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THE PEOPLE

Buell Wesley Frazier: A commute with Oswald, then a harsh interrogation

BY MARKUS SCHMIDT Nov 17, 2013





One day in October 1963, Buell Wesley Frazier, an employee at the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas, was paged by his supervisor, William Shelley.

"I was working, filling an order. Mr. Shelley asked me to come in his office, where he was sitting with a young man. He said, 'He is going to be working with us, I want you to teach him how to fill an order, teach him everything that you can do.' "

The new hire was 23-year-old Lee Harvey Oswald.

"For several days, Lee was just like my shadow," Frazier recalled. "Everywhere you would see me, Lee was right there. One day, I said, 'I think it's time we find out what he has learned.' Lee didn't back off, he wasn't scared. He was very eager to learn, and he learned very quickly. The questions he would ask were good questions."

Frazier took Oswald under his wing. The two young men even shared a commute twice a week. Oswald would get a ride from Frazier so he could spend weekends with his wife, Marina, and their two young children, who lived in the Dallas suburb of Irving, just down the road from where Frazier lived.

But Frazier maintains that his relationship with the shy, subdued Oswald was "strictly business," not personal.

"On the way home, we never stopped to have a beer or talk about the weekend," Frazier said. "We just left work, went straight out to Irving and I dropped him off. I knew Lee was married, I knew his wife and that they had a daughter. I didn't want to take any more time away from his family."

Frazier said that rumors of them being seen together at doughnut shops and rifle ranges around town are false. "We never went anywhere together," he said.

On the morning of Nov. 22, 1963, Oswald rode with Frazier to work, as usual. He didn't pay much attention to the package on his back seat that Oswald had brought along. When Frazier asked him about it, Oswald said he had bought curtain rods for his apartment.

That afternoon, about two hours after the assassination, police arrested Frazier as a suspected accomplice of Oswald's — and he was treated as such. He was fingerprinted, photographed and forced to take a lie detector test.

"I was interrogated and questioned for many, many hours," Frazier said. "Interrogators would rotate."

Dallas police Capt. Will Fritz, who was in charge of the homicide department, came into the room with a typed statement. He handed Frazier a pen and demanded he sign it. It was a confession.

Frazier refused.

"This was ridiculous," he said. "Captain Fritz got very red-faced, and he put up his hand to hit me and I put my arm up to block. I told him we'd have a hell of a fight and I would get some good licks in on him. Then he stormed out the door."

Frazier never saw him again.

At around 3 a.m. the next day, police let Frazier go.

"The way they treated me that day, I have a hard time understanding that," he said. "I was a rural boy; I had never been in trouble with the law. I was doing my best to answer their questions."

Although he was never charged, Frazier was still guilty in the eyes of many. For years, he had trouble finding work. His reputation in Dallas was tainted for decades. At 69, he still works.

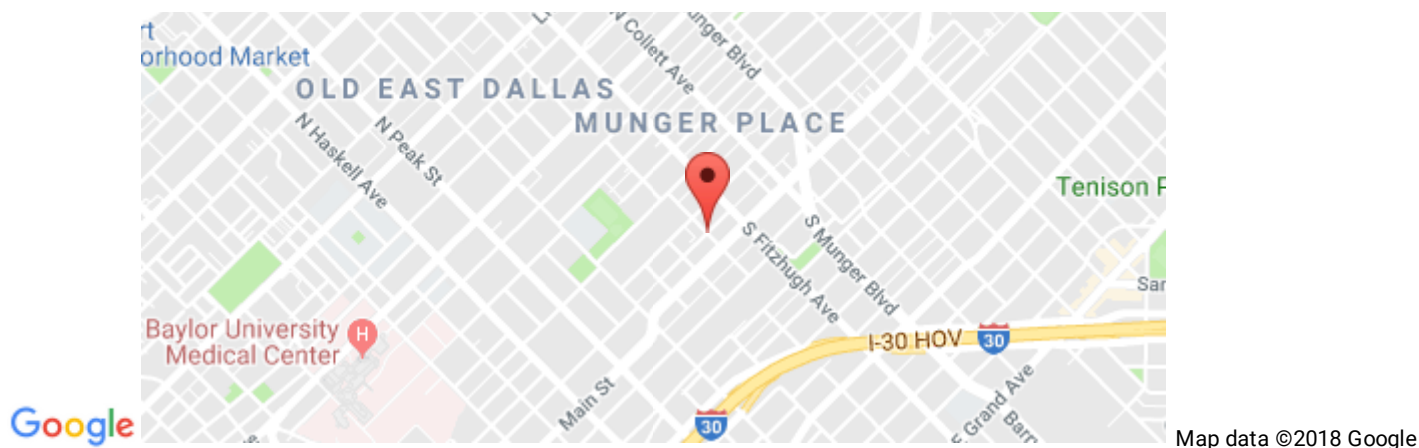
And now, 50 years after Kennedy's assassination, he said he's still not convinced the man he drove to work so many times was the killer.

But there's one thing he claims to know for certain: that the package Oswald put on the back seat of his car that morning was not a rifle.

"It wasn't long enough to put that type of rifle in that bag. There is no way it would fit in that package," he said.

Over the years, many assassination researchers have come to him to ask about Oswald. Once in a while, he accepts an invitation to join a panel discussion. But he tries to keep his recognition in perspective.

"I'm just a normal, everyday person. I haven't let this thing change me one way or the other. I'm still the same guy," he said. "I'm just a little bit more cautious about who I talk to."



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