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## THE SECRET SERVICE AGENT ON THE KNOLL

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with contributions from Michael Parks and Mark Colgan  
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UPDATED

"After the assassination, several witnesses stated they had seen or encountered Secret Service agents behind the stockade fence situated on the grassy knoll area and in the Texas School Book Depository." (HSCA Report pg. 184)

### Introduction:

I suppose the first thing most researchers think when reading about Officer Smith's experience meeting the Secret Service Agent on the knoll is to wonder who it could have been, the second thought has to be, "What nerve!" The creativity of impersonating one of the Presidential Praetorian Guard is one that always stood out in my mind. Our guy is not content with the everyday impersonation of Dallas' finest or the cache of being an FBI agent. (And CIA agents never identify themselves as such so that was out of the question.) But to claim be one of the elite Secret Service, those men with sunglasses and headsets in their ears albeit in this case, with dirty fingernails and a sportcoat.1

According to assassination literature and testimony it has long been established that no genuine Secret Service agents were in Dealey Plaza until later in the afternoon of November 22, 1963. Surprisingly, not only were there no Secret Service agents assigned to or stationed behind the grassy knoll area, but there were no FBI or other federal agents, or Dallas Police Officers stationed there either. This fact suggests phony Secret Service agents were in Dealey Plaza, and that perhaps they were there to help the assassins escape.

I began my search for the knoll agent a few years ago when an article written by Warren Commission apologist Max Holland for "The Washington Spectator" newsletter stated that the mysterious agent on the knoll was none other than James W. Powell, a Army Intelligence agent on his day off.

"James Powell, an Army Intelligence agent then involved in the surveillance of domestic dissidents, was present, and dressed in civilian clothes, in the Texas School Book Depository building in Dallas, 10 minutes after the shooting. And his unit, 112th Intelligence Group, did indeed have a file on a self-styled, and seemingly non-violent, Marxist named Lee Harvey Oswald....Like thousands of Dallasites that bright November day, Powell had taken the day off to watch the President and First Lady....After hearing the shots, Powell, who was a block away from Dealey Plaza, immediately ran to the vicinity. His first reaction was to take a picture of the TSBD because several people were pointing to it as the source of the rifle fire. He then raced over to check out the commotion around the "grassy knoll," identifying himself as "Special Agent Powell," and thereby creating rumors of a mysterious federal agent at the seen." ("The Washington Spectator," May 15, 1997)

After reading this article, I first called the ARRB's Washington, D.C. offices to ask when the Powell statement had been taken and when it had been released. I related that I had read a summary of the interview by Holland and to my astonishment was told it wasn't released yet. I then phoned "The Washington Spectator" contacting Mr. Holland who openly admitted his source was an ARRB staffer who shared the statement with him. I was understandably upset and shortly received a call back from both the ARRB's Information Officer, Tom Samoluk and General Council, Jeremy Gunn. Gunn told me that Powell didn't necessarily admit he was the agent on the knoll, it was the staffer's interpretation of the conversation - not necessarily what the testimony says.

Confusingly, after pestering the ARRB and NARA the following years for both the Robert E. Jones HSCA testimony and the ARRB's Powell statement, finally on May 24, 1999, I was sent three pages of the HSCA's Executive Session questioning of Army Intelligence Col. Robert E. Jones2, but not the ARRB's Powell statement. I finally received that document a year later simply faxed to me from the National Archives.3

Through the years there has been speculation from different assassination related sources regarding the knoll agent. There is no doubt he was there on the grassy knoll only moments after the shooting. More than a few authors have scoured testimony and written many words speculating on who the knoll agent could have been. This article won't tell you that but it will tell you who it wasn't.

To assist the reader with the purpose of this article I begin with a listing of the witnesses to the knoll agent and their statements:

### THE WITNESSES

#### Dallas Police Officer Joseph Smith

"After the shooting, Dallas Police officer Joe M. Smith encountered another suspicious man in the lot behind the picket fence [on the grassy knoll]. Smith told the Warren Commission that when he drew his pistol and approached the man, the man "showed [Smith] that he was a Secret

Service agent." (WC Vol. VII, pg. 535; see interview of Joseph M. Smith, Feb. 8, 1978, House Select Committee on Assassinations (JFK Document 005886).)

"I looked into all the cars and checked around the bushes. Of course, I wasn't alone. There was some deputy sheriff with me, and I believe one Secret Service man when I got there. I got to make this statement, too. I felt awfully silly, but after the shot and this woman, I pulled my pistol from my holster, and I thought, this is silly, I don't know who I am looking for, and I put it back. Just as I did, he showed me that he was a Secret Service agent." (Warren Commission Hearings, Vol. VII, pg.. 531)

#### **J.C. Price**

Post Office employee Price was never called to testify, however, he did sign an affidavit stating that immediately after the shots he saw a man with something in his right hand run across the railroad yard that lies behind the wooden fence and parking area.

"I saw one man run towards the passenger cars on the railroad siding after the volley of shots. This man had a white dress shirt, no tie and khaki colored trousers. His hair appeared to be long... He had something in his hand. I couldn't be sure but it may have been a head piece." (Dallas Sheriff's Department Affidavit, 12-22-63)

#### **Lee Bowers, Jr.**

Bowers, from his vantage point in the train observation tower located in the parking lot behind the Texas School Book Depository, saw two strangers standing near the wooden fence prior to and at the time of the shooting. They fit the description of the casually dressed man who accosted Officer Smith. (WC Vol. Dallas, Tex. by Mr. Joseph A. Bail, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

"One man, middle-aged, or slightly older, fairly heavy-set, in a white shirt, fairly dark trousers. Another younger man, about midtwenties, in either a plaid shirt or plaid coat or jacket. They were standing within 10 or 15 feet of each other, and gave no appearance of being together, as far as I knew. They were facing and looking up towards Main and Houston, and following the caravan as it came down."

#### **Sam Holland**

Holland told the Warren Commission that he ran around behind the fence on the knoll immediately after the shots and saw evidence of someone standing behind the fence - muddy footprints going back and forth in one spot. He mentions seeing "agents" a few minutes later.

"...I remember about the third car down from this fence, there was a station wagon backed up toward the fence,,, a spot, I'd say 3 foot by 2 foot, looked to me like somebody had been standing there for a long time.

"Yes; immediately, but I turned around, see, and went to searching in there for empty shells, and three or four agents there then and that is when I walked back to the ear there and noticed the tracks there in one little spot." (WC Vol. 6, pgs. 254-247)

#### **Malcolm Summers**

"I ran across the-Elm Street to right there toward the knoll. It was there [pointing to a spot on the knoll]-and we were stopped by a man in a suit and he had an overcoat-over his arm and he, he, I saw a gun under that overcoat. And he-his comment was, "Don't you all come up here any further, you could get shot, or killed," one of those words. A few months later, they told me they didn't have an FBI man in that area. If they didn't have anybody, it's a good question who it was." (1988 documentary "Who Murdered JFK?")

#### **Ed Hoffman**

"A police officer came around the north end of the fence. He saw and confronted the suit man. The policeman held his service revolver in both hands, arms extended forward, legs spread and slightly squat. The suit man held both arms out to his side, as if to gesture, 'it wasn't me. See, I have nothing.' Then the suit man reached inside his coat and pulled out something and showed it to the police officer. The officer relaxed, and both men mingled with the crowd coming around the fence." ("Eyewitness," by Ed Hoffman and Ron Friedrich, 1998, JFK Lancer Publications)

#### **Gordon Arnold**

After hearing the shots, "The next thing I knew someone was kicking my butt and telling me to get up, Arnold said, 'It was a policeman. And I told him to go jump in the river. And then this other guy - a policeman - comes up with a shotgun and he was crying and that thing was waving back and forth.'" ("Dallas Morning News," August 27, 1978, under the caption, "SS Imposters Spotted by JFK Witness," by reporter Earl Golz.)

#### **Another Witness?**

##### **Wilfred Baetz**

According to documents found by Michael Parks, Mark Colgan and myself, Wilfred Baetz saw the November 25, 1966, "Life" Magazine and decided to admit he had been in Dealey Plaza on the day of the JFK assassination.<sup>3</sup> According to a letter summarizing Baetz's phone statement on December 5, 1966, written by Charles Batchelor, Dallas Chief of Police, Baetz called both the New York FBI and Chief Batchelor. On December 7, 1966, Chief Batchelor sent this letter to the Dallas FBI office. (Document 1, pg. 22 of this article) But by the time the New York FBI pays him a visit Baetz has changed his mind and denies not only being in Dealey Plaza and being accosted by the Secret Service man, he denies even making the calls in the first place. Why? Perhaps the second document holds the explanation: Baetz's wife works for Time-Life.

"The subject stated...He was standing on the grass on the north side of Elm Street - on the slope approaching the triple underpass. He recalls only one shot and immediately after the shot he ran up the slope toward the railroad tracks and was stopped by an unknown officer who pointed a pistol at him and shouted 'Where are you going?' He then returned down the slope." ([Letter from December 5, 1966](#))

Is this a valid witness? After reading the background report listing some of Mr. Baetz's more colorful past experiences, he may not be considered a strong one. However, the evidence shows he could not have made the claim of seeing the knoll agent without having actually experienced it. The "recent publicity" he relates to when contacting the FBI is a "Life" Magazine issue concerning the Zapruder film - not witness statements. Likewise, the phone call to the FBI did originate from his home where he admits no one else could have had access. Each witnesses' statement leaves us with the unimpeachable conclusion that there was a man on the grassy knoll moments after the shooting identifying himself verbally and physically (showing the badge) as Secret Service.<sup>4</sup> Next we must try to find out who it could have been.

#### **Potential Agents**

##### **Secret Service**

- Agent Lem Johns
- Agent Forrest Sorrels

Committee interviews or depositions with 11 of the 16 agents who were on duty with the motorcade and with their supervisors produced evidence that only one agent had left the motorcade at any time prior to the arrival at Parkland Hospital. This agent, Thomas "Lem" Johns, had been riding in Vice President Johnson's follow-up car. In an attempt to reach Johnson's limousine, he had left the car at the sound of shots and was momentarily on his own in Dealey Plaza, though he was picked up almost immediately and taken to Parkland Hospital. In every instance, therefore, the committee was able to establish the movement and the activities of Secret Service agents. Except for Dallas Agent-in-Charge Sorrels, who helped police search the Texas School Book Depository, no agent was in the vicinity of the stockade fence or inside the book depository on the day of the assassination. (HSCA Report pg. 184)

Dallas Police Officer D. V. Harkness was questioned regarding his Warren Commission testimony as to who was behind the TSBD when he got there: "There were some Secret Service agents there, but I didn't get them identified. They told me that they were Secret Service." (Harkness [HSCA 180-10082-10443](#) 02/07/78)

#### **Dallas Police**

##### **· Plainclothes Detectives**

Because the Dallas Police Department had numerous plainclothes detectives on duty in the Dealey Plaza area, the committee considered it possible that they were mistaken for Secret Service agents. (HSCA Report, pg. 185)

According to Dallas Police records no plainclothes detectives were assigned to the knoll area in Dealey Plaza.<sup>6</sup> But if there, the question begs to be asked: "Why would they identify themselves as Secret Service?" Were they behind the fence on the grassy knoll? Not officially.

#### **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau (A&TT)**

##### **· Frank Ellsworth**

"...[FBI Agent James] Hosty told the [House] Select Committee that at the time of the assassination 'Frank' Ellsworth...had indicated that he had been in the grassy knoll area and for some reason identified himself as a Secret Service Agent.'<sup>8</sup> Ellsworth, deposed by the Committee, denied Hosty's allegation. We know, however, that he was in the immediate area.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, he and seven other ATF agents were among the first law enforcement personnel of any description to reach the sixth floor of the TSBD. If Ellsworth was in the vicinity, it remains to be asked how Hosty knew about it. (Peter Dale Scott, "Deep Politics," pg. 274)

"In 1963, if you would have asked me if I was a Secret Service agent, I most likely would have answered yes-our roles overlapped that much." (Frank Ellsworth to author Gus Russo in 1994, "Live By The Sword," pg. 473)<sup>10</sup>

Is Ellsworth admitting he is the knoll agent? If so, then why did he deny it to the HSCA? Reflecting on the timing of Officer Smith seeing the knoll agent, if Ellsworth left his fellow agents and drifted over to the knoll area immediately after the shooting he may have been the man Smith saw. According to testimony, this didn't happen.

##### **· Other ATF Agents**

The text below is from a US Secret Service document given to JFK Lancer by author Gus Russo regarding a memo from Alcohol and Tobacco Tax regarding their agents in Dealey Plaza on the day of the assassination. (A&TT was the old name of ATF.) Both ATF and Secret Service had treasury ID's. Even so, the Booth documents state the agents were searching the TSBD, not the knoll. <sup>11</sup>

CO-2-34,030

U.S. SECRET SERVICE

TO: Chief - Attn. Insp. Kelly

FROM: SAIC Sorrels, Dallas (initialed)

SUBJECT: Report as to A&TT Investigators searching Texas School Book Depository Bldg., Dallas, TX, after assassination of President Kennedy.

There is enclosed a memorandum dated Jan. 14, 1964, submitted by Mr. Carl R. Booth, Jr. Supervisor in Charge, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax, Dallas, TX, regarding their Special Investigators and others having assisted in search of the Texas School Book Depository Building after assassination of President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963. A copy of this memorandum is being retained in Dallas office.

ATTACHMENT - Memo & cc.

===-

#### **Army Intelligence**

Any study of Army Intelligence in Dealey Plaza must begin with the amazing testimony of Col. Robert Jones before the HSCA.<sup>12</sup> Excerpted below, Jones, in 1963 was commanding officer of the military intelligence region that encompassed Texas called the 112th. Did Military Intelligence personnel identify themselves as Secret Service agents on the grassy knoll?

The committee did obtain evidence that military intelligence personnel may have identified themselves as Secret Service or that they might have been misidentified as such. Robert E. Jones... told the committee that from 8 to 12 military intelligence personnel in plainclothes were assigned to Dallas to provide supplemental security for the President's visit. He indicated that these agents had identification credentials and, if questioned, would most likely have stated that they were on detail to the Secret Service.

The committee sought to identify these agents so that they could be questioned. The Department of Defense, however, reported that a search of its files showed "no records...indicating any Department of Defense Protective Services in Dallas." The committee was unable to resolve the contradiction. (HSCA Report, pg. 184)

#### **Testimony of Colonel Robert Jones**

Mr. Genzman: Colonel Jones, I next would like to ask you about the liaison operations between military intelligence and the Secret Service.

Mr. Jones: At any time that the President, or Vice President, or anyone at the Secret Service has responsibility for physical protection, would be

scheduled to arrive in the area, they would contact our Group Headquarters or our Regional Headquarters and we would augment their force, if necessary to provide some type of physical coverage, that is, a man on the street, or an observation of people, vehicles, communications, or any other information or support that we could provide.

But in every case, to my knowledge, our people were under the control and supervision of Secret Service. We never assumed responsibility for the President's protection.

Mr. Genzman: Would you characterize these operations as supplementing the manpower of the Secret Service?

Mr. Jones: Yes, I would.

Mr. Genzman: With specific reference to President Kennedy's trip to Texas, would you release to the committee your connection with liaison operations with the Secret Service?

...

Mr. Jones: We provided a small force - I do not recall how many, but I would estimate between 8 and 12 - during the President's visit to San Antonio, Texas, and then the following day, on his visit to Dallas, the regions also provided additional people to assist, that is additional people from Region 2.

Mr. Genzman: Did these people which you provided include sources who were in contact with the various local law enforcement agencies?

Mr. Jones: The people who were in contact with either the intelligence division or the State Police or the Police Department or the FBI or Secret Service, were reporting either directly to me or to the Regional Operational Officer if necessary, or to the FBI, but it was normally channeling through the region or to the group headquarters. This information would then be made available to the requesting investigating agency.

...

Mr. G.: I have several other names I would like to ask you about. Was James W. Powell one of these liaison personnel?

Mr. J.: Yes, he was a Captain and also wore civilian clothes and was assigned to Region 2 of the 112 MI Group.

Mr. G.: Was he, in fact, on duty the day of the assassination?

...

Mr. J.: Yes he was.

...

Mr. G.: Colonel Jones, I would like clarify several points. How many people did the Department of Defense Intelligence have on duty assisting the Secret Service in Dallas on the day of the assassination?

Mr. J.: I would estimate between eight and twelve.

Mr. G.: How many of these people would have been in plain clothes?

Mr. J.: All of them.

Mr. G.: Would any of these Military Intelligence personnel have been carrying Secret Service credentials as a part of their liaison work with the Secret Service?

Mr. J.: They would have not have been carrying Secret Service credentials. They would have been identified with some type of sign, or something on their lapels, or some code or communication that could be identified in the crowd.

This was handled by the Secret Servicemen and they would always advise our people on the type of signal or sign to wear, but they did not have Secret Service credentials.

-end of excerpt-

(Executive session testimony of Col. Robert E. Jones, April 20, 1978, House Select Committee on Assassinations)

Remember, this is the same Robert E. Jones, operations officer of the U.S. Army's 112th Military Intelligence Group Fort Sam Houston, Texas, who contacted the FBI offices in San Antonio and Dallas and gave those offices detailed information concerning Oswald and A. J. Hidell, Oswald's alleged alias, from the Army Intelligence files. The HSCA rightly felt this information suggested the existence of a military intelligence file on Oswald and raised the possibility that he had intelligence associations of some kind. Jones was directly responsible for counterintelligence operations, background investigations, domestic intelligence, and any special operations in a five-state area. (HSCA Report, pg. 221-222)

When the Oswald military intelligence file was requested by the House Committee, the Department of Defense relayed that they "destroyed the file as part of a general program aimed at eliminating all of its files pertaining to nonmilitary personnel." (HSCA Report, pg. 223; Letter from Department of Defense to House Select Committee on Assassinations, June 22, 1978, pg. 6 )

### **James W. Powell**

James Powell is important in assassination research for several reasons. According to his ARRB statement Powell had been in Dealey Plaza when the shooting occurred and had taken several photographs with a 35mm Minolta camera. One, of course, is his famous photograph of the Texas School Book Depository taken just seconds after the shooting of the president which shows the full length of the TSBD. It was released by the FBI in 1976 and first published in an assassination book.<sup>13</sup> None of the other Powell photos have ever been published and he has rarely been interviewed.

Let's return to the beginning of this article with the ARRB's interview of Powell by Timothy A. Wray, ARRB chief Analyst for Military Records.<sup>14</sup> What does Powell say about his activities on November 22, 1963?

### **His background:**

Wray: And what was the nature of your duties (at the time of the assassination)?

Powell: Well, I was a member of the 112th INTC (Intelligence Corps) Group. I ran security investigations for security clearances on both military and civilian personnel that worked, for instance, on missile bases or wherever. As long as some part of their life was in our area: Dallas, Texarkana, Amarillo, that sort of thing. I'd be responsible for checking into their background. Checking possibly police records. I went out interviewing references they might have given, character references, and developing additional character references from those that were given by the people we were running the security clearances on.

Wray: You also had special training in photographic investigation?

Powell: Right, investigative photography.

Wray: How did that play in your duties? Or was it just an additional skill you didn't use that very much?

Powell: It was primarily an additional skill. It was like anything else you do in the military, you get trained for it in the event that you have to use it someday. We were trained in investigative photography, both from the standpoint of taking actual pictures of well, let's say we were expected to go out and photograph spies, or whatever, or follow suspected people that we were suspicious of doing something involved with the military against us. We were trained to be able to seek these people out, to photograph, to cover, to do surveillance on them, that type of thing. I was trained to do the photographic end of that, not only from the standpoint of taking pictures but developing them as well.

Wray: Okay. Now, just to mention some things here that I think are already in the record. Ordinarily you did your, you performed your duties in civilian clothes?

Powell: Correct.

Wray: You had some kind of identification credential, didn't you, separate from your military ID card, that identified you as a special agent?

Powell: Yes.

Wray: Something like this? [Wray shows Powell his ARRB identification, which is a bifold wallet-type credential showing owner's picture and employing federal agency.]

Powell: something in your pocket you opened up. Like that exactly. [Laughs] And there you are, Mr. Wray. Exactly.

Wray: In the files that I've been able to search, I saw the immediately after the assassination you wrote a memorandum, and you may have been interviewed by some other people, FBI or something like that. But an indication that you also were interviewed by some people for, I think, the Church Committee that was the Senate committee on intelligence in approximately 1973. Later the House Select Committee on Assassinations had a couple of people talk to you. Is that correct?

Powell: The House Select Committee I remember. I don't maybe the other one also on the phone. I don't remember a direct interview with them. But the House Select Committee people did come out here to Los Angeles and I met them in a hotel in downtown L.A. Couple of gentlemen. They identified themselves and I talked with them, and I got correspondence back from them sort of confirming our meeting and so forth.

#### **The events of November 22nd**

Wray: Let me turn now to the events around the 22nd of November, 1963. Do you recall when or how you learned that the President was going to visit Dallas? Did you learn the day before, two days before, a week before, a month before? Do you have any impression of how long you learned about this?

Powell: To be very honest with you, no. I'm sure like everyone else I read it in the paper and heard about it. It was interesting enough that I asked for time off, a leave of absence from my regular duties so I could see the motorcade, so I could go out to the airport and see the president. And I was hoping to get a few pictures. But I don't remember specifically how long before. I'd say in the neighborhood of a week, probably.

Wray: do you recall any discussion with other members of the 112th in anticipation of the presidential visit? Other people that were going to try to get time off to go see it, or anything else that anybody was going to be doing in connection with that? With the visit?

Powell: To be very honest with you, no. That's surprising when I think about it. I know others were there, they were on duty, or they were working the normal things that they do and did not ask for time off to do this.

Wray: Do you recall any discussion, or activities the 112th was going to do related to providing security for the President?

Powell: No. Not at all.

Wray: Do you recall any occasion previous to that, or for that matter subsequent to that, when the 112th did provide any kind of security if not for the President, for any other kind of activity?

Powell: We did not.

Wray: Okay, now you mentioned that on the 22nd of November that you had asked for time off. I understand, I'm just clarifying something here. Some members of the unit were still maybe most members of the unit were working that day. Is that correct? But you had specifically asked for time off?

Powell: Right. Because if you're in my capacity I'm expected to be out. I have leads that are given to me. When I'm given a lead, I'm expected to go out and interview references and look for records and that type of thing during the course of the day, and then file a report on each one of those. That's what the other agents were doing except for those that, there was always a staff in the building in this case the Rio Grande Building and there were probably three or four of those people there at the time when I had my time off. The other agents were just out doing their regular job.

Wray: Let's go over here, sort of what happened that day. Did you go, do you recall whether you went to the office that day before you went out to Love Field? I mean, you were on pass that day, so

Powell: No.

Wray: Did not go to the office?

Powell: No need to.

Wray: So you went to Love Field. Were you there for when the President initially arrived?

Powell: Yes. Yes.

Wray: And did you take pictures at that time?

Powell: Yes, I did.

Wray: And how many pictures?

Powell: Not many. Probably three or four as they came off the plane. And I was a pretty good distance away, and unfortunately without a telescopic lens. [Laughs] You see these very small people coming off this great big plane.

### **Events in Dealey Plaza**

Powell: I know exactly where I was. He'd come down Main Street turned right onto Houston and left essentially on Elm and then down under the freeway. When I took the pictures I was back here again, I honestly can't remember if these things have published the main streets, but it was one of the east-west streets. The motorcade was coming down, I was approximately a block away, over here which is off this sketch taking photographs of the motorcade as it went by. Once it went by me I was on Main because I went one block back to Elm Street and I was coming down this way and I was almost at this intersection when the motorcade came around and started down Elm Street, down the hill. I was probably half way down the block when I heard the shots fired. At that time, not expecting anything like that, you weren't sure if we had backfires going on or fireworks or actual shots. Obviously, it turns out that shots were fired.

Wray: In terms of distance, how far would you estimate you were from the intersection of Elm and Houston then?

Powell: Maybe a hundred feet.

...

Powell: I knew that when I got to this intersection, there were people pointing up at the Book Depository Building indicating that they had heard shots coming from there.

Wray: If I could ask you, when you say "people," you mean more than one person?

Powell: People. Yes. More than one person: A couple. At least one pointed up at the building, and another standing near that person I think this gentleman corroborated that. I crossed the street over to the Book Depository Building and walked on down. There were, there were police officers, a few police officers there that had just been around the area, plus some at least a couple from the sheriff's department that were there. Sheriffs. In group we kind of went to the parking area behind because there were, again, a lot of civilians standing around watching the motorcade coming down who'd said they thought they heard, that they thought they'd heard someone running through that area. So we all went together back there but didn't see anything obvious, other than just this stampede. Nobody carrying a gun or anything like that. So I left the group and went back to the Book Depository Building, it being the closest building that looked like it might have a phone in it, and went in there to call my office.

Powell: When someone pointed up at the building and said they'd heard shots coming from up there, I wheeled around with my camera and took a picture of the building at that moment.

### **Powell's identification**

Wray: Okay. Let me ask you this question. Were you carrying your special agent ID?

Powell: Yes, yes.

Wray: Do you recall whether you showed that to anyone at the time you were walking around behind the School Book Depository in the vicinity of the railroad yard? I mean, to stop and ask people anything, did you show them that identification?

Powell: I recall that I, I basically recall that I did. Because the officers were curious as to why I was joining them and I just flashed my credentials to show them and that was sufficient at the time and I put them back. I had my camera and so forth. We all sort of walked together back to that area behind the building. But then I left them in place.

Wray tries to get Powell to admit he would call himself Secret Service:

Wray: When you show somebody the credential, how would you identify yourself verbally? You'd say

Powell: Well, I'm Jim Powell and I'm with the, with the military intelligence corps.

Obviously disappointed in his attempts to lead the witness, Wray tries again.

Wray: Would you say that you were a special agent?

Powell: Yes.

Wray: You would say that you were a special agent?

Powell: Yes.

Wray: So you might have said, I mean, something like, "I'm James Powell, I'm a special agent"

Although Powell cannot help but see where Wray wants him to go, he continues to state his identification correctly, though somewhat modified.

Powell: I'm a special agent with military intelligence. And show my credentials. It seemed like the logical thing to do at the time. [Laughs] It worked that time. It didn't work the second time, but anyway when I was coming out of the building, but that's something else altogether.  
-end-

We now have a better understanding of Powell's activities and the time sequence while in Dealey Plaza. He could not have been the knoll agent for several reasons:

- The time: he stopped to take his well-known photo of the School Book Depository building,
- His actions: he was with a group of what he terms "Sheriffs." They were probably the ATF Agents.
- Lastly, this not unimportant exoneration is that Powell, himself, reminds us that he had a camera. Officer Smith and the others surely would have remarked upon that in his description of the mysterious knoll agent. Was Powell on duty as his supervisor stated? Could he have had someone under surveillance? Or was he simply a witness to history as he claims.

#### CONCLUSION:

As stated at the beginning, this article will not show who the knoll agent is but I believe it has shown who it is not. The evidence that someone was on the knoll moments after the shooting in Dealey Plaza is established. As historical researchers, we may have to accept that we may never know who he was. For myself, I will continue to search.

#### NOTES:

1. Officer Joseph Smith's description to author Anthony Summers quoted in Conspiracy, The Definitive Book On The JFK Assassination, Updated and Expanded Edition, 1989, New York: Paragon House, pg. 50.
2. The complete HSCA Jones deposition (RIF 180-10116-10200) was a gift to JFK Lancer from Stewart Galanor.
3. Go here for [Baetz](#) and Booth documents[1] [2]. Also available to order from JFK Lancer Resource Mail Order is the complete booklet of all documents in this article including the testimonies of Jones and Powell.
4. Michael Parks recently came across evidence of even another witness to the knoll agent. He relayed this to from Mrs. Charles Blankenship: Her husband, Charles "Charlie" Blankenship was with the DPS office from another county other than Dallas. She recalled him working out of the Fort Worth office but was not sure. He was off duty on 11/22/63 but had come to Dallas to see the president with other officers stationed in Dallas. He was standing on the east side of Houston Street in front of the Records Building. He heard the shooting and, like many other lawmen, ran to where he felt the shots had originated, this being the knoll area. He supposedly encountered two men in suits that stated they were Secret Service agents. They told him he could go no further and he turned and left Dealey Plaza. He was not interviewed by any agency and kept this story to his immediate family until his death. It was known that he had a relative on the Dallas Police force.
5. "The Man Who Wasn't There," by Chris Mills, December 1995, Assassination Chronicles. Viewing films and photos from the motorcade creating a timeline, it is not possible for Johns to have had time to interact with anyone and immediately catch his ride. This is illustrated in the article ["The Man Who Wasn't There. Was There. Fake Secret Service Agents In Dealey Plaza"](#) by Michael Griffith from the Spring 1996 Assassination Chronicles.
6. Uniformed Officer W. B. Barnett was assigned to the corner of Elm and Houston. Uniformed Officer J. W. Foster was assigned to the railroad tracks over the triple underpass. (Reports reproduced in Chief Curry's book Assassination File, pgs. 104 and 106.) Former Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry stated in 1977 that the man encountered by Officer Smith "...must have been bogus." Said Curry, "I think he must have been bogus--certainly the suspicion would point to the man as being involved, some way or other, in the shooting since he was in an area immediately adjacent to where the shots were--and the fact that he had a badge that purported him to be Secret Service would make it seem all the more suspicious." (Summers, pg. 51)
7. HSCA Report, pg 184
8. In Hosty's own book "Assignment Oswald," he writes, "That morning, I had a prescheduled meeting to compare notes with Agent Ed Coyle of the Army Intelligence unit and Agent Frank Ellsworth of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Bureau about a weapons" Hosty does not address his claims regarding Ellsworth on the knoll. (Assignment Oswald, pg. 201, James P. Hosty, 1996 Arcade Publishing, New York)
9. WH 4, pg. 461
10. See his book, "Live By The Sword," pg. 473, for more revisionist statements from SS agent Mike Howard, Robert Gemberling, and Frank Ellsworth, a Dallas ATF agent, on the likely agent on the knoll. ("Live By The Sword," 1998, Bancroft Press, Baltimore, MD)
11. These agents are named in the Booth documents (attachment to the Secret Service document in this article.).
12. Robert Jones' initial contact with the HSCA was by a HSCA staffer named Harold Wheat. During this interview with Mr. Wheat, Jones admitted that he was aware of Oswald's trip to Mexico before the assassination. He also stated that he did not believe Oswald acted alone. "To believe that you would have to assume it was a suicide mission." Jones told the HSCA that to his surprise neither the FBI, Secret Service, CIA nor Warren Commission ever interviewed him. [Read more on Jones here.](#)
13. Cover-Up, J. Gary Shaw and Larry R. Harris, publisher, Gary Shaw, Cleburne, Tex., 1976.
14. Powell's statement, April 12, 1996. Taken in California by Timothy A. Wray, ARRB Chief Analyst for Military Records -- and apparently the source for Max Holland's article. No RIF number for his statement was attached.