Another Ignored Witness Found
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When she first heard the shots, Dorothy Ann Garner was sitting at a desk behind a fourth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository.

With her were Elsie Dorman, Sandra Styles, and Victoria Adams.

Mrs. Garner was an office supervisor for the Scott, Foresman Co., publishers of textbooks, with headquarters in Chicago. The company's Dallas regional office was located on that floor. She had been employed there for more than 10 years.

Her employees would describe her as a very dedicated, professional woman. According to one she was "detail-oriented" and "never missed a thing."
"She demanded the best, watched the clock like a hawk and tolerated no nonsense or talking when she ruled her kingdom," Victoria Adams would say. "If you can picture an old fashioned prim librarian telling everyone to 'shush,' you have an idea of the power and demeanor of Dorothy Garner."

On November 22, 1963, Mrs. Garner took a break from her duties and joined the three other women to watch as the presidential motorcade passed below. Elsie Dorman sat on the floor behind a window that had been partially opened for her benefit; she was filming the event with her husband's recently purchased video camera. Behind her stood Miss Styles and Miss Adams.

Mrs. Dorman told the FBI two days later she felt the shots had come from the area of the Dallas County Records Building, located cattycorner to the Depository. Mrs. Garner, interviewed by the FBI on March 20, 1964, said she felt the shots originated from somewhere west of the building.

Nothing else appears on the public record regarding these two women. Neither was questioned by the Warren Commission and their names do not appear anywhere within the 888 pages of the Warren Report.

This is particularly disturbing when one considers the significance and subsequent controversy surrounding what fellow employee Victoria Adams did following the shooting.

Miss Adams told authorities she and Sandra Styles left the fourth-
floor window moments later and descended the back stairs to the first floor.

The timing of their actions was crucial. If Miss Adams was accurate, the pair had been on those stairs at the same time Lee Oswald was as he raced down them from the sixth floor sniper’s lair. Oswald was on his way to a second-floor lunchroom encounter with Dallas policeman Marrion Baker and Depository manager Roy Truly, who had come up those same stairs from the first floor.

Yet Miss Adams had seen and heard no one.

The dilemma was ignored by the Warren Commission for it never included Miss Adams in any of the time tests conducted regarding Oswald’s escape. She was the only person excluded. Nor did it question any of the three other women who were with her at the window. It simply concluded that Oswald was on the stairs at that time and if Miss Adams did not see or hear him, then she was wrong. She must have come down the stairs later than she thought, the Report surmised, after Oswald had passed the fourth floor going down, after the lunchroom encounter had occurred, and after Baker and Truly had continued beyond the fourth floor going up to the roof, Baker’s original destination.

Prior to publication of my book, "The Girl on the Stairs," in which I analyzed the story of Victoria Adams, I discovered in the National Archives a document out of Dallas that had not been made available otherwise. It was a June 2, 1964, transmittal letter from Martha Joe Stroud, assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas, and its recipient was J. Lee Rankin, general counsel to the
Warren Commission. (See it below.)

The letter has since become known as "the Stroud document."

Its contents concerned the testimony of Victoria Adams and how, on examination, Miss Adams had noticed several spelling and grammatical errors that she felt needed correction. None of those corrections were made in the final version, however.

But the startling discovery came in the final paragraph of the letter, written almost as if it were an afterthought:

"Mr. Bellin [sic] was questioning Miss Adams about whether or not she saw anyone as she was running down the stairs. Miss Garner, Miss Adams' supervisor, stated this morning that after Miss Adams went down stairs she (Miss Garner) saw Mr. Truly and the policeman come up."

To anyone unfamiliar with the story of Victoria Adams, that last line would have meant little if anything. But suddenly, Dorothy Garner had taken on an extremely important role.

Her sighting of Marrion Baker and Roy Truly after Victoria Adams had left to go down the stairs was in direct contradiction to the Warren Report's conclusion about when Miss Adams was on those stairs.

It meant Miss Adams was right all along. And it cried out for an answer as to why Miss Adams didn't hear or see Oswald, as the Report stated she should have under those circumstances.

I was unsuccessful in my attempts to locate Mrs. Garner after finding the Stroud document. A retired New Jersey police investigator who read my book provided the solution.

On June 27 of this year, I spoke with Dorothy Ann (sometimes
known as May) Garner, the woman who was paid virtually no attention to
by authorities and therefore had slipped under the radar screens of
most JFK researchers. I started by telling her I had written a book
and was now continuing my inquiry into Victoria Adams. She had
absolutely no idea of why I had taken the time to pen a volume about
one of her former employees. It occurred to me at that point (which
Mrs. Garner then confirmed) that she was completely unaware of the
importance of and the controversy surrounding Miss Adams.

In my mind this was actually a good thing, since I felt her
comments might now lack potential bias accumulated over the years
and
thus lend more credibility to anything she could tell me.

I began with preliminaries, asking her what things were like that
day.

"It was total confusion," she said. "The Dallas police, FBI,
Secret Service were coming up the stairs, in the elevators, in all the
offices. The news media and workers and outsiders were going
everywhere."

The Dallas Police Department, she said, "took over our phones."
When I asked what that meant, she explained.

"They wouldn't allow personal calls to go out. After the
employees were allowed to leave, I went to a nearby diner and called
my husband."

It was her only opportunity for outside communications.

The focus of my call to her, of course, was Victoria Adams,
whether Mrs. Garner was indeed in a position to have seen Baker and
Truly or anyone else on the back stairs, and who she had made the
comment to that appeared in the Stroud document.
"I was at the window with Elsie Dorman, Victoria Adams, and Sandra Styles," she said.

Did Miss Adams and Miss Styles leave the window right away, I asked her.

"The girls did," she responded. "I remember them being there and the next thing I knew, they were gone."

They had left "very quickly...within a matter of moments," she added.

What did Mrs. Garner do after that?

"There was this warehouse or storage area behind our office, out by the freight elevators and the rear stairway, and I went out there."

Her move to that area clearly put her into a position where she could have observed activity on the back stairs as well as on the elevators. But how fast had she arrived there?

Mrs. Garner said she immediately went to this area, following "shortly after...right behind" Miss Adams and Miss Styles. She couldn't remember exactly why she went out there, other than to say, "probably to get something." Mrs. Garner said she did not actually see "the girls" enter the stairway, though, arriving on the fourth-floor landing seconds after. When I asked how she knew they had gone down, Mrs. Garner said, "I remember hearing them, after they started down. I remember the stairs were very noisy."

Were the freight elevators in operation during this time?

"I don't recall that," she answered. "They were very noisy too!"

Mrs. Garner said she remained at that spot and was alone for a moment before "several came out back from the office to look out those windows there."
The presence of other employees at the west windows was confirmed
by Bonnie Ray Williams who, with Harold Norman and James Jarman, had
watched the motorcade from the fifth floor and then, after several
minutes, made their way to the first floor by way of the stairs.
Williams testified he arrived on the fourth floor "where we saw these
women looking out of the window."

If Victoria Adams went down the stairs when she said she did, and
Mrs. Garner was now confirming that, perhaps Miss Adams had
descended
those stairs so fast she was ahead of Oswald. This possibility was
actually addressed when the Warren Report wrote, "If her estimate of
time is correct...she must have run down the stairs ahead of Oswald
and
would probably have seen or heard him."

Being in the position she was as quickly as she was, I asked Mrs.
Garner if she happened to notice the escaping assassin on the stairs.
She laughed at the question.

"No, I don't remember that. I don't remember seeing him at all
that day...except on TV."

Later in the interview, she would reflect back on the question
she found so humorous, saying she felt sure she would have
remembered
it if she had seen Oswald anywhere earlier that day, based on his
later notoriety and the fact it would have made an impression on her
mind.

Had she seen Roy Truly on November 22nd?

"I saw him several times that day," she said, but I'm not sure
when or where."
How about a policeman accompanied by Truly coming up the stairs?

"I remember I saw a policeman or police officers on the stairs, yes."

I pressed a bit more and asked the question again, recognizing the passage of time, the "confusion of the moment" as she had called it, and the fact its significance was lost on her may have made the question seem unimportant.

Did she remember seeing Roy Truly and a police officer come up the stairs together?

"I could have," she answered, "but there was so much confusion. It was, after all, a few years ago!"

Mrs. Garner was providing two key pieces of evidence: one that corroborated Victoria Adams regarding how quickly she and Sandra Styles left the window and moved to the back staircase, and a second that corroborated the Stroud document by putting Mrs. Garner at a location on the fourth floor where she could have observed activity on the stairs immediately after the shooting.

Like Sandra Styles, who also verified Miss Adams' timing of the descent in my personal interview with her, Dorothy Garner had been ignored by the Warren Commission.

Or had she?

Although no public record exists of an interview or conversation between Mrs. Garner and the Commission, apparently one did take place.

Since I discovered the Stroud document I was always curious as to
whom Mrs. Garner had made her statement. Was it David Belin, in charge of this area of the investigation? After all, he had been in Dallas not long before that taking depositions from other Depository employees.

So I asked Mrs. Garner if she recalled someone from the Warren Commission talking with her.

"Yes, I do remember that," she replied.

According to her, the questioning occurred "several months later... quite a few months later," a time period which seemed to fit with the June date on the Stroud document.

She could not remember who the man was. The name David Belin did not ring a bell. She also could not recall where the questioning had taken place or specifically what had been asked. She did say, however, that the conversation, which she admitted could even have been by telephone, was "brief."

When I then asked if she was sure of the agency the questioner was from she replied firmly, "Yes." When I inquired how she could be so definite the person had been from the Commission, she answered, "He identified himself as being from the Warren Commission."

In retrospect, I found Mrs. Garner to be an honest and forthright woman. The positive characteristics other employees attributed to her were evident throughout much of our discussion. She spoke well for her age (she is 83 now) and often asked me to repeat a question, not because she was hard of hearing she assured me, but to
ensure she had understood it correctly.

The years since have no doubt caused her to forget specifics, but her memory seemed clear on generalities such as when Miss Adams and Miss Styles had left the window, where Mrs. Garner had gone after the shooting, and what she had seen while there.

She was completely unaware of the significance to the story regarding Miss Adams, which may account for why the specifics of what happened after the shooting did not make a more indelible mark on her memory.

The key points of the interview remain:

1) Coupled with the testimony of Victoria Adams, the corroboration of Sandra Styles, and the contents of the recently discovered Stroud document, Mrs. Garner has now become yet another source of confirmation to what Miss Adams had been saying all along.

2) Mrs. Garner was indeed in a position to observe activity on the back stairs immediately after the assassination, as the Stroud document implies.

3) Mrs. Garner did not recall seeing Lee Oswald on the stairs, but felt she would have been able to do so had he been there. This is significant as a rebuttal to the latest hypothesis that the alleged assassin came down the stairs after Miss Adams had descended.

4) Mrs. Garner is firm that someone from the Warren Commission talked with her at a later date.

She appeared credible and without any reason to embellish her
story, especially so since she was completely unaware of the
background surrounding Miss Adams.

CJ