Sean Murphy

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A couple of years back, I made contact with Sandra Styles. She told me that she felt Victoria Adams had significantly exaggerated the speed with which the pair descended from the fourth to the first floor after the shooting.

In the light of Barry Ernest's new book 'The Girl on the Stairs', I decided to contact Sandra once again to discuss this matter. She has some rather interesting things to say.

Rather than summarise them (and risk putting words in Sandra's mouth), I shall simply offer the relevant text from Sandra's own emails. In a number of places I've asterisked key details.

Before doing so, however, I would like to apologise to Barry Ernest for having on a previous occasion called his integrity as a researcher into question. The gap between what Sandra has told me and what Barry says she told him is not at all as large as I had alleged. My apologies, Barry.

Sean Murphy

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In my first email I asked Sandra to respond to the following words from Barry (as posted on a research forum), who was himself responding to what Sandra had told me a couple of years back:

'When I interviewed Sandra Styles in 2002, she said absolutely nothing of the kind to me. What she did say was, she couldn't be sure exactly how quickly she left the window and went down the stairs, but she recalled she did so "rather quickly," in her words, and "when Vicki did," again in her words. Why she would say otherwise now, especially when she said what she did then and added, "Vicki was the more observant one," is beyond me.'

Here was Sandra's response:

'First of all, I do not recall that Barry put much emphasis on the timing or that we spent time discussing that aspect. I stand by what I said to you. *At the time, I first thought we went downstairs quickly; but in thinking about it further, I came to the conclusion that it was not immediately. I told an interviewer (FBI? not sure) that when we got downstairs, the police were there, so I assumed we went down quickly; however, the interviewer told me that it took the police 15-20 minutes to get to the Depository, so I accepted that we must have taken longer to get downstairs than I first thought.* I went with what Victoria said because she spoke with such certainty; since I couldn't say for sure, I didn't argue with her. *She also told office workers that on the way down, she noticed the freight elevator cables were moving.* I'm not sure what that would prove; but since I did not
notice that, that is what I meant when I said she was more observant. Barry was working closely with her, and I didn't want to get into it with her when I couldn't prove it either way.

Barry's main discussion with me concerned the outlay of the office: the exact location of the back stairs in relation to the other elevator, which direction the building faced, etc. Since I didn't have scanning capabilities, I had to describe all that verbally in several emails. We were all interviewed several times by different entities over the next year. I always said the same thing to each one: that I had nothing of importance to help their investigation. Their concern was whether I knew Oswald, had ever seen him, etc. As to the timing of the whole thing, I wasn't sure then and can't say for certain now. I only go by what seems reasonable. I can only report my personal recollections the best I can. I was easily led back then, lol. If she said we went down immediately, I thought that must be true. If the interviewer said that was not possible due to the amount of time it took the police to get over there, I re-thought it and accepted his assessment.* The truth may lie somewhere in between. What is logical is that, in all the pandemonium, it is unlikely that we would hear shots and head for the back stairs!

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In my reply, I put two points to Sandra:
1) The authorities' claim that it took 15-20 minutes for police to get to the Depository was way off.
2) Barry had come across the so-called Stroud document, in which Dorothy Ann Garner is reported to have told authorities she saw Baker and Truly come up onto the fourth floor AFTER Adams and Styles had left it.

Sandra's response:
'Hmmmmmmm, points to ponder. At this point, I'm wondering whether I was even there! hahaha
1. My initial sense was that we went down soon after, and the 15-20 minute delay given by the investigator DID seem a bit long, but I took his word for it. We did linger at the window a bit trying to sort it out, and I'm sure it was Vicki's idea to go find out what was going on; therefore we wouldn't have waited a long time to make the decision to go downstairs. I am certain that we went to the public elevator first, but may not have waited long there either. My hesitancy on the timing in all the interviews probably accounts for why they did not pursue further information from me. As I told everyone who ever asked, I had no real sense of that aspect of the investigation. Still, logic tells me it had to take a couple of minutes at least for things to sink in and to make the decision to go. Therefore, *I'll give up a few of those minutes but still don't remember it's being a matter of a few seconds. However, I yield to wiser heads if the
evidence is there.*
2. I know nothing of Dorothy Garner's part. I don't know where she was at the time. Her office was near the front elevator, but she could have been in the lunch area on the other side near the back stairs. It seems odd to me that if the two men ran up the back stairs a minute or so after the shooting, we did not encounter them on our way down even if we had left immediately and even more strange that Mrs. Garner would have been in a position to see them coming up. It all goes back to the fact that I could be totally off on my calculations, and anything is possible. I cannot swear in any venue that what I thought was actually true. I still see it all in my mind's eye and have not changed my opinion about what we did and when, but I could be mistaken about the number of minutes. I suppose I could blame the fact that I am 71 and let it go at that!! No, that would be too easy.'

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In my reply, I asked Sandra a number of follow-up questions:
a) Could she recall what her initial time estimate for their going to the stairs was - i.e. before she was told that the police didn't get to the Depository for 15-20 minutes?
Her answer: 'Not less than a minute. I thought more like a couple. I do realize that time takes on feet of its own in a situation like a shooting or other catastrophe, and witnesses have different takes on it. I am glad to have the 15-minute thing put to rest; even then it didn't make sense that it would take the DPD that long to cross the street.'
b) Could she describe the layout of the fourth floor?
Her answer: 'Here is the layout of the office: Mr. Bergen's office was in the SE corner and opened into the reception area, as did the public elevator and Dorothy's office. Directly across from Dorothy's office was a small conference room. Behind the reception area were the desks of the Customer Service Reps (I was one of those) and Records (Elsie's job). Then there were the stacks where free teacher aids and supplies were kept. On the other side of the stacks was the break/lunch area (not a separate enclosed room), which had a table, coffeepot and a refrigerator (no drink machine). It was all open; the only doors were in the bosses' offices, the conference room, and the back. The elevator opened directly into the reception area. The door in the NW corner of the breakroom led to the stairs/freight elevator/storage area.'
c) Could she give any more detail on Victoria's observation about the elevator cables moving?
Her answer: 'I don't remember any of that. She didn't mention it to me on the way down or up. As I recall, she only mentioned it later offhandedly, but I don't recall the circumstances as to how or exactly