

Day Trip for an Assassin

It had been 49 years and 363 days since I had last been in Dallas, Texas. I knew that this would probably be a final chance to revisit the city where I had killed a man for the first and last time in my life. And not just any man but the President himself. The first destination on the trip itinerary was my wife's choice - the 6th floor museum at Dealey Plaza.

“Just you and your wife?” a heavily made-up, young female employee asked me as we stepped through the door.

“That will be 28 dollars,” she replied to my nodded confirmation. “First time in Dallas?” the woman enquired in an upbeat yet clearly insincere tone.

“I was here long before you were born,” I replied patronisingly.

I had not come for conversation. She took the unveiled hint along with the 28 dollars from my wife and handed me a museum tour guide. I rejected the offer of the audio guide.

It was a sunny but cool November morning. We had set out three hours before to avoid the worst of any crowds, do the museum tour, and get over to the World Aquarium (my choice, being a keen amateur aquarist) before heading back home ahead of darkness descending. I had been somewhat surprised at my wife's preference on the day trip but with the 50th anniversary of the assassination imminent, she persuaded me that we should mark a momentous event in history but before the gaudy and golden ‘celebrations’ really kicked in, in a couple of days time.

The museum doors had just opened for business and, apart from a burly and bored looking security guard, we had the place to ourselves for now.

“Honey, I need to powder my nose. I’ll catch up with you,” my wife whispered in my ear, and headed for the appropriate place to perform the required task.

I ignored the exhibits and headed for the window to my left. Cardboard boxes meant to emulate wooden crates present when Oswald was here had been carefully stacked near to the window. I guess they were an exhibit of sorts. Oswald had inadvertently grabbed all the ‘glory’ on that day back in 1963, but I knew the truth.

I gazed out and down the street. I hadn’t been in this building on that fateful day. It beggared belief that people still seriously thought anyone could have got the fatal head shot off from such an unfavourable location, let alone someone of Oswald’s limited abilities. Sure the conspiracy theories hazily discussed a shooter on the grassy knoll on the plaza but all they had were grainy film blow-ups showing a vague and ambiguous shape of some form leaning over the wooden picket fence. For five decades, I alone knew that the shape was real – the shape had been me. My name? - I guess it’s important in the grand scheme but that will go to the grave. It’s all too distant in time now.

Why had I done it? I had been an abrasive youth, rebelling against everything in chaotic times. More than anything I hated the very real prospect of a rich and privileged family dynasty running the country. I had been shooting rifles since I could stand up back on my parents’ farm and my father had instilled in me a deep disdain for the ruling elite. I possessed the skills, motivation and target. It all seemed to fall naturally into place.

“What you doing over here?” my wife asked, standing at my side and joining my outward gaze.

“Oh, just getting my bearings,” I calmly replied. “Come on, let’s take a look round.”

After a couple of hours taking in the photographs, films and artifacts, I had had my fill and was getting claustrophobic and hungry.

“Let’s get a bite over the road at the museum café,” I suggested to my wife.

“Sure honey, and then we can take a look over at the grassy knoll,” she replied excitedly.

“You can if you like but that’s a bit too much assassination-tourism for my liking,” I said, holding her arm as we made for the museum exit.

“Really, I can’t get enough of it,” she responded in a slightly disturbing fashion. “I wonder what the President would have been doing now but for that fateful day?”

I briefly considered some kind of smart-arse reply but thought better of it. Who the hell knows what difference it would have made if I had bottled out and not taken aim over the picket fence.

After a pleasant if expensive lunch in the café and a circuit of the tacky gift shop, I left my wife with her newly acquired JFK pen and conspiracy DVD to walk over to the knoll while I checked the map for the quickest route to the World Aquarium.

I had met my wife long after my unknown place in history had been achieved, but in all the years we had been together, she had shown little obvious interest in the assassination or its attendant panoply of intrigue and investigation. She had been quiet in the car journey to Dallas but her newly found exhilaration had come as something of a shock to me. If I told her the truth now, I suspect she wouldn’t be able to keep it to herself.

Half an hour later, she returned. “Sure you don’t want to take a look?” she enquired.

“What’s the point? There wasn’t anyone there on the day. It’s all a fantasy,” I curtly replied.

“Oh come on then, let’s see these damn fish so we can get back home,” she said, sensing my irritation.

The Aquarium was superb although my wife failed to share my zeal, just as I had failed to share hers earlier in the day.

On the drive home, we were both quiet but satisfied in our own ways.

“You know honey, you’ve seemed a little distracted all day,” she said, turning her gaze from the road to me. “What were you doing in Dallas on your last visit? You told the girl at the museum you had been here before.”

“Oh, I was taking care of some business at the time I think. It was nothing important. I’m feeling hungry. Do you fancy steak?”

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