

Mr. STEELE. Right now I haven't the slightest idea what he looked like. I think, as I recall, he was about Oswald's height.

Mr. JENNER. Oswald was 5 foot 9. You say he was the same height, or taller, or what?

Mr. STEELE. Well, he wasn't shorter. He was either the same height or slightly taller.

Mr. JENNER. Would it refresh your recollection if I told you that when you were interviewed by special agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the 24th of November, 1963, that you told them that he was aged 19 or 20 years, that he was about 6 feet tall, slender built, dark hair, and olive complexion?

Mr. STEELE. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Was that the way you recall him?

Mr. STEELE. Yes; he was slender built and about my complexion.

Mr. JENNER. You have dark skin?

Mr. STEELE. Caucasian, dark.

Mr. JENNER. What would you say he weighed?

Mr. STEELE. About 170, 175, I guess.

Mr. JENNER. How tall are you?

Mr. STEELE. Six feet.

Mr. JENNER. Would this man have been about your height?

Mr. STEELE. I guess so, but it didn't seem like he was quite as tall as I am.

Mr. JENNER. Do you think he was more slender than you?

Mr. STEELE. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. How was he dressed?

Mr. STEELE. Sport shirt, as far as I can remember.

Mr. JENNER. White or colored, or what?

Mr. STEELE. I don't even remember the man right now, to tell you the truth. I just have a very vague recollection of what he looked like.

Mr. JENNER. But you are sure he was slender built?

Mr. STEELE. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Now, you have the right, if you wish to exercise it, of reading over your deposition and signing it, or you may waive that right and let the court reporter transcribe your testimony, and it will be forwarded direct to Washington. What do you prefer to do?

Mr. STEELE. Well, I will do what you consider best.

Mr. JENNER. Well, you are willing to waive the necessity of reading your deposition and signing it then?

Mr. STEELE. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. All right. Is there anything else that occurred that you haven't told me about, or that I haven't asked you about, that would be of assistance to the Commission?

Mr. STEELE. No; I can't think of anything else.

Mr. JENNER. All right. Thank you for coming in voluntarily and testifying.

TESTIMONY OF CHARLES HALL STEELE, SR.

The testimony of Charles Hall Steele, Sr., was taken on April 7, 1964, at the Old Civil Courts Building, Royal and Conti Streets, New Orleans, La., by Mr. Albert E. Jenner, Jr., assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Charles Hall Steele, Sr., 1488 Madrid Street, New Orleans, La., after first being duly sworn, testified as follows:

Mr. JENNER. You are Mr. Charles Hall Steele, Sr., is that right?

Mr. STEELE. Right.

Mr. JENNER. And you have seen the letter received by your son from Mr. Rankin, general counsel of the President's Commission, have you not?

Mr. STEELE. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. You have read it?

Mr. STEELE. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Did you also read the documents that were enclosed with that letter?

Mr. STEELE. No, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Well, those documents, Mr. Steele, consist of Senate Joint Resolution 137, authorizing the creation of the Commission to investigate the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy; the Executive Order No. 11130 of President Lyndon B. Johnson, appointing that Commission and fixing its powers and its duties, and a copy of the rules and regulations under which we take testimony before the Commission and also by deposition, as in this case.

The Commission is directed to investigate all the facts and circumstances surrounding or bearing upon the assassination of our late President Kennedy. I am Albert E. Jenner, Jr., one of the various members of the legal staff of the Commission, and we are here today taking depositions of witnesses who may have in some way touched the lives of the Oswald family during their residence here in New Orleans.

You have told us that you have some concern about your boy in this matter, and you have also told me of your position in this community both as a family man and a public official. I think it will be proper, due to the circumstances of your situation, to put a statement from you into the record of these proceedings before the Commission, and so, with your permission, I will ask you some questions at this time.

Mr. STEELE. All right.

Mr. JENNER. Now, you are a native-born American here, and your wife is a native-born American, and all your children were born here, is that right?

Mr. STEELE. Correct.

Mr. JENNER. In and around this area?

Mr. STEELE. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. You are how old now, sir?

Mr. STEELE. I am 44, but I will be 45 the 15th of August, this year—1964.

Mr. JENNER. Do you have any children in addition to Charles Hall, Jr.?

Mr. STEELE. I have a daughter Jacqueline; she's a twin to Charles, and I have one boy Gerald, who is aged 13.

Mr. JENNER. Jacqueline, what is she doing?

Mr. STEELE. She is at Mercy Hospital, a student nurse. She will graduate in August.

Mr. JENNER. Now, tell me about yourself, Mr. Steele?

Mr. STEELE. I am a deputy sheriff, attached to the Civil District Court, and an officer of the court. I own a small business known as the Liberty Coffee and Household Co.

Mr. JENNER. You are a service man, are you?

Mr. STEELE. 23 years on active National Guard status, subject to 24 hours' notice.

Mr. JENNER. Were you in World War II?

Mr. STEELE. I was.

Mr. JENNER. What was the nature of that service?

Mr. STEELE. I was inducted right here in 1941, June or July; I don't remember exactly, and I went on duty with the AFRTC, at Fort Knox, Ky. That's the Air Force Replacement Training Center, at Fort Knox, and then I was transferred to the 5th Armored Division, and that division was sent to England, but I didn't go with them. I was in the cadre that was sent to the Tank Destroyer Battalion at Camp Forest, Tenn., and we pulled winter maneuvers, after which they found that our unit was not ready to go overseas, so we were disbanded and I was then sent to the 631st Tank Destroyer Battalion at Camp Shelby, where I was a sergeant, and then I was sent to the 773d Tank Destroyer Battalion, and I finally ended up after 2 years in Charleston, S.C., in charge of a G.U. ward, so I spent two lovely years living off of Uncle Sam, and I was discharged as a staff sergeant, and then I went to Fort Sill, Okla., in 1949, after being commissioned in the National Guard in 1948, and received my field commission in artillery,

and I have stepped my way up to where I am now a major, general staff, assistant G-4.

Mr. JENNER. All right; now tell me about your boy. Had he ever been in trouble before this thing occurred?

Mr. STEELE. He never had a police record, or anything like that.

Mr. JENNER. Are you Catholic?

Mr. STEELE. My family is; I am not. I am Presbyterian, but the children are Catholic.

Mr. JENNER. Then I take it your boy has never been in any serious trouble?

Mr. STEELE. He had better not be.

Mr. JENNER. You heard his story, didn't you, Mr. Steele, about what happened on this occasion?

Mr. STEELE. I started that story off with him from the minute he hit that front door, and I have been right with him on down through the FBI, the Secret Service, and everybody, right on through, and this is the only time that he has ever been questioned outside of my presence.

Mr. JENNER. Well, he is your son, and I know you have his welfare in mind all the time, and there is a possibility that fathers might become prejudiced in matters of this kind, but knowing him as you do and being his father, and knowing his weaknesses and so forth, do you think now that he is telling the truth about this?

Mr. STEELE. Well, let me put it this way. In my experience, being a battery commander and handling 60 to 70 men at one time, and I have been in court, and with my experience and all that, I have honestly tried to trick him, using the same tactics that you might say the best attorneys would use, and I feel that he is honestly telling the truth. I feel he has told that story over and over again in exactly the same way, so that's the only conclusion I can come to. In my own mind, I am positive he didn't know what he was doing at the time.

Mr. JENNER. You gave him a good cross examination, in other words, is that right?

Mr. STEELE. Believe me, because I was under a nervous tension over this, I'll tell you. I was just promoted in August, to my present position, and actually I am not a State officer; I am a Federal officer, and at the same time I had been in the middle of a campaign, running for the democratic nomination for committeeman, and I am a member of the pledged electors' group, and I advocate that I as a Democrat am pledged to the choice of the Democratic Party, and I just couldn't stand by and let something like this come up and take that all away from me, so I certainly did cross-examine him, and I got to the bottom of it, and I'm satisfied that he was not at fault. He had a weak moment in which he saw a chance to make a couple of bucks, but other than that, he didn't have the slightest idea of what he was doing. I'm satisfied of that.

Mr. JENNER. Is there anything else that you would like to add to what you have said, Mr. Steele?

Mr. STEELE. No; I think that's about it.

Mr. JENNER. Now, you have the privilege, if you wish, to read and sign your deposition, or you may waive that, and the reporter will transcribe the deposition, and it will be forwarded direct to Washington. What is your preference on that?

Mr. STEELE. I will waive it.

Mr. JENNER. All right, Mr. Steele; thank you for coming in and testifying voluntarily. I wanted your background in the record, in view of the fact that your boy did have personal contact with Oswald and particularly because of your position in the community, I wanted your background in the record. Thank you very much.

Mr. STEELE. I think I can promise you that he is not going to get into any more trouble. We had that out over and over, and I don't think he will be passing out any more leaflets.

Mr. JENNER. I think we all believe that, Mr. Steele; well, thank you again for giving your statement. It will be of help to the Commission in evaluating the testimony of your son, by showing his family background, and so forth. Thank you.