

Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy

TESTIMONY OF EDWARD VOEBEL

The testimony of Edward Voebel 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.

Edward Voebel, 4916 Canal Street, New Orleans, La., after first being duly sworn, testified as follows:

Mr. JENNER. You are Edward Voebel?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's right.

Mr. JENNER. And you live at 4916 Canal Street in New Orleans?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Where is your place of business?

Mr. VOEBEL. At the same place.

Mr. JENNER. They are both at the same place, 4916 Canal Street?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's right.

Mr. JENNER. And that's here in New Orleans?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. And you are associated in business, I believe, with your mother and father, are you not?

Mr. VOEBEL. Mother, uncle, and grandmother.

Mr. JENNER. Your mother, your uncle, and your grandmother?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's right.

Mr. JENNER. And what is your business?

Mr. VOEBEL. Quality Florist Co.

Mr. JENNER. What is your age, Mr. Voebel?

Mr. VOEBEL. I am 23.

Mr. JENNER. You received a letter from Mr. Rankin, general counsel of the Warren Commission, did you not?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. And enclosed with the letter were a copy of Senate Joint Resolution 137, authorizing the creation of the Commission to investigate the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. And Executive Order No. 11130, of President Lyndon B. Johnson appointing that Commission and fixing its powers and duties; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. And a copy of the rules and regulations under which we take testimony before the Commission and also by way of deposition, such as this one. You received that also?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. I take it you gather from those documents that the Commission is enjoined to investigate all of the facts and circumstances surrounding and bearing upon the assassination of the late President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. I am Albert E. Jenner, Jr., member of the legal staff of the Commission, and I am here with my associate, Mr. Liebeler, taking depositions here

in New Orleans, which is the birthplace of Lee Harvey Oswald, and making inquiries of those who in the ordinary course of their lives had some contact with this man, and also other aspects of the assassination. Now, it is our understanding that you did have some contact with him; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. I would like to ask you a few questions about that.

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. When did you first become acquainted with Lee Harvey Oswald, and under which circumstances? Just tell me generally how that came about.

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, it was at school.

Mr. JENNER. Is that Beauregard Junior High School?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Do you know what year that was?

Mr. VOEBEL. Let's see. I will have to figure that out. That was about 1954 or 1955.

Mr. JENNER. How did you become aware of him?

Mr. VOEBEL. Going to school there. Do you want me to tell you the whole story?

Mr. JENNER. Well, let's get in a few preliminary remarks first. I would like to have a little background in the record before we go into that.

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir. I don't exactly remember when I first saw him, because I might have seen him going to school and back without knowing who it was, but I really became acquainted with him when he had this fight with this boy, and we took him back into the boy's restroom and tried to patch him up a bit.

Mr. JENNER. Were there individuals involved in this fight that you remember?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Tell me the circumstances of that, please.

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, the day before, maybe a couple of days before, Lee had a fight with a couple of boys.

Mr. JENNER. Do you know their names?

Mr. VOEBEL. They were the Neumeyer boys, John and Mike.

Mr. JENNER. John and Mike?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. They were classmates?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes. Well, I think one of them was in the same grade as Lee. One was older than the other one. The younger one was maybe a grade or two below Lee, and Lee was in a fight with John, the older one.

Mr. JENNER. Let's see if I have that straight now. Lee was in a fight with the elder of two Neumeyer brothers; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right. He was in a fight with John Neumeyer. The fight, I think started on the school ground, and it sort of wandered down the street in the direction naturally in which I was going.

Mr. JENNER. Was it a protracted fight?

Mr. VOEBEL. Protracted?

Mr. JENNER. Yes; did it keep going on?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, it kept going on, across lawns and sidewalks, and people would run them off, and they would only run to the next place, and it continued that way from block to block, and as people would run them off of one block, they would go on to the next.

Mr. JENNER. That was fisticuffs; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. Were they about the same age?

Mr. VOEBEL. Oswald and John?

Mr. JENNER. Yes.

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't know; I guess so.

Mr. JENNER. How about size?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think John was a little smaller, a little shorter than Lee.

Mr. JENNER. Do you know what caused the fight?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I don't. I don't remember that.

Mr. JENNER. But you followed this fight from place to place, did you not?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Why, were you curious?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; and well, it was also on my way home, going that way. The fight traveled my route home.

Mr. JENNER. All right, what happened as this fight progressed down the street?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I think Oswald was getting the best of John, and the little brother sticking by his brother, stepped in too, and then it was two against one, so with that Oswald just seemed to give one good punch to the little brother's jaw, and his mouth started bleeding.

Mr. JENNER. Whose mouth?

Mr. VOEBEL. Mike Neumeyer.

Mr. JENNER. The little boy?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir. Mike's mouth started bleeding, and when that happened, the whole sympathy of the crowd turned against Oswald for some reason, which I didn't understand, because it was two against one, and Oswald had a right to defend himself. In a way, I felt that this boy got what he deserved, and in fact, later on I found out that this boy that got his mouth cut had been in the habit of biting his lip. Oswald might have hit him on the shoulder or something, and the boy might have bit his lip, and it might have looked like Oswald hit him in the mouth, but anyway, somebody else came out and ran everybody off then, and the whole sympathy of the crowd was against Lee at that time because he had punched little Mike in the mouth and made his mouth bleed. I don't remember anything that happened after that, but I think I just went on home and everybody went their way, and then the next day or a couple of days later we were coming out of school in the evening, and Oswald, I think, was a little in front of me and I was a couple of paces behind him, and I was talking with some other people, and I didn't actually see what happened because it all happened so quick.

Some big guy, probably from a high school—he looked like a tremendous football player—punched Lee right square in the mouth, and without him really knowing or seeing really who did it. I don't know who he was, and he ran off. That's when we ran after Lee to see if we could help him.

Mr. JENNER. He just swung one lick and ran?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; that's what they call passing the post. He passed the post on him.

Mr. JENNER. Passed the post, what's that?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's when somebody walks up to you and punches you. That's what's called punching the post, and someone passed the post on Lee at that time.

Mr. JENNER. You think that might have happened because of the squabble he had with the two Neumeyer boys a day or two before?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; I think that was what brought it all about. I think this was sort of a revenge thing on the part of the Neumeyer boys, so that's when I felt sympathy toward Lee for something like this happening, and a couple of other boys and I—I don't remember who they were, but they brought him back in the restroom and tried to fix him up, and that's when our friendship, or semi-friendship, you might say, began. We weren't really buddy-buddy, but it was just a friendship, I would say.

Mr. JENNER. But you do remember that you attempted to help him when he was struck in the mouth on that occasion; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; I think he even lost a tooth from that. I think he was cut on the lip, and a tooth was knocked out.

Mr. JENNER. Well, you had a mild friendship with him from that point on, would you say?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. Tell me about that. Did you get together occasionally and share interests, and what were his interests?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't remember exactly what his interests were. I never even discussed that, that I know of. I was taking music uptown—I told the investigator that I was taking clarinet lessons at the time, but actually I was taking piano lessons, so that part was a mistake, but I did play both of them, but at that time I was taking piano lessons, and sometimes I would stop off

at Lee's, and we would play darts and pool. Lee's the one who taught me to play pool. In fact, he invited me to come and play pool with him. He lived over the top of the pool hall.

Mr. JENNER. And did you accept his invitation?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; that's when we played darts.

Mr. JENNER. You played darts and you shot pool also; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Where was that?

Mr. VOEBEL. On Exchange Alley.

Mr. JENNER. Exchange Alley?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; or Exchange Place, whatever you call it.

Mr. JENNER. Did you find him adept in playing pool?

Mr. VOEBEL. You see, I had never played before and he showed me the fundamentals of the game, and after a couple of games I started beating him, and he would say, "Beginner's luck," so I don't think he was that good, because I am really not that good at playing pool. I mean, I don't think he was a great pool player.

Mr. JENNER. But he showed an interest in the game and some adaption to the game at the time he was teaching you; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; he liked it.

Mr. JENNER. He liked to play pool?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; he seemed to like it.

Mr. JENNER. Did you ever meet his mother?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think I met her one time, and for some reason I had a picture in my mind which was different from when I saw her in the paper after all of this happened. I didn't recognize her. She was a lot thinner, and her hair wasn't as gray, as I recall it, when I met her. Of course, this was about 8 years ago, but I can remember she had a black dress on, and she was sitting down smoking a cigarette; now, maybe she wasn't smoking, but this is a picture that comes to my mind as I recall that.

Mr. JENNER. Do you smoke?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. Did Lee smoke?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. Do you drink?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I don't, really.

Mr. JENNER. Do you drink occasionally?

Mr. VOEBEL. If it's in a party, or to be sociable I do, but I am not a drinker.

Mr. JENNER. How about Lee, was he a drinker?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, you see, we were only at the age of about fourteen or fifteen, and smoking and drinking just wasn't of interest to a lot of people our age at that time. Kids did it, but I had no reason for drinking at the time, because I mean, I was just 14 years old, and I think the legal age here is 18, so that didn't actually enter my mind.

There was another thing why I sort of formed a friendship with Lee, and that was that most of the people that went to our school used to smoke, which I thought was a bum type nature, and Lee wasn't one of those, so he fitted in with my character, so to speak, a little bit more than the others.

Mr. JENNER. All right; those are the things I am interested in, what you think of Lee's habits and personality and so forth, from the time you knew him, and don't you worry about whether it's important or not. That's my problem.

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. I'm trying to get a picture of this boy as he became a man, and that includes what he was doing and thinking when he was 14 or 15 years old, and as far as you are concerned, during the time you were sociable with him and particularly what your reaction to him was. People change, of course.

Mr. VOEBEL. Right. Now, I want to make one thing clear. I liked Lee. I felt that we had a lot in common at that time. Now, if I met Lee Oswald, say a year ago, I am not saying that I would still like him, but the things I remember about Lee when we were going to school together caused me to have this sort of friendship for him, and I think in a way I understood him better than

most of the other kids. He had the sort of personality that I could like. He was the type of boy that I could like, and if he had not changed at all, I probably still would have the same feeling for Lee Oswald, at least more so than for the Neumeyer brothers. Of course, as you say, people do change, and I don't know how I would have felt about Lee as we both grew older. I lost contact with Lee years ago.

Mr. JENNER. Would you describe the Neumeyer brothers as roustabouts?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; they were ruffians, real punk-type guys. At least, that was my impression of them.

Mr. JENNER. Well, that's what I want, your impression. Would you say there were other boys of the type of the Neumeyer brothers at Beauregard School while you were attending there?

Mr. VOEBEL. Oh, yes; I would say most of them seemed to be troublemakers. In fact, it was almost impossible to go to school at that time without brushing against somebody or getting involved in a fight sooner or later. You take me, I am not a fighter, but I had to fight at that school.

Mr. JENNER. You did?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; it was almost impossible to get along with the type of characters that were going to that school at that time.

Mr. JENNER. So this particular incident, when Lee had this fight, that in your opinion is no indication that the boy was a rabble rouser or inclined to get into fights; is that right? Your impression was just the opposite of that; isn't that true?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, no; I will say this; I would back down from a fight a lot quicker than Lee would. Now, he wouldn't start any fights, but if you wanted to start one with him, he was going to make sure that he ended it, or you were going to really have one, because he wasn't going to take anything from anybody. I mean, people could call me names and I might just brush that off, but not Lee. You couldn't do that with Lee.

Mr. JENNER. Would you say he was unusually quick to take offense?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I didn't know him to be that way. He could have been, now, but I wouldn't go that strong with it. All I'm saying is that if you picked on Lee, you had a fight on your hands. He wouldn't go out of his way to avoid it.

Mr. JENNER. All I'm asking you is what your impression was, and I don't want you to speculate as to what might have been. Do you think he was a person to take offense at anything on the spur of the minute, so to speak?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, like I said, he didn't take anything from anybody.

Mr. JENNER. Was this a coeducational school?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. High school or junior high?

Mr. VOEBEL. Junior high school, but it just had been changed. It was a grammar school, and it had just been changed to a junior high, and when it changed to a junior high, it seemed to draw a lot of bad characters. As time went on, it might have slacked off; I don't know how it is now, but living right near there and seeing the kids come home now very often, I think they have gotten worse, because now they have got gang wars and things like that.

Mr. JENNER. You still live close to the school?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; and I know they have gang wars in this cemetery near there, and there was this guy that I believe was pushing narcotics, pushing dope. I tried working with the police department for a long time to get this guy out there. I believe he was pushing dope, but it was hard to pin him down. I worked almost 2 months with the narcotics people, but he was too slick for us. He just disappeared. He was there for about a year, and then he disappeared.

Mr. JENNER. Are you familiar with the Warren Easton School?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Did you go to Warren Easton?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I went to Fortier.

Mr. JENNER. Warren Easton is a senior high school; right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Is it somewhere close to Beauregard?

Mr. VOEBEL. Oh, about 6 or 8 blocks away, I would say.

Mr. JENNER. Is it normal for students going to Beauregard Junior High School to then enroll in Warren Easton?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; that's normally right.

Mr. JENNER. That's the regular progression?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. Did you know that Lee attended Warren Easton?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; to tell the truth, I lost complete contact with him after I left Beauregard. I might have seen him once or twice during that summer.

Mr. JENNER. Were you a grade up on him, or were you in the same grade, or what?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't remember. Let's see—no; I think we were in the same grade, I think we were.

Mr. JENNER. When you left Beauregard, where did you go to high school?

Mr. VOEBEL. I went to Fortier.

Mr. JENNER. Any reason?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, Fortier has an ROTC system.

Mr. JENNER. That's why you went over there?

Mr. VOEBEL. To get in the ROTC; yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Are you a service man?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. In what branch?

Mr. VOEBEL. Army.

Mr. JENNER. Did some other boys pal around with you and Lee?

Mr. VOEBEL. Not that I can remember. You see, the only relationship we had after this fight I told you about, was when I would be downtown and stop in, and we would play pool or play darts, but I don't remember participating in any events with Lee at school. For example, I don't remember having played ball or anything with Lee, so probably our gym periods were different.

I used to go straight home after school, and I think he did too, so there was no buddying around on either of our parts at school. I had a lot of friends and many acquaintances, but I don't think Lee did.

Mr. JENNER. You don't think Lee did?

Mr. VOEBEL. No, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Do you have a recollection or conception of any ridicule accorded him when he first turned up at Beauregard?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; I think there was something. Always when someone comes in new, they are supposed to belong to something like a gang or clique, and if you didn't, then you had to prove yourself. It's just like the old story they tell about the Irish Channel, about how anybody new moving in there had to prove himself or fight the leader in the community before they accepted him.

Mr. JENNER. Tell me some more about the Irish Channel, and how that compares to the Beauregard situation when you were attending there.

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, it may be different now, but I know in my day when you went to Beauregard, if you didn't belong to a gang or something, you had to prove yourself. You had to fight somebody.

Now, the Irish Channel is a part of town around Magazine Street, oh, maybe the 3000 block, generally around Magazine and Louisiana Avenue, I think, in that section, and it was pretty well known that any time a stranger or someone new moved in the neighborhood, he had to face something like that. The whole neighborhood had gangs, and unless he joined one of them someone would have to fight something, and it was the same at Beauregard. Of course, it was all, you know, children and adolescent things.

Mr. JENNER. And it was your impression that Lee had that social force, whatever it was; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir; he met it head on.

Mr. JENNER. He was inclined to meet it head on and not back up?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right. He wouldn't take anything. I used to try to avoid it as much as possible, until you just couldn't avoid it any more. I think a few of the boys at the time got a wrong impression of me. They thought I was just a fat kid, and I wouldn't do anything, and I used to take a little pushing around, and another thing, they would always be in gangs. Now, if you got them alone, you could whip them, but they would hang around in bunches.

In fact, I had an incident like that happen to me over at that school where this boy marked me out. He said he didn't like the way I looked, so he just kept talking and trying to force me into an incident, and finally he got it. I beat the dickens out of him, and it was after school, almost the same way this happened to Lee.

Word got around at the school what I had done, and a whole gang of people met me after school one day, but I was lucky enough to talk myself out of it. Now, when they passed the post on Lee, he was inclined to fight back, but I had sense enough to know that you can't fight a whole gang, so I talked myself out of it. This gang came over to my house and piled out of automobiles and started joshing and using all kinds of vulgar language to try to get me to come out, and my uncle ran them off, and after that I didn't have any more trouble. You just had to prove yourself to gain the respect of those gangs.

Mr. JENNER. They didn't attack you any more?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. Would you say that the course of conduct of Lee Oswald was normal, having in mind the problems he was facing?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, except that he didn't make friends.

Mr. JENNER. He did not?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; he was not inclined to make friends.

Mr. JENNER. But you don't know why he was so disinclined?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, let's just put it this way; he didn't make friends. It was just that people and things just didn't interest him generally. He was just living in his own world, let's say.

Mr. JENNER. But you did have some measure of common interest that you told me about?

Mr. VOEBEL. I guess you are trying to get at the gun. Is that what you have in mind?

Mr. JENNER. Well, I am not going to say what I'm trying to get at.

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I know Lee seemed to have an interest in guns.

Mr. JENNER. And these were regular weapons, not toys?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's right, military weapons. My uncle started a collection while he was in the service, and he brought back a few foreign military weapons.

Mr. JENNER. Was that World War I?

Mr. VOEBEL. World War II.

Mr. JENNER. Your uncle?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's right, my uncle.

Mr. JENNER. And you also would say that you had an interest in guns; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, I was interested in guns. In fact, we had guns around the house all the time. We were always interested in them, my uncle and I, and I learned to shoot a pistol when I was about, oh, 7 years old, you see.

Mr. JENNER. Did Lee share your enthusiasm for collecting weapons?

Mr. VOEBEL. Oh, no; I don't think I even told Lee about how I felt about that. I don't think Lee was interested in weapons for the same reason I was. I mean, I like weapons because I like mechanics. I like anything you can take apart and especially weapons, and I've always liked reading about the history of different guns, and I have often thought about what could have happened in a situation had they had this weapon or that weapon, you know more modern weapons than the ones they did have. I don't think Lee was interested in the history of any weapons. For example, he wanted a pistol, but it just seemed like he wanted the pistol just to have one, not for any purposes of collecting them or anything.

I also like sport cars. You've heard of people who like mechanics and cars. I wanted them for a purpose, whereas Lee would be inclined to want something just to have it, I think.

Mr. JENNER. Did you have an interest in automobiles at that time?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir; I did.

Mr. JENNER. Did Lee?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. You couldn't interest him in that?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I was interested in a lot of things. I had taken music, and I liked automobiles, and I collected weapons, just a lot of things, and Lee didn't share any of that with me, because his interests didn't seem to run that way.

Mr. JENNER. Was he interested in music?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; he wasn't.

Mr. JENNER. Do you know whether he knew how to operate an automobile?

Mr. VOEBEL. I never had seen him drive at all.

Mr. JENNER. Did you ever discuss the subject with him?

Mr. VOEBEL. Not that I can remember.

Mr. JENNER. What was your impression as to whether he could drive or couldn't drive an automobile?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't think he could drive. The only thing I think he was interested in besides reading, that I could gather, was one day he went fishing and he caught a whole bunch of little fish in City Park. They were no bigger than that.

Mr. JENNER. Almost minnows?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right, and I think he liked to fish.

Mr. JENNER. Did he talk about fishing?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, not as fishermen do, but I could tell that he enjoyed fishing, at least that day. I do know that he did go fishing, although I don't know how often, but I know he bought a whole rig and went fishing that day.

Mr. JENNER. What did you observe as to his financial circumstances?

Mr. VOEBEL. Financial circumstances?

Mr. JENNER. Yes; as to his home and his dress, and his means as to his finances.

Mr. VOEBEL. Poor.

Mr. JENNER. Poor?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. And you were reasonably well fixed; isn't that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. And you did notice by contrast that he was a poor boy?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. That made no difference to you?

Mr. VOEBEL. Not a bit. That's another thing about me. It doesn't matter whether a friend of mine has money or not. Some of my best friends are very poor, and I also have rich friends, but that doesn't matter to me. It's just the individual person. I don't belong to any cliques. I don't fraternize with any type of group that bands together because of some class reason or anything like that. I like people because of maybe an interest that is similar to mine, someone that I have a more or less common understanding with on different subjects that I am interested in. I don't go for these people that belong to clubs or groups like that, because I don't have the time.

Mr. JENNER. Are you married?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. When did you get out of the service?

Mr. VOEBEL. Two years ago. I just served 6 months.

Mr. JENNER. That's a sort of special program?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; 6 months in the Reserves.

Mr. JENNER. Then you have to serve 2 weeks each year; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right. This year we are going to meet at the Brooklyn Army Terminal and also take in the World's Fair?

Mr. JENNER. Tell me more about your association with Oswald. You say you played darts with him and you would go to the poolroom beneath the apartment where he lived and shoot pool with him?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Did you boys hang around the poolroom after you would shoot pool?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; nothing like that. We would go down and play two or three games, and then I had to go because it would be getting late in the day. You see, that would be after my music lesson, so after a couple of games I would leave and go on home. We didn't hang around at all. For one thing, I had so many things to do. I had my music lessons and my schoolwork, and with my folks

in business, I had to help them out in the shop, so my time was pretty scarce at that time.

Mr. JENNER. Did Lee ever own a weapon?

Mr. VOEBEL. A real one?

Mr. JENNER. Yes.

Mr. VOEBEL. Not that I know of.

Mr. JENNER. Now, you emphasized that word "real." Is there something there that you want to tell me about?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, he did own a plastic model of a .45.

Mr. JENNER. A plastic model?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; and he showed that to me. I guess you want to know now about his plan for this robbery. Actually I wasn't too much impressed with the whole idea at first, because I had heard so much talk about stealing and robbing and things like that, that it really didn't bother me until he did shock me one day when he came up with a whole plan and everything that he needed for a burglary, you see.

Mr. JENNER. Tell me about that.

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, we were over at Easton.

Mr. JENNER. Easton High School?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; we were over there for some program that they were putting on for junior-high people, acquainting them with the high school.

Mr. JENNER. Was that right at the time you were graduating from Beauregard?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. And he was preparing to graduate at the same time from Beauregard; right?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think so.

Mr. JENNER. Wasn't there a period when he dropped out of Beauregard altogether?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't remember.

Mr. JENNER. Or was that at Easton?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't remember.

Mr. JENNER. You don't remember that?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. You don't remember him being out of school entirely for about a year?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; that might have been over at Easton. It could have been over there, but I don't remember that at all.

Mr. JENNER. All right, go on with your story.

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, this program we had, that was a band concert, and we were listening to the band and I think this was when he revealed the plan for stealing this pistol from a place on Rampart Street.

Mr. JENNER. Did he seek to enlist you in that plan?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; not really, he just told me about it. He had observed a pistol in this window, this show window, on Rampart Street, and his plan was to steal it.

Mr. JENNER. It wasn't one of these collector's items?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I don't think so. I can't remember the pistol, to tell you the truth, but I don't think it was a collector's piece. It was just a weapon. It might have been a Smith & Wesson. I think it was an automatic, but I don't remember. I really didn't pay too much attention to it.

Mr. JENNER. You actually saw the pistol in the window?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes. To get back to my story, it was maybe the following week that I was up at his house, and he came out with a glasscutter and a box with this plastic pistol in it, and I think he had a plan as to how he was going to try to get in there and get this pistol.

Mr. JENNER. You mean in the Rampart Street store?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes. Now, I don't remember if he was planning to use this plastic pistol in the robbery or not, or just to take it and cut the glass and break it out, and get the pistol that way. I don't think he was really sure even then how he wanted to do it, but finally he told me his complete plans and how he was going to cut the glass out of the window and everything, and

I didn't know what to tell him, so he said, "Why don't you come over and look at this pistol and tell me what kind it is, and what you think of my plan?" So I said all right, and so we walked over there to this store and we looked at this pistol in the window, and like I said, I don't remember what kind it was.

He said, "Well, what do you think?" and I didn't know what to tell him. I didn't know how to talk him out of it, so then I happened to notice this band around the window, a metal tape that they use for burglar alarms, and I got to working on that idea in the hope that I could talk him out of trying it, and I told him, I said, "Well, I don't think that's a good idea, because if you cut that window, it might crack that tape, and the burglar alarm will go off," and I don't think he believed me, but I told him, "Let's go in the store and look at it from the inside," and so I convinced him that it would be too dangerous to try it, that this was a burglar alarm that would go off, and so anyway, he finally gave up the idea. There had been some jewel robberies on Canal Street and the way they were doing it was cutting a hole in the window, such as Lee planned to do. I remember reading about that, but anyway, he finally changed his mind about trying to rob the store, and that was the end of that.

Mr. JENNER. What kind of glasscutter was this that he showed you?

Mr. VOEBEL. Oh, it was just a real cheap one.

Mr. JENNER. This was a plate glass window, though, you say?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. It never occurred to you that he couldn't cut a plate glass window with a glass cutter?

Mr. VOEBEL. Not at that time; no. I didn't know anything about the cutting of glass anyway. I just thought he could do it, you know.

Mr. JENNER. Did you hear any more about that event afterwards?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I think it just played out. I don't think he really wanted to go through with it, to tell you the truth. I think he was really looking for a way out. It was just some fantastic thing he got in his mind, and actually it never did amount to anything. I mean, it seemed to me like he just wanted me to discourage him to the point where he could back out of the whole thing, and he never went through with it, and I never heard anymore about it after that. Now that I look back on it, I think maybe he was just thinking along the lines that if he went through with it, that he would look big among the guys, you know, but I am just speculating on that, of course.

Mr. JENNER. Did you ever have any discussions with Lee about politics?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. I mean the politics in the pure sense.

Mr. VOEBEL. No; we didn't discuss that. We were too young, I guess, to be interested too much in politics at that time. I have read things about Lee having developed ideas as to Marxism and communism way back when he was a child, but I believe that's a lot of baloney.

Mr. JENNER. You and he never discussed anything like that, then?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I am sure he had no interest in those things at that time, at least that I know of. Of course, we took courses like political science and courses like that, and he might have done a lot of reading and studying along that line at that time, but I don't even know that. I know we never discussed anything like that.

Mr. JENNER. Now at this time, his two brothers, they were in the service, I believe; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I don't know. He never did say. I know he did have two brothers, but I didn't know what they were doing.

Mr. JENNER. They weren't around for any of this playing darts or playing pool, or anything else that you and Lee participated in, were they?

Mr. VOEBEL. No, I never saw them. I never met them.

Mr. JENNER. Did you form an opinion as to the relationship between Lee and his mother?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I know it wasn't the type of relationship that you usually see between a mother and her children. I'm just giving you my opinion on that, now. I know that they weren't very close, as far as Lee was concerned, but of

course she was always around, and I think she tried to take good care of him, but it was hard with a person like Lee to know what he was thinking or doing all the time.

I think Lee loved his mother and was concerned about her, but there was something lacking there that you usually see between a mother and her children, as far as I am concerned, but with the type man Lee was, I guess a lot of that is understandable. You just couldn't get through to him. He just wasn't communicative. He just didn't talk too much about anything.

Mr. JENNER. Was he curt as to his mother, that you observed? I mean, did he cut her off short in any way?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I noticed the normal resentment going on in him at that time, but I was the same way, and I remember seeing that in other kids at that time. Your mother might be telling you things that are normally good for you, but I think every child resents discipline to a certain extent. I know I did at that time, but as to Lee and his mother, I don't think there was anything violent between them, if you know what I mean but at the same time he wasn't what you would call a mamma's boy.

Mr. JENNER. What do you mean by that expression, "mamma's boy"?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, that's just an expression that was used at that time.

Mr. JENNER. Was it used with respect to Lee and his mother?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; never. He was no mamma's boy.

Mr. JENNER. Well, did you have the impression that his mother was often indulgent toward him?

Mr. VOEBEL. In one way; yes.

Mr. JENNER. In which way was that?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, if he wanted something, no matter what it was, she would always seem willing to go out of her way to get it for him. Even if she couldn't afford it, she would try to get it for him. Of course, if there was something he wanted and she didn't think it was good for him, I don't know about that; I don't have any recollection of anything like that, but I know she did everything she could for Lee, and maybe he didn't always show his appreciation the way other kids would, but that's just the way he was.

Mr. JENNER. What sort of impression did you have of Lee's attitude as to his lot in life, in other words, whether he felt that since his father died so young, and he had, I mean Lee, had received a bad deal in life. What was his attitude about that, if any?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I think he was impressed with the fact that his father had died at a young age, and that he never got to know his father. I think that left a mark on him, but I don't think that's unusual in itself. I think there were times when you could see he felt bad because he didn't have a father, but he never actually talked about that. Lee didn't talk too much, even when we were at Beauregard together.

Mr. JENNER. Did Lee ever come over to your house?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't think so; no; he never did. Now, I can't say for sure, but I don't think he did.

Mr. JENNER. Did you boys ever have any common athletic interest?

Mr. VOEBEL. Not that I know of.

Mr. JENNER. Were you active in sports?

Mr. VOEBEL. Just in intramurals.

Mr. JENNER. Did he play any intramurals?

Mr. VOEBEL. I don't know. I wasn't in the same gym class with him, so I can't say for certain on that. I don't know. He must have. I think everybody had to play some intramural sports.

Mr. JENNER. Did you have any impression as to whether he had a feeling that there were things that should have been accorded him by way of possession or attainment of worldly goods, of which he had been deprived because his father had predeceased him?

Mr. VOEBEL. Did he have a feeling of that at that time?

Mr. JENNER. Yes.

Mr. VOEBEL. You see, he was 14 years old, and I just don't think those thoughts would have occurred to him at such a young age, any more than it would have to me. We were just boys, and we were having a fairly good time, as all boys our

age seemed to do. We would play darts and play pool, and do things like that which didn't cost a lot or anything.

Mr. JENNER. Well, I mean, did he say anything that would have given you that impression?

Mr. VOEBEL. In fact, I am afraid that some of these impressions that I am giving you may have been developed later, since this assassination occurred. I don't mean that I had all of these impressions back when we were in Beauregard together.

Mr. JENNER. I understand that, but the Commission is interested in the impression you had then of Lee and the impressions you have now as compared to then. We are trying to get the complete background of this man in order to possibly arrive at the motive for this entire tragedy.

Mr. VOEBEL. It's hard to get what I was thinking of then, and how I think now and separate the two; that's what I mean, because, of course, at that time nothing like this had happened, and I didn't have in mind trying to analyze Lee's personality or anything. You just don't go out looking for something like that unless you have a reason.

Mr. JENNER. You heard the rumor, or read about them at any rate, that Lee Oswald was studying communism when he was 14 years of age, did you not?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Did you see any evidence of that when you were going around and associating with Lee Oswald?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I didn't.

Mr. JENNER. Did you put any credence in that?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; none whatever. As far as I know, I was the only one that would enter his home, around that age, so I would be the only one to know, and I can say for certain that the only things Lee would be reading when I would be at his home would be comic books and the normal things that kids read.

Mr. JENNER. Were you a voracious reader in those days?

Mr. VOEBEL. No.

Mr. JENNER. What do you say as to Lee Oswald, if you know?

Mr. VOEBEL. I really can't say for sure, but he did impress me, in the time that I knew him and associated with him, that he wasn't a great reader. We liked to fool around more than we liked to go to school, I guess you would say.

Mr. JENNER. You would not consider that Lee was a good reader?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I wouldn't. I know my studies always came hard to me, even music when I first started with it.

Mr. JENNER. Are you still interested in music?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; I still play music.

Mr. JENNER. Would you say, in looking back to your acquaintance with Lee, that he had a normal curiosity about things, the normal curiosity of a young man of 13, 14, 15, or 16 years old?

Mr. VOEBEL. I would say that he had a normal curiosity, if I understand then what you mean by that. It's just that he didn't seem to be able to mix with people; that's all.

Mr. JENNER. Do you think that's a basic personality characteristic that has remained in your mind all these years?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right. It seems to me like he did like things and wanted to do things, but he just couldn't get himself to get with people, you see, and you just can't do too much by yourself. To me, I think that maybe his whole downfall was maybe a lack of communication with people. Of course, I don't know the reason. I am not a psychologist. I can't tell you why, but somehow I have that feeling because I knew Lee, and I knew how he didn't like to mix with people.

Mr. JENNER. I gather from this discussion with you that, up until this horrible tragedy happened, you had at least a favorable impression of Lee, and even though your opinion of his personality and attitude and behavior might have changed since you learned of this tragedy and since his death, you at least, up until that time, had a good opinion of him; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Right.

Mr. JENNER. You think he was a normal boy, at least in most respects, and he was not what we have referred to as a roustabout or a member of a gang at school, or anything like that?

Mr. VOEBEL. That's right.

Mr. JENNER. While you were going to Beauregard?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. But he did have trouble making friends at Beauregard; right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, to tell you the truth, Lee didn't go out and look for friends. He didn't seem to care about having friends. He had a few friends, but I think that was the way he wanted it. At least, that seems to be the way he was best able to cope with things, to just more or less be by himself and go and come as he wanted to.

Mr. JENNER. And you don't think Lee was an outstanding student in his studies at Beauregard? You think he was more or less average; is that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; he was just an average student.

Mr. JENNER. How was his attendance at school? Did he miss many days; do you know?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I don't think he missed much schooling. I think his attendance was pretty good.

Mr. JENNER. Did you boys ever discuss the Marines?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I was not much on the Marines.

Mr. JENNER. Well, my question was did you talk about this subject with Lee?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; we didn't discuss that.

Mr. JENNER. Did he ever talk about his brothers?

Mr. VOEBEL. No. I think that he mentioned he had one or two, but there was never any talk about them. I don't know anything about his brothers—I mean what they do, how they are, and what their life is. I have no impression of that whatsoever.

Mr. JENNER. Did you ever have the impression that he probably received his just dues in the world up to that point?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think I made a statement to that effect, but I can't really say for sure. Maybe it was later that I got that impression. That's hard to pinpoint right now, in looking back at all this.

Mr. JENNER. But did you have such an impression at that time?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I had no impression like that at that time. Like I said, I wasn't looking for stuff like that.

Mr. JENNER. Well, sometimes you don't look for that sort of thing because you have a previous impression; isn't that true?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; that's true, but I don't think I had that impression at that time. I'll say this: most of the things about Lee I liked. I think I might have made a statement like that, about him being bitter toward the world and everything, but of course, that would have been my opinion since this happened. I wasn't talking then about when we were going to Beauregard, to the same school.

Mr. JENNER. Do you remember making a statement to the FBI that in your opinion Oswald was bitter since his father died when he was very young, and that he thought that he had had a raw deal out of life?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Do you remember that statement?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Do you still carry that opinion, and hold it?

Mr. VOEBEL. Like I say now, I think this opinion was formed later.

Mr. JENNER. And you don't think you had those impressions then?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I didn't; not back in those days. I formed that later.

Mr. JENNER. What was that embitterment directed toward?

Mr. VOEBEL. Toward authority, I would say. He didn't like authority.

Mr. JENNER. You noticed that at that time, did you?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think so. He didn't seem to like to be told what to do, or made to do something.

Mr. JENNER. Is there a Civil Air Patrol unit here?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; I think they have two.

Mr. JENNER. Two?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes, sir.

Mr. JENNER. Were there two here at that time?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Did you and Lee have any interest in the Civil Air Patrol?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; I think I got him interested in it. We got to talking about it and I told him as much as I knew about it, and I think he attended maybe one or two meetings, and I think he even subsequently bought a uniform, and he attended at least one meeting that I remember, in that uniform, but after that he didn't show up again.

Mr. JENNER. He just attended two meetings of the CAP?

Mr. VOEBEL. Two or three meetings, I would say.

Mr. JENNER. And that's all he attended?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes. He lost interest after that, I think.

Mr. JENNER. Who was the majordomo of the CAP unit that you attended?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think it was Captain Ferrie. I think he was there when Lee attended one of these meetings, but I'm not sure of that. Now that I think of it, I don't think Captain Ferrie was there at that time, but he might have been. That isn't too clear to me.

Mr. JENNER. Lee did buy a uniform to attend these CAP meetings and join the unit?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; he bought a uniform and everything, and he seemed to be very interested at the outset. He even got a paper route, I think it was, or something, to get enough money together to buy the uniform; he was that interested, and that's why I thought it strange when he didn't attend any more meetings.

Mr. JENNER. You thought that was strange?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes. After all this happened, and, of course, this is my opinion now, I guess—not then, but I think now maybe he liked the uniform to wear more than he did like going to the school, with those classes that we had.

Mr. JENNER. You had classes at these meetings of the CAP unit?

Mr. VOEBEL. Oh, yes; we had classes, and maybe that was the thing that Lee didn't care for, because after those couple of meetings he just didn't show up any more.

Mr. JENNER. Did these classes at the CAP unit that you attended require some study?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; they did.

Mr. JENNER. Did Lee ever talk to you about himself and his history, of his earlier life?

Mr. VOEBEL. His "history"?

Mr. JENNER. Yes; his background—anything about his family before he ever met you?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, he mentioned the fact about his father dying, but he didn't talk about much else; I mean about when he was younger, or anything like that. Maybe he might have mentioned about coming here from Texas, and things like that, you know, at different times, but I don't recall all of that now. I got the impression somewhere that he wasn't born here, and I got the impression that he was from Texas at that time, but, of course, that wasn't correct, as I learned after all this happened. But, I mean, we didn't sit around talking about things like that. We were more interested, I guess, in things at school and things that were going around, more up to date, I guess you would say.

Mr. JENNER. Did he talk to you at all about his life in Texas, or to anyone in your presence, that you recall?

Mr. VOEBEL. No. I mean, he might have mentioned it at different times, just as a passing remark, or something. You know how that is, but if he did it has just slipped my mind, because it wasn't anything that would impress me so that I would remember it.

Mr. JENNER. Did you attend these CAP meetings once a week or twice a week, or how often?

Mr. VOEBEL. Twice a week, and now that I think of it, Lee might have actually attended two or three meetings. It seems like he maybe attended two or three of them, but anyway he quit then, all of a sudden. He just quit coming, so I figured he had lost interest in the whole thing.

Mr. JENNER. Do you have any idea what made him quit attending those classes?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, as I remember, we were having classes then on the

weather, and that can be a drab subject, although it is essential, but maybe that's why he quit coming; I don't know.

Mr. JENNER. Was this CAP unit coeducational?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. Because sometimes that can stimulate your interest too, isn't that right?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, to tell you the truth, no. I had no girl friend out there at that time. I had a girl at the school, but that was it.

Mr. JENNER. But there were girls out at this unit, attending these classes?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes; but they were kept pretty well separated from us. They might have been in the classes, but the girls out there didn't interest me.

Mr. JENNER. Did they interest Lee?

Mr. VOEBEL. No; I don't think so. He wasn't very interested in girls.

Mr. JENNER. He was not?

Mr. VOEBEL. No. At least it didn't impress me that he was. He didn't show any inclination toward girls at all, that I could see.

Mr. JENNER. Did he have any sex deviation of any kind?

Mr. VOEBEL. None whatever.

Mr. JENNER. From your experience, he seemed to be perfectly normal in that respect?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. He might have been interested in girls, but he just wasn't pushing it at that time if he was, is that about it?

Mr. VOEBEL. I think he was more bashful about girls than anything else. I think that was probably it.

Mr. JENNER. Is there anything that you can think of from your acquaintance with Lee, from what you knew about him then, that you could tell us that would be helpful to the Commission, aside from what I have asked you?

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

Mr. JENNER. Now, in taking these depositions, you have the privilege of reading and signing your deposition, or you can waive that privilege and let the reporter transcribe the deposition, and it will be sent on to Washington. However, if you want to read and sign it, it will be transcribed, and the U.S. attorney will contact you and let you know when you may come in and read and sign it. What is your preference in that regard?

Mr. VOEBEL. Well, I don't have to read it and sign it. I have just told you what I know about it.

Mr. JENNER. You prefer to waive that then?

Mr. VOEBEL. Yes.

Mr. JENNER. All right. Thank you for coming in.

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM E. WULF

The testimony of William E. Wulf was taken on April 7-8, 1964, at the Old Civil Courts Building, Royal and Conti Streets, New Orleans, La., by Mr. Wesley J. Liebeler, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

William E. Wulf, having been first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

Mr. LIEBELER. Mr. Wulf, my name is Wesley J. Liebeler. I am a member of the legal staff of the President's Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Staff members have been authorized to take the testimony of witnesses by the Commission pursuant to authority granted to the Commission by Executive Order No. 11130, dated November 29, 1963, and Joint Resolution of Congress No. 137.

I understand that Mr. Rankin wrote to you last week——

Mr. WULF. Correct.

Mr. LIEBELER. Advising you that I would be in touch with you——

Mr. WULF. Right.