

Mr. RICHEY. Oh, just a couple minutes. It wasn't very busy if I can remember, and he come up and sat alongside of me.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did he mention anything to you about the fact that the President was coming to town?

Mr. RICHEY. No. I was aware myself that the President was coming, but I didn't know he was coming to Dallas because they were expecting him at Fort Hood, Tex. They kind of had a feeling he might stop in. They were getting ready for this big inspection, but I didn't know he was coming to Dallas. This was a surprise to me.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Do you have anything else that you can think of?

Mr. RICHEY. No, I don't think so.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I want to thank you both again, and I hope you have a pleasant trip back.

TESTIMONY OF JAMES THOMAS AYCOX

The testimony of James Thomas Aycox was taken at 10 a.m., on July 24, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Burt W. Griffin, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Let me introduce myself. My name is Burt Griffin. I am a member of the general counsel's staff on the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy.

I want to tell you a little bit about the procedure that we are going to follow here and what we are trying to do, and then I will administer the oath to you.

The Commission, as you may or may not know, was set up pursuant to an Executive order which was issued by President Johnson in November of last year, and also pursuant to a joint resolution of Congress.

Under this joint resolution, the Commission has been given authority to promulgate various rules and regulations. Under those rules and regulations I have been designated to take your testimony here today.

The Commission was directed by President Johnson to inquire into and to evaluate and report back to President Johnson about all the facts relating to the assassination of President Kennedy and the death of Lee Oswald.

In calling you here today, we are particularly interested in finding out what you know about Jack Ruby and, if anything, about the murder of Lee Oswald, and also if you have any information in other areas, we would like to get that, too. Let me ask you a preliminary question.

Mr. AYCOX. Is it all right if I smoke?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Sure.

Did you receive a letter from the Commission?

Mr. AYCOX. Yes. Here is the letter.

Mr. GRIFFIN. When did you receive that?

Mr. AYCOX. Sunday morning. See, I used to live at this address, but I moved to the 2800 block, just a half block, and I still go up there sometimes to get my mail. So the lady accepted it and brought it to my house Sunday morning.

Mr. GRIFFIN. The reason I ask is, you are entitled to receive notice of an appearance 3 days before you actually are supposed to arrive here, but I see that you have had the 3 days' notice; so we are in good shape there.

Before I administer the oath, do you have any questions that you want to ask me about the proceedings that will take place in the next half hour.

Mr. AYCOX. No, not at the present, I don't. I will wait and if there is anything I want to ask, I will stop you and ask you later.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Fine. Feel free to. If you will raise your right hand, I would like to administer the oath.

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. AYCOX. I do.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Will you state for the reporter here your full name.

Mr. AYCOX. James Thomas Aycox.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What is your address?

Mr. AYCOX. 2819 Hibernia.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Do you know Jack Ruby?

Mr. AYCOX. I know him.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How did you first happen to meet Jack Ruby?

Mr. AYCOX. Well, I went out to his club and played. The first night we went out there to play, his sister was running the place.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Is that the Vegas Club?

Mr. AYCOX. Vegas Club, and she had to have an operation the first night I played with another band. We just played one night.

The next night, about a week later, we got a steady job there, and she had to have an operation, and she told us he would be taking over and handling both clubs until she got out of the hospital, and for us to follow his orders, and that is how I met him.

One night he came out before she went to the hospital, and she introduced me to him, and then he came out and emceed the show.

We had a show on Friday and Saturday nights at the Vegas Club and he come out and emceed the show.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What kind of shows did he have at the Vegas Club on Friday and Saturdays?

Mr. AYCOX. Just a rock-and-roll. Different artists come from other clubs, recording artists around town come out and did three or four numbers, tap dance and sing.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did they have any stripteasers at the Vegas Club?

Mr. AYCOX. No.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How long did you work at the Vegas Club?

Mr. AYCOX. Let me see, it was 2 or 3 weeks before this came up.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Do you remember when you quit working at the Vegas?

Mr. AYCOX. Well, it was in the wintertime. It was kind of cold. I don't recall the date, but I think it was in November, I believe.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Was it before or after President Kennedy was shot?

Mr. AYCOX. It was before.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How long before President Kennedy was shot?

Mr. AYCOX. Well, it was about, maybe 3 or 4 days, or a week, or something like that.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How did you happen to quit?

Mr. AYCOX. Well, things weren't going right out there. I couldn't get along with the band. He had told me to do one thing, and the guy that was playing there before I was, but we were playing mechanical all night. He would never say anything to the artists and tell them we will be here again and what time we would open. Mr. Ruby came out on Sunday and would drill us, and he wouldn't want us to play mechanical all night.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What do you mean by mechanical?

Mr. AYCOX. That is playing and not singing.

Mr. GRIFFIN. He wanted you to put on a little performance?

Mr. AYCOX. That's right, and tell some kind of jokes, plug for the club. So this guy was the pianoplayer with the band before I started, and when the other band left, he stayed and taken over the band.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you replace the Joe Johnson band?

Mr. AYCOX. That's right.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What was the name of the band that you were in?

Mr. AYCOX. I don't really know what the name of this band was. I played with Leonard Wood. He was the band leader.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you play in the band called the Players?

Mr. AYCOX. That is the name.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Leonard Wood then replaced Joe Johnson?

Mr. AYCOX. But he was working with Joe first. Then after Joe left, he stayed to take over.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Is Leonard the pianoplayer?

Mr. AYCOX. Leonard is the pianoplayer.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What did you play?

Mr. AYCOX. I played drums.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How many other pieces were in the band?

Mr. AYCOX. We had a bass player and a saxophone and guitar. Four other pieces besides the piano. Five all together.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Had any of your four people, not including Leonard Wood, had you four people played together before?

Mr. AYCOX. Not exactly. I played, sat in some jobs, but I never worked steady. Nobody but the guitar player.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Was this a group that Leonard Wood arranged?

Mr. AYCOX. It was a group that he organized.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you people belong to a union or have any agent or anything like that?

Mr. AYCOX. Well, I belonged to the union myself, and I guess some of the other fellows belonged to the union, too.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you have agents?

Mr. AYCOX. No; not for this particular job. We have agents, but this particular job, I just got it accidentally.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did Leonard Wood stay on with the band?

Mr. AYCOX. After I left?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Well, was he there all the time you were there?

Mr. AYCOX. He was there all the time; but he started replacing Leonard and got another pianoplayer.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Jack tried to replace Leonard?

Mr. AYCOX. Leonard didn't want to follow out the orders, and he told him, "You either do like I say or you have to leave." So Leonard said he spent his time running around to get the fellows together and picking up people to get there to rehearse, but he still didn't want to do what Ruby said, so Leonard stayed on, and we got to where we couldn't get along, so on a Wednesday night, I believe I told him I decided to quit and go with another band, because I did what Mr. Ruby said, but still I wasn't pleasing Leonard, so I didn't call him or tell him nothing.

I didn't get a chance to see him because every time I called him at the club the line was busy. And this Wednesday night I decided to leave, so they got another drummer.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How long before you left did Jack start to try to replace Leonard Wood?

Mr. AYCOX. He just told me that, once or twice. One night after we finished playing, he would come from the other club over here and see how things were, and then I guess one of the waitresses, she must have told him that he asked me to sing three or four numbers and Leonard didn't want me to sing those numbers. Leonard wanted to be the whole show and he didn't have what it takes to compete with everybody else on the show, so he just got cross, and he was the band leader. I had a chance to take over the band out at the club out there, but he didn't want to follow out the orders, so I decided to leave.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did Eva Grant work at the club at all during the last week that you were there?

Mr. AYCOX. She hadn't gotten out of the hospital yet, I don't think, because we sent her a card out to the hospital. She hadn't came out of the hospital yet.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did she work there at all when you were employed there?

Mr. AYCOX. She worked there about a week after I started playing there.

Mr. GRIFFIN. The first week that you were there, she was at the club?

Mr. AYCOX. Yes.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Then the next week, you didn't see her?

Mr. AYCOX. I don't think so.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What kind of clientele did they have at the Vegas Club?

Mr. AYCOX. What kind of what?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Patrons.

Mr. AYCOX. Well, they were pretty nice; you know. They came out some nights. Quite naturally on Friday and Saturday there would be more people than through the week. Some nights through the week we had a pretty nice crowd.

But here is the point. After Joe left, Leonard had been playing with Joe—

Joe had a style of his own, so Leonard wanted to play behind Joe's style. So Mr. Ruby tried to point out to Leonard to pick up a style of his own, because Joe was gone and he got another job, and to try to pick up a style and quit trying to sell Joe, because he would be just helping Joe.

Joe left, and then people come out, and Leonard kept trying to play Joe's pattern, but we didn't have the band, because we didn't know how Joe played and everybody had a different style, and Leonard kept wanting to play behind Joe, because he had been working with Joe.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How did Joe happen to quit?

Mr. AYCOX. I don't know why he quit or nothing like that, but I just heard he was going to quit, and maybe he got a job paying more money.

Mr. GRIFFIN. On how many Sundays during the time you were with Ruby did Mr. Ruby come out to the club and give you instructions?

Mr. AYCOX. I think about 3. I don't think I stayed there over 3 weeks, maybe.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did he come out every Sunday?

Mr. AYCOX. He come out every Sunday.

Mr. GRIFFIN. When did you rehearse on Sundays?

Mr. AYCOX. Well, suppose to rehearse from about 1 o'clock to 3. Sometimes from 1:30 to 2:30, something like that. Sometimes we rehearsed to 3.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did he come out and stay the entire time?

Mr. AYCOX. Yes; he came out. Sometimes he might be there a little earlier than the band, or maybe the band might get there a little early, but he would be out there to open up, and then we were rehearsing.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I want to hand you what I have marked for the purpose of identification as James Aycox Depositon, July 24, 1964, Exhibit No. 1. This is a document that consists of two pages, and it purports to be a copy of an interview report prepared by FBI Agent Hughes, who had this interview with you on December 14, 1963. Take your time and read it over. I want to know whether that is an accurate report of what you told him on December 14.

Mr. AYCOX (reading report). This was not the fellow. There was another fellow here that was a member of the band. There were five of us.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Who was the fifth fellow?

Mr. AYCOX. Milton Thomas.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Is that Brother Bear?

Mr. AYCOX. This is right [returning document].

Mr. GRIFFIN. If that is all right, then if you would sign it on the first page where I have marked.

Mr. AYCOX. Right here?

Mr. GRIFFIN. That is all right; yes.

Mr. AYCOX. This is where you want me to sign?

Mr. GRIFFIN. You can sign it near the top where I put the marks on the page.

Mr. AYCOX (signing). Both pages?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Why don't you initial the second page?

Mr. AYCOX. Initial this one?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes; just put your initials there.

(Mr. Aycox initials.)

Mr. GRIFFIN. Thank you very much. I appreciate your coming in this morning.

TESTIMONY OF THOMAS STEWART PALMER

The testimony of Thomas Stewart Palmer, was taken at 10:25 a.m., on July 24, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Burt W. Griffin, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Let me start by introducing myself again. I am Burt Griffin, and I am a member of the general counsel staff of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy.