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The Patsy Paschall Film
by Greg Jaynes (1996)

Thirty-two years ago, Patsy Paschall filmed President Kennedy's motorcade as it passed by the Old Red Courthouse at Main and Houston in downtown Dallas. Her complete film has never been shown publicly(*). It may offer answers to questions about the "Grassy Knoll" that have persisted for three decades. It definitely poses new questions.

Mark Oakes interviewed Patsy on video before ever seeing her film. He knew of her film because it had been subpoenaed by the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1978. Prior to Mark's interview, no one had ever spoken to Patsy about what she saw or heard: not the Warren Commission, not the House Select Committee not the FBI. It should be noted that Patsy Paschall is not a woman seeking an audience. After close to a year of Mark calling her twice a week, she finally agreed to arrange a viewing of her film. When he got the go ahead he called me because he did not have a projector and he needed one the next morning. I immediately agreed to help. First, we used my projector - which wasn't very good, but played good enough to get the general idea of what was on the film. Somehow, the news media got wind that we had a videotaped copy of the film and it became a national story. Finally, we took the film to a professional editing studio and, using professional equipment, we produced a videotape that was clear enough to study details.

The Patsy Paschall film offers much to be studied. While the following discussion is not the complete story of all the secrets the film holds, it is the most complete examination and report on the film to date.

On November 22, 1963, Patsy worked as a clerk in the Old Red Courthouse. That day, she brought her Bell and Howell 8mm color movie camera to work so she could film President Kennedy's motorcade as it passed through Dallas. She filmed from a third floor tower of the courthouse as the motorcade turned right onto Houston Street. With the President's limousine out of sight, blocked from her view by the corner of the Criminal Courts building, she began filming the other cars in the motorcade as they proceeded west on Main Street toward the intersection of Main and Houston Streets.

Hearing what she thought were three firecrackers - first a single pop then two pops closely-spaced - she commented to her co-workers, "Some nut's popping firecrackers!"

Patsy said she saw smoke coming from the grassy knoll. She described it as looking like what "two or three" firecrackers would produce. She went on to add that the smoke was in the area between the retaining wall and the corner of the picket fence.

By now, the President's car had come back into her view on Elm Street. She began to film again.

When the camera started recording, it captured the President's limousine as it passed beneath the triple underpass. Also visible is the white Ford that held Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry and Sheriff Bill Decker. This car had been just ahead of the President's limousine, but had pulled to the left and allowed the Presidential limousine to pass. Next, we see the black 1956 secret service car, Vice President Johnson's limo, and Johnson's white Ford Secret Service car all pass beneath the triple underpass. At this point there is a cut in the film because she stopped filming. Naturally, her interest was in filming the President and he had already passed out of sight.

The cut at this point is very interesting because before the cut she had filmed the first

five cars in the motorcade. We know that the sixth car in the motorcade was a gray 1959 Chevrolet sedan. When she started filming again, she had changed to a narrower angle lens aimed at the corners of the picket fence and the white retaining wall. In the foreground, we see what we know to be the sixth car in the motorcade, the 1959 Chevrolet sedan. The interesting thing at this point is the timing. How long did Patsy wait before she started filming again to begin the next segment after the cut. When you watch the film, you see the first five cars of the motorcade go beneath the underpass then you notice the cut and see the sixth car as it passes the grassy knoll. This is deceptive because it appears that all six cars file by in regular intervals. But they did not! (See segment R below.)

The 1959 sedan stopped for a few seconds before proceeding past the Grassy Knoll. We know this because the car behind the 1959 sedan was a convertible that NBC cameraman Dave Weigman was riding in. Of course Weigman's car had to stop when the 1959 sedan stopped in front of it. When the car stopped Weigman got out and ran over to the grass on north side of Elm Street and filmed from there then, as his car had made its way down Elm toward the triple underpass, he ran to get back in.

NOTE: The Patsy Paschall film as yet is unavailable for public viewing. The film is for sale and possibly may be available for licensing. Interested parties should contact Mark Oakes in Irving, Texas.

The Dave Weigman film is available for public viewing. It is included in Robert Groden's video production:

JFK: The Case For Conspiracy
New Frontier Productions
PO Box 2164
Boothwyn, Pa 19061

Also, a frame of the Dave Weigman film that shows the smoke on the Grassy Knoll is published in Robert Groden's excellent book:

The Killing Of A President (pg. 204)
Penguin Books USA Inc.
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014

Dave Weigman began filming when the car he was riding in was on Houston Street. In his film, you can see the gray 1959 Chevrolet sedan in front of his car as it turns left onto Elm Street. While his camera is filming, the car he is riding in turns onto Elm Street. His camera shakes and slashes until the car stops - then he films what appears to be smoke on the Grassy Knoll.

The segment of the Weigman film that shows President Kennedy's car going beneath the underpass and the 1959 Chevrolet sedan and the smoke on the Grassy Knoll corresponds with the segment of the Patsy Paschall film that begins with the the President's car going beneath the underpass. (See segment Q below.)

The timing of these events is important because in Patsy's film there is some type of movement behind the corner of the picket fence. The time of this movement is just as the gray 1959 sedan passes the knoll in the foreground. The main question is, "Is the movement that we see the movement of a person or persons who may have fired at the President from behind the picket fence?"

Spectrographic comparisons of a Dallas Police dictabelt recording and test firings conducted in Dealey Plaza have yielded a 95% probability that a shot was fired from a point near the corner of the picket fence on the East-West leg of the fence. This is the same area of the fence where we see the movement in Patsy's film.

It is important to determine how many seconds or minutes after the headshot it is when we see this movement behind the picket fence. If it was too long after the headshot then the movements we see may be the movements of people rushing behind the fence to see what happened. If only a few seconds have elapsed, possibly these are the movements of gunmen escaping.

How long did Patsy wait between these key segments of her film?

At the time, Patsy feared that someone may harm her if she came forward with the film. As a precaution, she gave the undeveloped film to her attorney to hold on her behalf. Dallas attorney Fred Bruner contacted the FBI and reported the existence of the film. FBI Special Agent Robert Barret met Mr. Bruner at Dynacolor Corporation near Love Field in Dallas. According to Mr. Bruner, the film was developed and only one copy was made. SA Barret viewed the film in his presence and even commented that he saw himself in the film. Mr. Bruner claims that he kept both the original and the copy and that the FBI did not take a copy of the film. The film was not made available to the Warren Commission.

Patsy's film was subpoenaed in 1978 by the House Select Committee on Assassinations. Mr. Bruner said he sent the original film to the Committee. The Committee had copies made and distributed them to the various experts for analysis.

Mr. Bruner produced a document signed by HSCA member Louis Stokes, assuring him that the film and any copies made would be returned to Mrs. Paschall. This document also assured Mr. Bruner that the film would be used for official purposes only. At least one bootleg copy of the film was made and used in a commercial publication. The bootleg copy is incomplete and poor quality.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The Patsy Paschall film was shot on 8mm movie film. Film cameras are very different from video cameras. An 8mm film camera records its images on filmstock. When developed, the film resembles a continuous stream of photographs. Video Cameras record an electronic signal on magnetic media. Videotape does not need to be developed and you cannot see the images on the tape. A video tape player reads the electronic signals from the video tape and sends the signals to a television or monitor.

In the United States of America, we use the National Television Standards Committee (NTSC) standard for video signals. The NTSC established a video standard that adheres to 525 scan lines and 30 frames per second. A single NTSC video frame consists of 2 fields. That means the television or monitor screen is updated two times per frame. So, if we have 30 frames in a second we must have 60 fields in a second. This is because of the standardized electrical main we use, to wit: 110 volts and 60 cycles. In countries that use a 50 cycle main such as Great Britain, they use the PAL system which is a video standard that uses 25 frames per second. 50 cycles divided by two fields equals 25 frames per second.

The point of all this techno-babble is to explain how the timing of the segments was achieved in the cursory analysis of the Paschall film that follows.

The timing used here is based on the NTSC system. So, if you see 4 / 15, it means four seconds and fifteen frames. Fifteen frames is half a second (30 frames = 1 second).

The reported times refer only to the videotaped copy of the film. The film was transferred on high grade equipment so it should be reasonably accurate. The Bell and Howell camera that Patsy used to take the film ran approximately eighteen frames per second.

In some instances when making a transition or cut from one segment to another, one field

will record the image from the previous segment and the next field will record the image from the following segment. This would give us a frame of video that looks like a blend or a fade from one scene to the next, when actually nothing of the sort took place on the film. In fact all the cuts or transitions in the Paschall film were simply her beginning to film and then stopping filming.

Fortunately, the video signal blending anomaly only matters at transitions from one scene or segment to the next and it only occurred four times on the videotape of the film. In these cases I did not count the blended frame in either segment in the overall frame count. Each time this omission occurs, it causes an error in reported timing of one thirtieth of a second. While an error of this scale is virtually insignificant, it is noteworthy in any study using the data.

END OF TECHNICAL NOTES

From tower, the first segments of Patsy's film show first one, then another large airplane circling over downtown Dallas, apparently preparing to land at Love Field. These aircraft were probably Air Force One and Vice President Johnson's plane.

NOTE: I did not time these segments because I am not confident in the data that would result.

When we first videotaped the film, we played it thru a projector that had a loose tensioning arm. The result was jerky and poor quality. I am not sure the projector played at the correct speed so any timing would be suspect.

When we (Fred Bruner, Mark Oakes and myself) took the film to a professional editing suite to have the film recorded onto Betacam, the operator started the film and stopped it at a point when the aircraft in question were being displayed. Then he started the film over again without resetting the video tape. The result is incorrect timing in the first segment. The segments with the aircraft have no bearing on the rest of the film and I offer this information in the interest of accurate reporting.)

Seconds	Frames	Description	Segment
5	15	From tower, Patsy films down on north side of Main Street. Deep in shadow some images of people can be made out as they stand on the sidewalk by the Dallas County Criminal Courts building.	A
2	27	From tower, she films to her right - eastward - down Main Street. People are lined up along north side of Main Street waiting for the parade, while civilian cars which are not related to the parade pass along Main Street.	B
5	28	From tower, Patsy films a man in a suit standing beside her in the tower. The man is wearing eyeglasses, but not much else can be determined because of poor lighting. Patsy said the man worked with her. On the left edge of the screen you can see Main Street below, all in deep shadow.	C
6	9	From tower, she films the County Records building	D

		<p>across Main Street. This building is built right up against and to the east of the criminal courts building. Specifically, she aims her camera at a window in the Records Building. A woman comes to the window and waves. This segment is lit well and is very clear.</p> <p>***NOTE*** There is another cut within this segment. The woman at the window appears to jump forward somewhat. This cut is insignificant so it is included as part of the segment.</p>	
4	0	From tower, another shot across the north side of Main Street. Very deep in shadow, except the top right of the screen where sun light is not blocked by the old red courthouse. A man wearing light colored clothes is visible leaning against the records building.	E
4	5	From tower, a shot across Main Street to the upper level of the criminal courts building showing shadows of the old red court house towers.	F
1	21	From tower, a shot to Patsy's right, eastward down Main Street. Lead police motorcycles in the parade are visible, but are deep in the shadow of another building east of the old red courthouse.	G
6	4	From tower, a shot to her right, eastward down Main Street three police motorcycles pass from center screen to screen left and out of view. Chief Curry's lead car can be seen in distance preceded by five police motorcycles which are in shadow. The motorcycles' flashing red lights are visible.	H
2	8	From tower, a shot to her right eastward down Main Street the five police motorcycles riding abreast lead Chief Curry's car out of shadow.	I
1	0	From tower, a shot to her right, eastward down Main Street Chief Curry's car in lighted area leads President's car out of shadow.	J
5	9	From tower, President's car is in shadow of the old red courthouse. It passes into lighted area and two police motorcycles are visible on the right side of President's car.	K
2	8	From tower, the President's car is directly in front of Patsy on Main Street. The 1956 black Cadillac Secret Service car is visible. All in shadow.	L

1	18	From the tower, Vice President's car is directly in front of Patsy on Main Street. Vice President's car passes to screen left and out of view. Then the Vice President's white Secret Service car passes by with left rear door open.	M
0	29	From tower, a white convertible passes directly in front of Patsy on Main Street.	N
3	6	<p>From tower, a shot to her right, aimed at the corner of Record and Main Streets.</p> <p>(Record Street is now blocked off and has been made into a plaza both on the east side of the Records building and east side of the old red courthouse. Also the buildings that were on the east side of Record Street directly east of the two mentioned buildings have been torn down and the land they were built on is part of the plaza. The plaza on the east side of the old red courthouse is where the John F. Kennedy memorial is located today. And the plaza on the east side of the Records building is now called Dallas County Historical Plaza.)</p> <p>A dark car is in the shadow of the old red courthouse on Main Street. A police motorcycle is following at its right rear.</p> <p>Parked at the near corner of Record and Main, on Record Street facing south (the motorcade is passing directly in front of it) is a light colored Rambler station wagon.</p> <p>To the rear of the Rambler station wagon and parked bumper to bumper, a dark colored sedan. The model is unrecognizable on video. Perhaps an examination of the film itself could reveal more.</p> <p>Back to the motorcade, a dark convertible, then two white convertibles pass by on Main Street as they approach the intersection at Houston Street.</p>	O
2	16	From tower, Patsy aiming down and left, films the first of three busses as it reaches Houston Street. It is in deep shadow but is visible. (Only the first bus is visible in this segment.)	P
3	18	From tower, Patsy aims at the triple underpass with a wide-angle lens. We see President's car as it merges into the shadow of the triple underpass on Elm Street. We also see the movement of Chief Curry's car just ahead of the President's car as it slows and moves to the left allowing the President's car to pass.	Q

We see the President's black 1956 Secret Service Cadillac followed by the Vice President's car, then the Vice President's white Secret Service car.

In the videotape the area above the triple underpass is very dark and not much can be made out. An example of the difference between the quality of film vs. video can be pointed out here. If you look at the frame of Patsy's film that was printed in the Nov. 24, 1967 edition of Life magazine, you can clearly see what the videotape can't show. The whole top of the triple underpass - including the concrete railing on the far side - is visible. You can see the back of the Old Charter sign on the far side of the underpass. Also you can see the two electrical switch boxes at the west end of the picket fence.

2

29

From tower, Patsy has changed to a narrow angle lens and aimed her camera at the corners of the picket fence and the retaining wall. In the foreground we

see the obelisk with the eternal flame that stands at the south end of the reflecting pool. Just beyond the obelisk is the tall octo-circular monument that separates the Houston street portion of the plaza from the infield grass, which is situated between Main Street and Elm Street.

The octo-circular monument has vertically-oriented rectangular portals. Thru one of the portals we see a police motorcycle parked on it's kickstand on Elm Street. Thru another portal we see the Babushka Lady standing. Thru another portal we see Bill and Gayle Newman lying prone on the grass on the north side of Elm Street.

We see the 1959 Chevrolet sedan that we know to be the sixth car in the motorcade as it travels down Elm Street toward the triple underpass.

As the 1959 Chevrolet sedan passes the Babushka Lady, there is some movement behind the corner of the picket fence. Specifically, this segment of film is two seconds and twenty nine frames in length. The movement occurs at one second and three frames into this segment.

At one second and fifteen frames into this segment we see Abraham Zapruder jump down from the pedestal that he stood on when he filmed the famous "Zapruder film".

While this is happening, at the bottom of the screen, we see the roof of the second bus in the

R

		motorcade as it turns right from Main onto Houston Street.	
12	0	<p>From tower, Patsy changed to a wide angle lens. She aims at the intersection of Houston and Main Streets. She changed lenses and started filming again soon enough to again film the second bus in the motorcade.</p> <p>Remember this bus was seen at the end of the previous segment. We see this second bus disappear around the corner of the Criminal Courts building.</p> <p>We see people from Main Street running toward Dealey Plaza. Then bus number one comes into view on Elm Street seen thru a portal in the monument on Houston Street. As Bus number one has come into view on Elm Street and bus number two has disappeared around corner of Criminal Courts building on Houston street, we see bus number three come into view on Main Street as it approaches Houston Street.</p> <p>(This segment shows all three buses in the motorcade.)</p>	S
1	24	From tower, wide angle lens, focus is on intersection at Main and Houston. Traffic from Main Street is being routed south onto Houston Street away from Dealey Plaza.	T
2	5	<p>From tower, aimed at corner of picket fence, she has changed to a narrow angle lens. Many people are running between the corner of the picket fence and the retaining wall into the parking lot behind picket fence.</p> <p>A red car is visible thru the portals of the monument as it travels down Elm Street toward the triple underpass.</p>	U
5	26	<p>Street level, Patsy has gone down to the northeast corner of Houston and Main Streets. She films northward up Houston Street, capturing the Texas School Book Depository building and the crowd of people standing along the reflecting pool.</p> <p>This segment is not clear enough on video to make out who anyone is in the crowd. Maybe analysis on the actual film could be helpful.</p>	V
29	0	Street level, now Patsy is standing at the same place as in the previous segment but now she is standing behind a white-roofed car. A thin man wearing a black suit and derby crosses Houston	W

		<p>Street from Dealey Plaza - toward the area of the Houston Street Entrance to the county jail. This man may be Deputy Sheriff E.R. "Buddy" Walthers.</p> <p>At seven seconds and twenty frames into this segment, the film fades to blank. It remains blank until twelve seconds into the segment.</p> <p>When the film fades back into view, we see a man in a suit walking briskly in the street. He walks around the corner from Houston Street to Main Street. The man walks north on Houston Street to the area near the entrance of the county jail. A white panel van is parked in the</p> <p>street facing north, just adjacent to the entrance of the county jail. A state trooper and some other kind of law enforcement types are standing behind a car parked on Houston Street near the intersection of Main and Houston.</p>	
2	15	Street level, Basically the same as above. Cops at Houston and Main, with TSBD in background.	X
3	2	<p>From tower, Back up in the old red courthouse. This shot is framed with the left window sill at screen left. The shot is aimed in the direction of the triple underpass.</p> <p>We can see two or three people standing around the manhole cover near Elm Street where a bullet may have struck.</p> <p>In the foreground we see normal traffic at intersection of Houston and Main.</p>	Y
6	7	From tower, same as previous segment but after a cut.	Z
4	16	From tower, same as previous segment but after a cut.	A2
2	3	From tower, poorly framed with window sill in much of left side of frame, but otherwise same as previous segment.	B2

(*) - Excerpt from "A First Timer's Visit to Dallas" by Clint Bradford, written in 11/96, posted at clintbradford.com and **NOT** part of Greg's original article (just here to explain one of the first semi-public showings of the film):

Robert Groden's latest work-in-progress is tentatively entitled "The Assassination Films." We were shown a working copy, which included *over 15 films* that were shot in and around Dealey Plaza on 11/22/63. New to the fray is **Patsy Paschall's** film, which hasn't been seen in such a public forum before now. Hopefully, we

might all be seeing fairly soon. She spoke to our group at the Paramount Hotel - and gave us her story. When asked if she had possession of the original print of her film, she stated rather emphatically that she did.

When she originally took the file to her attorney, it is alleged that she was advised "nothing of importance" appears on it. Hence, it was, essentially, buried from public consumption for 32 years. She heavily stipulated its use by the HCSA - yet that is the approximate time Robert Groden acquired the copy we saw last night. Movement behind the picket fence is clearly visible with the unaided eye after Patsy panned from the motorcade entering the underpass back to the Knoll area - even without any film enhancement.

Patsy's perspective provided first-hand insight of the mood and tenor of the 60s. She seemed sincere and concerned that the truth be known.

But thirty-two years' wait? ... And a quarter of a million dollars?

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