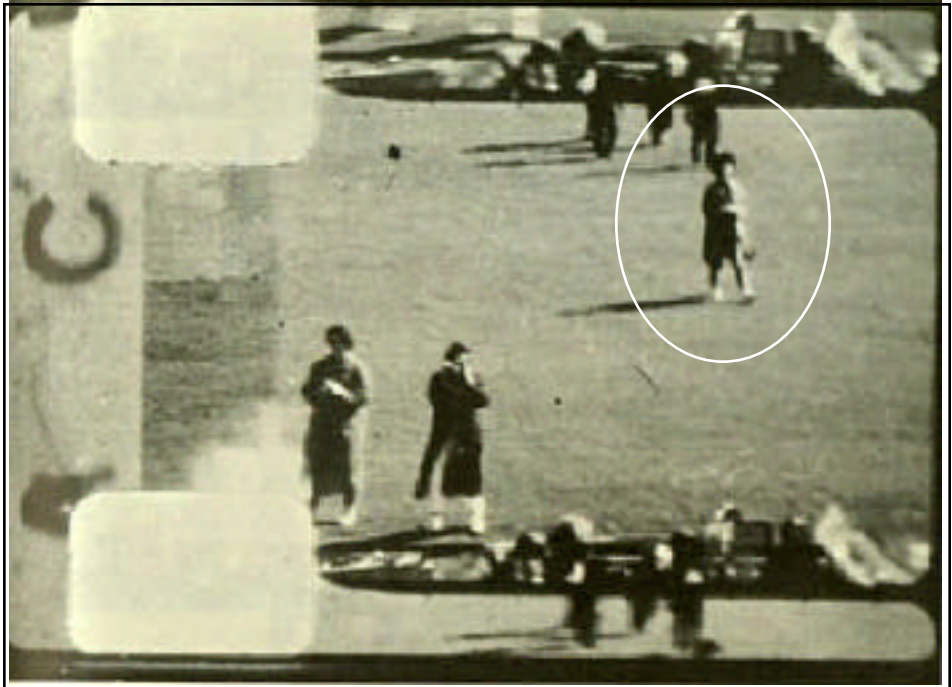


The Running Woman

Toni Foster



Zapruder frame showing Toni running toward Elm Street.

By Debra Conway

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Introduction

In 1996 I received an email from a fellow JFK webmaster, John Masland. It read: "Can you help this person?" I read a little further down and found a message that read,

"I have recently talked to a woman who identified herself as the woman in the white shoes seen to the right (her left) and about 50 feet behind Jean Hill (in red dress) as seen in the photos on page 138 of this month's LIFE magazine (They reprinted the Zapruder frames). She is Toni Foster, the mother of my dental assistant. Toni said she has never been interviewed. If you know of anyone who might be interested..."

"Might be interested!!" I thought. It seems that his dental assistant, Mrs. Foster's daughter, casually mentioned "That's my Mom" while looking through the LIFE magazine in the office. Answering that email began a journey that soon led to many, lengthy phone calls and finally to a most incredible day with the "walking lady" Miss Toni Foster.

At the time of the email exchange I was acting as an advisor to MPI Media Group for their then in production JFK assassination video. Knowing they would have the funds and ability for a professionally filmed interview¹ I shared my finding with them. In a few short days one of the MPI producers and I were knocking on the door of a lovely home, both holding our breaths, waiting to meet Toni and to be the first outside of her family (except for the kind doctor who led us to her) to hear her story.

The door opened and we found ourselves staring into the face of the lady we've seen for years in the Zapruder film. Yes, she was older, and I must add, just a little heavier, but it was surely she. Remembering her white moccasins in the film, I looked down to find her comfortably barefoot and looked around her home to

see many American Indian decorative items throughout. Though Toni has a lively personality, she was very nervous about what we would expect from her. We understood that the last thing she wanted was notoriety. After the camera and lights were set up her story began...

Toni Foster

THE PRESIDENT IS COMING

Just like everyone else, we knew President Kennedy was coming so we were trying to hurry and get downtown to see him. We were listening to the radio to follow what areas he was in; so we were hurrying. When we did arrive and parked my husband said, "Let's go over to Main Street to get a picture of them as they come around. Then he wanted to go down near the underpass. We were anxious to get there.

My husband knew he had "x" amount of time to get over to take a picture as the car turned from Main onto Houston. I believe it was Main Street. Where we stood to take the picture was a wall. You had to go around the wall to get to the lawn where I was to see him when he came down Elm Street. We took the picture, then we ran around the wall. I was going down toward the street and

I just wanted to be at a certain place where I could see him clearly. Why I ended up where I ended up is just that's the direction I was going. There weren't that many people on the left of me, more to the right of me. All the people across the street, you could see that whole knoll area, not quite to the depository area. Before I got there, there were a lot of people behind me. But I wasn't thinking about those things. The closer I got, because I was afraid

I would miss him, I began a fast walk-run.

THE SHOTS

I heard two firecracker-like sounds and I looked up because it sounded like it was coming from up in the air. At the time, I thought, “Those sound like firecrackers.” To me it was *click-click*; they were just that fast. As I thought that and I looked towards the president I didn’t know he was already shot. Because when I did look at him that’s when the third shot hit and his head went down like that [puts her head to her chest]. I looked at him, I noticed he took his hands and did like this [brings her hands up and crossed at her chest], his head came down. I thought, “I wonder what he’s doing? Why did he do that?” As I’m thinking that – that fast – the 4th shot, the last shot, hit and his head exploded. So to me it was four shots. I do recall after that, the shell, I could hear that clink.

And I remember everything stopped for me. I remember [his head] looked like confetti, it was just blown off. It hit him back here [puts her hand on the right rear of her head] and it was just like confetti. The spray went behind him. I do believe from what I heard and what I saw the shots came from the back². Now this whole thing was a shock but that’s how I feel, what I heard and what I saw. At the time when I looked at him and I saw [how he reacted] – they were coming from the back.

I know the Governor and Mrs. Connally were there but I wasn’t even thinking of them. I don’t mean that in an inconsiderate way but it’s just what I saw. They were protecting themselves too. For some reason the car stopped. It did stop for seconds. I don’t ever know why it stopped and all of a sudden it sped up and they went under the underpass.

I could never figure out why the car stopped. [Mrs. Kennedy] started crawling out the back of the car crying and screaming (whatever it was she was screaming, I can’t remember). She was like on the trunk, on the back of the car. After reading and seeing things, I now know it was a Secret Service agent running toward her to get on the back of the car, to get her to get back in the car. One thing that stood out to me, I didn’t know if it was if she had reached toward the agent and it was scratch marks [on the agent’s face] or it was blood from her hands from the president. He got her in the car. Mrs. Kennedy, I could hear her screaming and about that time she started to come up out of the car and the President fell toward her. I knew, even while looking at him, his head looked funny to me. I knew what had happened, that he was dead.

So much was happening. I remember this police officer. There was a police officer behind the driver’s side. When I looked at him there was blood all over him. I could see the flesh of our president on his hat or helmet. I remember people stating too about his flesh being everywhere. Then everyone was just running and screaming. There were parents protecting their children, falling on them to protect them. The children made me realize what was happening was real.

I remember, for myself, I was looking for my husband. I knew he was in the line of fire from where he was and I was trying to find him. At times I didn’t think I was moving. To me, at that time, I thought everything seemed like it took so long. Just thinking of what had just happened. At that time everybody was screaming and crying. Myself, I kept saying, “They shot him. They shot him.” I also thought, “He is dead.” As the car sped off, after it stopped, everybody was running in every direction, and that fast, I

“I kept saying, ‘They shot him. They shot him...and that fast, I remember looking at the knoll.’”



Toni Foster in her home in 1998. Photos © 2000 JFK Lancer

remember looking at the knoll.

THE AFTERMATH

There were sirens. I can’t recall the car behind them, which I’m sure was the one all the agents were in. And that fast you see gentlemen out there – all of a sudden they all had guns, rifles, light machine guns, if that is what it was. The depository, the police department was across from it. I remember we ran over in that direction. We ran in all directions. We ran to the knoll. We turned and looked and could see people still at the depository and we ran over there. All of a sudden these men I didn’t see before were out looking up. Telling everybody to stand back. Everybody had run over to the steps of the depository. There was a lot of pushing and shoving. Of course, everybody is looking – and people were still looking up.

For me it was too much and I was saying, “I want to go home. I want to go home.” On the way home we went past the hospital. There were all kinds of police cars and cars and we knew we wouldn’t be able to see anything. We went by the place where the President was supposed to have gone for the luncheon. I didn’t want to, my husband wanted to. I remember when we got home to his – to my mother-in-law’s home, my husband told her what happened. I remember her words, saying we shouldn’t say that: We shouldn’t say a thing like that – that President Kennedy is dead. She looked at me in anguish and I said, “Well. He is, Mom.”

It has been something over all these years every November. It’s like a picture that I know will never, ever go away.

After this all happened like everyone else we watched TV. I never went away from the TV that weekend. Even after his funeral,

I just wanted to get close. They were a beautiful young couple, pictures didn’t do them justice...This was the President and I knew I would probably never, ever see him again. And, of course, none of us got to see him again.

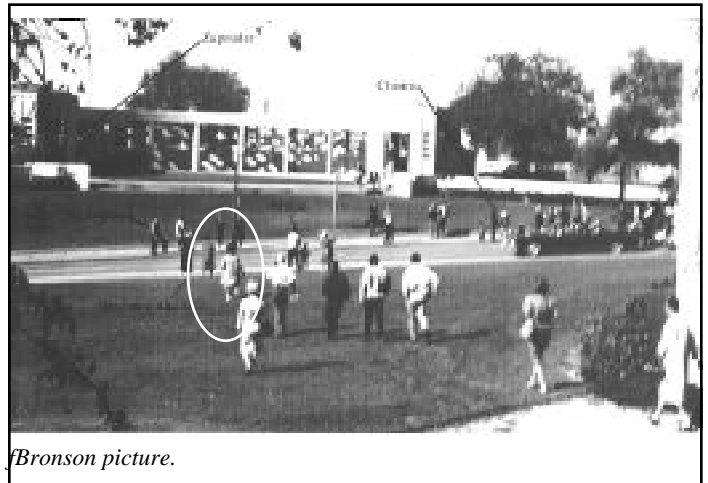
even all through the years I have followed Jackie and the children. How I feel and what happened, I’ve never said anything to people except my immediate family. Even my own children hadn’t realized how it has bothered me over the years. I didn’t want them to worry about me. It was such a terrible thing that happened.

I just wanted to get close. They were a beautiful young couple, pictures didn’t do them justice. From where I was to where it happened, I was very close. The people in front of me, they were standing just before the step down into the street and they weren’t very far from me. This was the President and I knew I would probably never, ever see him again. And, of course, none of us got to see him again.

NOTES:

1. Because of Mrs. Foster’s agreement with MPI, JFK Lancer was unable to use the footage taken that day until it was released to me in 1999. It was subsequently shown at the 1999 November In Dallas Conference. Her statements here are from this filmed interview.

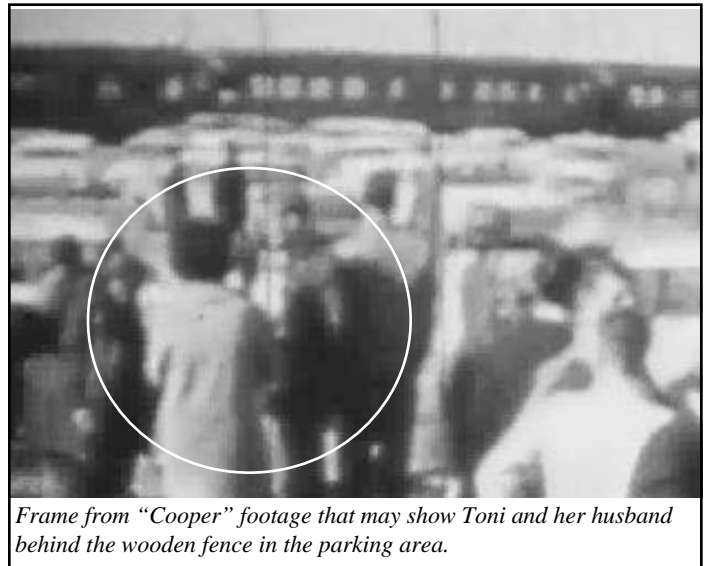
2. Toni has no knowledge of gunshot wounds and thought, like many others, that the large wound on the rear of the president’s head meant it had been the entry. The bottom photograph on page 32 is of Toni showing us how the wound opened up to the rear.



Bronson picture.



Frame from the Nix film.



Frame from “Cooper” footage that may show Toni and her husband behind the wooden fence in the parking area.

CORRECTION:

In the previous issue of KAC researcher Barb Junkkarinen’s name was spelled incorrectly. We apologize for the error.

The Publishers