LEE HARVEY OSWALD—THE MAN AND THE MYSTERY

Suspected Assassin of Kennedy Was Withdrawn and Friendless

By DONALD JANSON
Special to The New York Times

DALLAS, Dec. 7—Two weeks ago President Kennedy was assassinated in downtown Dallas. Two days later the accused assassin, Lee H. Oswald, was killed in the Dallas City Hall. The second slaying cut off any opportunity for a startled world to learn from Oswald's lips his version of what happened.

Even the life story of the secretive young malcontent has not been completely pieced together, but what is known sheds some light on the troubled man and the mystery he created just before his death.

Lee Harvey Oswald was born Oct. 18, 1939, in New Orleans. His father, a life insurance salesman, had died two months before. What parental guidance he received came from his widowed mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald.

At the age of 3 she put him in a Lutheran home for children. His older brother and a half-brother, her son by her first marriage, were already there.

The child acquired a stepfather, Edwin A. Ekdahl, when his mother married for the third time two years later.

He did not have him long. The Ekdahls took him to Fort Worth, where the husband, an engineer, was granted a divorce in 1948.

Lee was almost 7 when he was enrolled in the first grade. Throughout elementary schools in Fort Worth he was a child of average intelligence and low achievement.

He was a slow reader and poor speller. He was reluctant to join in games.

Oswald's comments later indicated that he remembered his mother as working in stores. By the time he had reached the sixth grade, Mrs. Howard Green recalls, he had taken an interest in books, possibly as a refuge. By then he was clearly a loner, she said. He was not unpopular, only detached.

In Junior High

Oswald started junior high school in the Bronx. His mother had moved to New York in 1952 to be with his brother, who was in military service.

Serious problems became obvious to everyone but Mrs. Oswald. While his mother worked, the boy played hooky. He was absent 47 days from Junior High School 117 from October, 1952, to January, 1953.

John Carro became his probation officer. He found that the 13-year-old youngster was staying home and watching television in the Oswald's small furnished apartment much of the day.

Neighbors reported that he played alone with toy guns. Mr. Carro found him a withdrawn and friendless child who was taunted at school because of his Southern drawl and because he wore blue jeans.

Mrs. Oswald ignored requests that she see school counselors. The case was taken to Bronx Children's Court. Mr. Carro persuaded the welfare agency to help, but she told its representative to "please keep out of family affairs." She said her boy's trouble was only a matter of truancy.

The youth appeared before three Children's Court judges. Each recommended psychiatric treatment. Mrs. Oswald demurred. A fourth judge sent him to the Youth House for Boys in the Bronx.

He was examined for a month there in 1953. The chief psychiatrist, Dr. Renatus Hartogs, found that the slim 13-year-old had schizophrenic tendencies and was "potentially dangerous."

This examination, performed 10 years ago, found Oswald to be full of anger although outwardly calm. It found he had fantasies involving violence. The fatherless boy had a hatred of authority, fixed on a father symbol. His personality was unyielding, seclusive, aggressive.

Mrs. Oswald and her son returned to New Orleans, home of her sister. There he finished eighth and ninth grades. Attendance improved. Grades were average. He was inconspicuous.

Fought Other Boys

He started spending spare time in New Orleans libraries, he said later, reading about Marxism.

Soon the youth was uprooted again. This time it was back to Fort Worth. He entered tenth grade there, but a month later quit to join the Marines.

This was in October, 1956, a week after he turned 17.

He was unpopular with his buddies. He fought a lot, but wasn't big enough to win. Oswald did become a good shot with a rifle, according to Donald Goodwin, a Marine sergeant who was his section head.

John E. Donovan, his commanding officer at a radar air control center at Tustin, Calif., said Oswald had read Russian newspapers and spent a lot of time studying the Russian language.

He was speaking of the March to September period of 1959, Oswald's last six months in service. Mack Osborne, who shared a double bunk with him then, said he spent "most of his spare time" on Russian.

Oswald's plans matured quickly that September. He received a passport he had applied for, then was placed on inactive duty, following a plea for a hardship discharge so he could return to Fort Worth to take care of his ailing mother.

He shocked her by staying only a night, then hurrying on to New Orleans, where he booked passage for Europe.

Oswald reached Moscow Oct. 13, 1959.

He listed his occupation as "shipping export agent." On Oct. 31 he appeared at the United States Embassy and said he was "through" and had applied for Soviet citizenship. His mother tried to call him in Moscow. He hung up on her.

Pledge of Allegiance

On Nov. 2 he wrote out an affidavit saying "I affirm that my allegiance is to the Soviet Socialist Republic."

But the country of his choice refused to grant him citizenship. The defection aborted, he remained as an alien and found work in a sheet metal factory in Minsk for 80 rubles ($88.80) a month.

Life there added more frustrations to a mind long buffeted by them. He told about them later: Low wages, crowded quarters, little privacy, no paid vacation, monotonous food, forced lectures on Communism during lunch hours.

But there was Marina. He married the young pharmacist a month and a half after he met her. She said later she had felt sorry for him because he had no friends.

He had begun working on an exit visa in July, 1960, before he met Marina. A year and a half later he was still trying.

"I beseech you," he wrote to Senator John G. Tower of Texas in January, 1962, "to rise [sic] the question of holding by the Soviet Union of a citizen of the United States, against his will and expressed desires."

After Senator Tower referred the matter to the State Department, the embassy extended Oswald's passport to include his wife and a daughter, June Lee, born Feb. 15, 1962.

Meanwhile, the Marine Corps, following his attempted defection, had taken him off inactive duty with an "undesirable" discharge. This came to his attention a month before his daughter was born and he sent a bitter letter of protest to John B. Connally Jr., the Secretary of the Navy, who later became Governor of Texas.

The hostile young man with yet another grievance wrote to Mr. Connally that after his return to the United States "I shall employ all means to right this gross mistake . . ."

With money lent them by the United States Embassy in Moscow, the Oswald family traveled to New York, arriving by ship June 13, 1962.

New Start

In Fort Worth, the Oswalds lived with relatives, then found a cheap furnished apartment of their own. Lee found the first of a series of unskilled jobs that provided a bare living.

The Oswalds soon found their way to a Russian language class at the Fort Worth public library. This put them in touch with the small Fort Worth-Dallas Russian-speaking community. Several members were immigrants, and Marina was a source of fresh information on the old country for them.

They liked her and invited the Oswalds to their homes. They visited her also, and brought clothing and a playpen for the baby when they discovered their financial plight.

But their friendship with Oswald soon soured. Without exception they found him unpleasant, opinionated, contrary—a man with a mind closed to persuasion and logic.

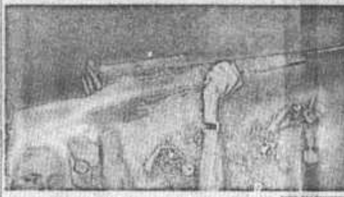
The Jule in Oswald grew. He became dictatorial at home. He lost his job. One night, one of Marina's friends got a call from her asking if she could come over at once.

When she got there she said her black eye and facial bruises resulted from his hitting her for smoking. She stayed several days, then moved to the home of another Dallas woman for a week.

She returned when her husband pledged reform. Meanwhile, he moved to Dallas and got a second unskilled job, which he held from October to last April.

Oswald had other interests. He rented a post office box in October under the name "A. Hidell." He received The Worker and the Militant, a paper reflecting Trotskyite views. He also received first-class mail, including letters from Communist party headquarters in New York City, where he had written for information.

And last March 20 a rifle for A. Hidell arrived from a mail order house in Chicago. This was the rifle that remained in his possession until it was used to kill President



A Dallas policeman holds the gun used to assassinate President Kennedy.

Kennedy, evidence gathered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation shows.

Secondary evidence developed this week showed that it was first used April 10 to fire into the home here of Edwin A. Walker, the former general who has been preaching ultraconservatism since he was relieved of his command in Germany. The shot missed Walker, but not by much. This was about the time Oswald's Dallas job ended.

On April 24 he was discovered by an acquaintance packed and ready to take a bus to New Orleans. Marina and the baby went to Irving, near Dallas, to stay with a friend, Mrs. Michael R. Paine.

In New Orleans Oswald first stayed with his aunt, found work as an oiler of equipment at a coffee warehouse, found a cheap apartment and called his wife May 9. Mrs. Paine took her there May 10.

Oswald took a post office box again and lost no time getting to the branch library nearest his home. On May 23 he checked out "Portrait of a Revolutionary: Mao Tse-tung." In June he was reading "Portrait of a President," a biography of President Kennedy, and "The Huey Long Murder Case," an account of the assassination of the Louisiana political leader.

Passport Issued

On June 24, Oswald applied for a passport to visit Europe and the Soviet Union. The records in Washington showed only that he had a reputation for "fuzzy Marxist" thinking. This was insufficient to deny a passport. One was issued the next day.

Living on unemployment compensation, he started spending long hours in reading about the Cuban revolution. On Aug. 9 he passed out leaflets on Canal Street for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a New York-based pro-Castro organization that has denied he represented them officially.

After a scrape with an anti-Castro Cuban that day, Oswald was fined $10 in municipal court for disturbing the peace.

On Sept. 17 he got a 15-day tourist card from the Mexican Consulate, representing himself as a photographer who wanted to visit Mexico.

Mrs. Paine came to visit, found the family living on $33 a week in unemployment checks, and took Marina, pregnant, and June Lee home with her Sept. 23.

Oswald told them he would go to Houston to look for work. He started hours after they left — but for Mexico City.

Arriving by bus Sept. 26, he called the next day at the Cuban and Soviet Embassies for a visa to Russia via Cuba. He asked for swift action and was told by both offices it would be impossible.

After further efforts he departed, frustrated again, for Dallas. He arrived Oct. 3, spent a night at the Dallas Y.M.C.A., the next night with his family in Irving, and the rest of his short life in rooming houses in Dallas.

It had been announced Sept. 26 that President Kennedy would visit Dallas and other points in Texas Nov. 22. Oswald's rifle, hidden from view in a blanket, had gone to Irving with other family possessions in Mrs. Paine's station wagon three days before.

Oswald rented another postal box and started job-hunting. On Oct. 14 he moved to the last living quarters he was to have, an $8-a-week cubicle in a rooming house near the Texas School Book Depository. He signed the register as "O. H. Lee." Not even his wife knew of the deception.

New Job

V. S. Truly, superintendent of the textbook distributing center, hired him as an order filler the next day. He went to work Oct. 16.

His second daughter was born Oct. 20. Mrs. Paine said he seemed happy about it.

The F.B.I. checked on Oswald more than once after he returned from Mexico City, but did not yet know about the Walker shooting. Agents did learn soon after he got his job

Turned to Marx In High School

that he was working at the depository.

On Nov. 19 Dallas newspapers reported that there would be a motorcade through the downtown section Nov. 22 to give the President maximum crowd exposure.

It was announced that it would go to the Trade Mart, where the President was to speak at a luncheon.

It could be assumed that the motorcade would pass the depository. This was confirmed when the route was announced three days later.

The Night Before

The night before the assassination, Oswald went unannounced and uninvited to the Paine home, the first time he had done this.

He stayed in the suburb all night, with his family. In the morning, evidence indicates he took the rifle to work with him, wrapped in brown paper sacks.

It is charged that Oswald used the rifle from a six-story window to kill the President and wound Governor Connally as they rode by.

In his flight, the police say he also killed a Dallas patrolman who challenged him a short time later. This time he used a pistol. He was arrested, unrepentant and unwaveringly denied everything. He never had a trial. His troubled life ended with his own death by shooting two days later.

DO NOT FORGET THE NEEDIEST!