Business College in Austin.

Mr. BELIN. Then what did you do?

Mr. BREWER. I got married and quit school and went to work for Hardy's Shoe Store. I—that was in September, and I got married in December. And I have been with them ever since.

Mr. BELIN. When did you go to work for Hardy's Shoe Store?

Mr. BREWER. In September of 1961.

Mr. BELIN. Do they assign you to any particular store?

Mr. BREWER. I worked at the Capital Plaza Shopping Center in Austin for about 10 months, and then they transferred me to Dallas and gave me a store down on Jefferson.

Mr. BELIN. In Austin were you just a shoe salesman?

Mr. BREWER. I was assistant manager.

Mr. BELIN. And they transferred you to a shop on Jefferson?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. In Dallas?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. What is the address of that shop in Dallas?

Mr. BREWER. 213 West Jefferson.

Mr. BELIN. They made you the manager of that shop?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. How long have you been manager?

Mr. BREWER. Since August of 1962.

Mr. BELIN. From August 1962 on?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Until the present time?

Mr. BREWER. Until the day I was made manager of the downtown store.

Mr. BELIN. Today is the 2d of April, or the 3d?

Mr. BREWER. Second.

Mr. BELIN. You were made manager of the Hardy's Downtown Shoe Store?

Mr. BREWER. Yes, sir.

It wasn't April Fool's. I thought they were firing me, but it turned out they weren't.

Mr. BELIN. Did he call you in yesterday to tell you?

Mr. BREWER. Day before yesterday and told me to get ready for an audit, that I would be going to town, if I wanted it, and I said yes.

Mr. BELIN. Would this be considered a promotion?

Mr. BREWER. A better store, more volume, and make more money. It would be considered a promotion.

Mr. BELIN. Any children at all, Mr. Brewer?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. I want to take you back to November 22, 1963. This was the day that President Kennedy was assassinated. How did you find out about the assassination, Mr. Brewer?

Mr. BREWER. We were listening to a transistor radio there in the store, just listening to a regular radio program, and they broke in with the bulletin that the President had been shot. And from then, that is all there was. We listened to all of the events.

Mr. BELIN. Did you hear over the radio that the President had died?

Mr. BREWER. I heard a rumor. They said that—one of the Secret Service men said that the President had died, and said that was just a rumor.

Mr. BELIN. Do you remember hearing anything else over the radio concerning anything that happened that afternoon?

Mr. BREWER. Well, they kept reconstructing what had happened and what they had heard, and they talked about it in general. There wasn't too much to talk about. They didn't have all the facts, and just repeated them mostly. And they said a patrolman had been shot in Oak Cliff.

Mr. BELIN. Is Oak Cliff the area in which your shoe store was located?

Mr. BREWER. Yes, sir.

Mr. BELIN. All right, would you describe what happened after you heard on the radio that an officer had been shot?

Mr. BREWER. Well, there was heard a siren coming down East Jefferson headed toward West Jefferson.

Mr. BELIN. What is the dividing street between East and West Jefferson?

Mr. BREWER. Beckley.

Mr. BELIN. How far is Beckley from your store?

Mr. BREWER. Two blocks.

Mr. BELIN. Two blocks to the east or to the west?

Mr. BREWER. There is Zangs to the east. The first street is Zangs and the next street is Beckley.

Mr. BELIN. The first street east is Zangs Boulevard and the next street is Beckley?

Mr. BREWER. Yes, right.

Mr. BELIN. Is your store located to the north or south side of Jefferson?

Mr. BREWER. On the north.

Mr. BELIN. All right.

Mr. BREWER. I looked up and out towards the street and the police cars—

Mr. BELIN. When you looked up, did you step out of the store at all?

Mr. BREWER. No; I was still in the store behind the counter, and I looked up and saw the man enter the lobby.

Mr. BELIN. When you say the lobby of your store, first let me ask you to describe how is—how wide is your store, approximately?

Mr. BREWER. About 20 feet.

Mr. BELIN. All right, is the entrance to your store right on the sidewalk?

Mr. BREWER. The entrance to the store is about 15 feet from the sidewalk, front doors.

Mr. BELIN. The front doors?

Mr. BREWER. Yes; they are recessed, and then there is windows, show windows on each side.

Mr. BELIN. This would be, if we were—if we would take a look at the letter "U," or see the letter "V," your doorway would be at the bottom part of the letter and the show cases would be at the sides of the letter, is that correct?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. What you call this lobby, that is the area between the sidewalk and your front door, is that correct?

Mr. BREWER. Yes, sir.

Mr. BELIN. All right, you saw a man going into what you referred to as this lobby area?

Mr. BREWER. Yes; and he stood there with his back to the street.

Mr. BELIN. When did he go in now? What did you hear at the time that he stepped into this lobby area?

Mr. BREWER. I heard the police cars coming up Jefferson, and he stepped in, and the police made a U-turn and went back down East Jefferson.

Mr. BELIN. Where did he make the U-turn?

Mr. BREWER. At Zangs.

Mr. BELIN. Do you remember the sirens going away?

Mr. BREWER. Yes; the sirens were going away. I presume back to where the officer had been shot, because it was back down that way. And when they turned and left, Oswald looked over his shoulder and turned around and walked up West Jefferson towards the theatre.

Mr. BELIN. Let me hold you a minute. You used the word Oswald. Did you know who the man was at the time you saw him?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. So at the time, you didn't know what his name was?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Will you describe the man you saw?

Mr. BREWER. He was a little man, about 5'9'', and weighed about 150 pounds is all.

Mr. BELIN. How tall are you, by the way?

Mr. BREWER. Six three.

Mr. BELIN. So you say he was about 5'9''?

Mr. BREWER. About 5'9''.

Mr. BELIN. And about 150?

Mr. BREWER. And had brown hair. He had a brown sports shirt on. His shirt tail was out.

Mr. BELIN. Any jacket?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. What color of trousers, do you remember?

Mr. BREWER. I don't remember.

Mr. BELIN. Light or dark?

Mr. BREWER. I don't remember that either.

Mr. BELIN. Any other clothing that you noticed?

Mr. BREWER. He had a T-shirt underneath his shirt.

Mr. BELIN. Was his shirt buttoned up all the way?

Mr. BREWER. A couple of buttons were unbuttoned at the time.

Mr. BELIN. Light complexioned or dark?

Mr. BREWER. Light complexioned.

Mr. BELIN. All right. After you saw him in the lobby of your store there, what you call a lobby area, which is really kind of an extension of the sidewalk, then you saw him leave?

Mr. BREWER. Yes, he turned and walked up toward—

Mr. BELIN. Had the police sirens subsided at the time he turned, or not?

Mr. BREWER. No; you could still hear sirens.

Mr. BELIN. Did they sound like they were coming toward you or going away?

Mr. BREWER. They were going away at that time.

Mr. BELIN. Going the other way?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. How could you tell?

Mr. BREWER. They were getting further in the distance.

Mr. BELIN. Then what did you see this man do?

Mr. BREWER. He turned and walked out of the lobby and went up West Jefferson toward the theatre, and I walked out the front and watched him, and he went into the theatre.

Mr. BELIN. What theatre is that?

Mr. BREWER. Texas Theatre.

Mr. BELIN. Why did you happen to watch this particular man?

Mr. BREWER. He just looked funny to me. Well, in the first place, I had seen him some place before. I think he had been in my store before. And when you wait on somebody, you recognize them, and he just seemed funny. His hair was sort of messed up and looked like he had been running, and he looked scared, and he looked funny.

Mr. BELIN. Did you notice any of his actions when he was standing in your lobby there?

Mr. BREWER. No; he just stood there and stared.

Mr. BELIN. He stared?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Was he looking at the merchandise?

Mr. BREWER. Not anything in particular. He was just standing there staring.

Mr. BELIN. Well, would you state then what happened? You said that you saw him walk into the Texas Theatre?

Mr. BREWSTER. He walked into the Texas Theatre and I walked up to the theatre, to the box office and asked Mrs. Postal if she sold a ticket to a man who was wearing a brown shirt, and she said no, she hadn't. She was listening to the radio herself. And I said that a man walked in there, and I was going to go inside and ask the usher if he had seen him.

So I walked in and Butch Burroughs—

Mr. BELIN. Who was Burroughs?

Mr. BREWER. He was behind the counter. He operated the concession and takes tickets. He was behind the concession stand and I asked him if he had seen a man in a brown shirt of that description, matching that description, and he said he had been working behind the counter and hadn't seen anybody.

And I asked him if he would come with me and show me where the exits were and we would check the exits. And he asked me why.

I told him that I thought the guy looked suspicious.

Mr. BELIN. Could you tell whether or not he bought a ticket?

Mr. BREWER. No; he just turned and walked right straight in.

Mr. BELIN. When he walked right straight in, could you see the box office?

Mr. BREWER. Well, the box office is right in the middle in front of the theatre, and he turned right at the corner and went in. You could see him if he was buying a ticket, because the box office is flush with all the other buildings.

Mr. BELIN. If he had purchased a ticket, would you have seen him purchasing the ticket from where you were standing or walking?

Mr. BREWER. I could have seen him, yes; standing in front of the box office.

Mr. BELIN. Then did you know when you saw him walk in and when you walked up to Julia Postal that he had not bought a ticket?

Mr. BREWER. I knew that he hadn't.

Mr. BELIN. Why did you ask Julia Postal whether he had or hadn't?

Mr. BREWER. I don't know.

Mr. BELIN. You just asked her?

Mr. BREWER. Just asked her whether he had bought or she had seen him go in.

Mr. BELIN. She—did she say whether she had seen him, or don't you remember?

Mr. BREWER. She said she couldn't remember a man of that description going in.

Mr. BELIN. All right. You saw this person Butch?

Mr. BREWER. Yes, sir.

Mr. BELIN. You say he is the usher, too?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. What did you and Butch do?

Mr. BREWER. We walked down to the front of the theatre to the stage. First we checked the front exit, and it hadn't been opened. We went to the back and it hadn't been opened.

Mr. BELIN. How could you tell that it hadn't been opened?

Mr. BREWER. Well, you open it from the inside, and you raise a bar, and a rod sticks into a hole at the bottom and then you open it. When you close it, it doesn't fall back in. You have to raise the rod again to close it from the inside.

Mr. BELIN. In other words, you have to close it from the inside?

Mr. BREWER. You can close it from the outside, but it won't lock.

Mr. BELIN. It was locked when you got there?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. So you knew that no one had left?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Then what did you do?

Mr. BREWER. We went back up front and went in the balcony and looked around but we couldn't see anything.

Mr. BELIN. Now you first looked on the bottom floor and you did not see him?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. How many patrons were in the theatre at that time?

Mr. BREWER. I couldn't really tell. There weren't many, but it was dark and we couldn't see how many people were in there. There were 15 or 20, I would say, at the most, upstairs and downstairs.

Mr. BELIN. Together, 15 or 20?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Then you went upstairs. Did you see him upstairs?

Mr. BREWER. No; I couldn't see anything upstairs.

Mr. BELIN. Did you hear any noises there?

Mr. BREWER. When we first went down to the exit by the stage, we heard a seat pop up, but couldn't see anybody. And we never did see him.

But we went back and upstairs and checked, and we came down and went back to the box office and told Julia that we hadn't seen him.

Mr. BELIN. Julia Postal is the cashier?

Mr. BREWER. Yes; and she called the police, and we went—Butch went to the front exit, and I went down by the stage to the back exit and stood there until the police came.

Mr. BELIN. Then what happened?

Mr. BREWER. Well, just before they came, they turned the house lights on, and I looked out from the curtains and saw the man.

Mr. BELIN. Where was he when you saw him?

Mr. BREWER. He was in the center section about six or seven rows, from the back, toward the back.

Mr. BELIN. Toward the back? Are you sure?

Mr. BREWER. do you know exactly which row he was in from the back?

Mr. BREWER. No; I don't know which row.

Mr. BELIN. Then what did you see?

Mr. BREWER. He stood up and walked to the aisle to his right and then he turned around and walked back and sat down and at this time there was no place I could see.

Mr. BELIN. Did he sit down in the same seat he had been in to begin with?

Mr. BREWER. I don't remember if it was the same seat or not.

Mr. BELIN. Then what happened?

Mr. BREWER. I heard a noise outside, and I opened the door, and the alley, I guess it was filled with police cars and policemen were on the fire exits and stacked around the alley, and they grabbed me, a couple of them and held and searched me and asked me what I was doing there, and I told them that there was a guy in the theatre that I was suspicious of, and he asked me if he was still there.

And I said, yes, I just seen him. And he asked me if I would point him out.

And I and two or three other officers walked out on the stage and I pointed him out, and there were officers coming in from the front of the show, I guess, coming toward that way, and officers going from the back.

Mr. BELIN. Then what did you see?

Mr. BREWER. Well, I saw this policeman approach Oswald, and Oswald stood up and I heard some hollering, I don't know exactly what he said, and this man hit Patrolman McDonald.

Mr. BELIN. You say this man hit Patrolman McDonald. Did you know it was Patrolman McDonald?

Mr. BREWER. I didn't know his name, but I had seen him quite a few times around Oak Cliff. But I didn't know his name.

Mr. BELIN. Then you later found out this was Patrolman McDonald?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Did you say this man was the same man?

Mr. BREWER. The same man that had stood in my lobby that I followed to the show.

Mr. BELIN. Who hit who first?

Mr. BREWER. Oswald hit McDonald first, and he knocked him to the seat.

Mr. BELIN. Who knocked who?

Mr. BREWER. He knocked McDonald down. McDonald fell against one of the seats. And then real quick he was back up.

Mr. BELIN. When you say he was——

Mr. BREWER. McDonald was back up. He just knocked him down for a second and he was back up. And I jumped off the stage and was walking toward that, and I saw this gun come up and—in Oswald's hand, a gun up in the air.

Mr. BELIN. Did you see from where the gun came?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. You saw the gun up in the air?

Mr. BREWER. And somebody hollered "He's got a gun."

And there were a couple of officers fighting him and taking the gun away from him, and they took the gun from him, and he was fighting, still fighting, and I heard some of the police holler, I don't know who it was, "Kill the President, will you." And I saw fists flying and they were hitting him.

Mr. BELIN. Was he fighting back at that time?

Mr. BREWER. Yes; he was fighting back.

Mr. BELIN. Then what happened?

Mr. BREWER. Well, just in a short time they put the handcuffs on him and they took him out.

Mr. BELIN. Did you see police officers hit him after they got the handcuffs on him?

Mr. BREWER. No; I didn't see them.

Mr. BELIN. Did you see any police officer hit Oswald after Oswald stopped fighting?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Did you hear Oswald say anything?

Mr. BREWER. As they were taking him out, he stopped and turned around and hollered, "I am not resisting arrest," about twice. "I am not resisting arrest." And they took him on outside.

Mr. BELIN. Then what happened?

Mr. BREWER. Well, then, the police officers and plainclothesmen, whoever they were, got everybody that was in the theatre and set them aside, and

another officer was taking their names and addresses of all the people that were in the theatre.

Mr. BELIN. When you first saw this man, when you saw him leave what you referred to as the lobby of your shoestore building, what is it, marble or concrete?

Mr. BREWER. Terrazzo.

Mr. BELIN. Terrazzo between the sidewalk and your front door?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Where were you when you first saw him?

Mr. BREWER. I was behind the counter there by the hose bar.

Mr. BELIN. About how far were you from the front door?

Mr. BREWER. Ten feet.

Mr. BELIN. Could you see through there to get a good view?

Mr. BREWER. Yes; the doors are solid glass.

Mr. BELIN. Then you saw this man leave?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Then what did you do?

Mr. BREWER. I went out the front door and stood in front of the store and watched him.

Mr. BELIN. You stood in front of the door?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Where was he walking when you first saw him? As you got out in front of your store?

Mr. BREWER. He was, I would say, he was in front of the furniture store. What is the name of that?

Mr. BELIN. Would that be Thompson's Furniture Store?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Did you know—notice how fast this man was walking?

Mr. BREWER. Just a little faster than usual.

Mr. BELIN. Faster than usual walk?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Then about how far were you behind him?

Mr. BREWER. Well, I stood there until he walked into the theatre. I don't really know what I was thinking about.

Mr. BELIN. You stood in front of your store as he walked into the theatre?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. About how far is the entrance of the theatre from your store?

Mr. BREWER. I would say 50 or 60 feet—yards.

Mr. BELIN. Then after you saw him turn into the theatre, what did you do?

Mr. BREWER. Then I walked toward the theatre.

Mr. BELIN. At an average pace, or above average?

Mr. BREWER. I don't know.

Mr. BELIN. You don't remember? About how long after you got to the theatre did the police come in, if you can remember?

Mr. BREWER. I don't remember that either.

Mr. BELIN. Do you remember about what time it was when the police came in?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Is there anything else you can think of that in any way bears on this?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Mr. Brewer, I am handing you what has been marked "Commission Exhibit 150," and ask you to state whether or not that looks like the shirt you saw the man wear?

Mr. BREWER. That looks like the shirt, yes.

Mr. BELIN. Did you notice whether the man that wore it had any holes in the elbows at all, or not?

Mr. BREWER. I didn't notice.

Mr. BELIN. But this Exhibit 150, looks like the shirt?

Mr. BREWER. It looks like the shirt.

Mr. BELIN. Was he wearing a jacket? I believe you answered that before.

Mr. BREWER. No, he didn't have on a jacket.

Mr. BELIN. Did you hear this man as he was in the theatre say anything other than "I am not resisting arrest."?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Did he say anything, or could you not understand it?

Mr. BREWER. He said something, but I couldn't understand what it was.

Mr. BELIN. When he said, "I am not resisting arrest," was this before or after they had the handcuffs on him?

Mr. BREWER. After.

Mr. BELIN. Mr. Brewer, you have the right, if you want, to come back and read this deposition and sign it, or you can just waive the signing of it and let the court reporter send it directly to us in Washington. Do you have any preference on it?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Do you want to waive it?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. We want to thank you for all of your cooperation on this. I might ask one other question. We chatted for a few minutes when we first met before we started taking this deposition, did we not?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Is there anything we talked there about that isn't recorded in this written testimony?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Is there anything you said which is different insofar as stating the facts and what you have stated here on the record?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. When we first met, what is the fact as to whether or not I just asked you to tell your story, or whether or not I tried to tell you what I thought the story was?

Mr. BREWER. You asked me to tell the story first.

Mr. BELIN. Is that what you did?

Mr. BREWER. Yes.

Mr. BELIN. Anything else you can think of?

Mr. BREWER. No.

Mr. BELIN. Please thank Hardy's Shoe Store for us for letting you take the time to be here. We thank you very much.

Mr. BREWER. Okay.

TESTIMONY OF JULIA POSTAL

The testimony of Julia Postal was taken at 3 p.m., on April 2, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Joseph A. Ball, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. BALL. Will you stand and hold up your hand, please and be sworn? Do you solemnly swear the testimony you will give before this Commission will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mrs. POSTAL. I do.

Mr. BALL. Will you state your name, please?

Mrs. POSTAL. Julia Postal.

Mr. BALL. What is your address, please?

Mrs. POSTAL. 2728 SeEVERS.

Mr. BALL. Will you tell me something about yourself, where you were born and what your education was, what your occupation has been, just in general.

Mrs. POSTAL. Was born here in Dallas and I went through all school here to my first year at Adamson, and went to California and finished up out there.

Mr. BALL. Finished high school there?

Mrs. POSTAL. Went through 4 years of it.

Mr. BALL. In California?