

was only an excursion. Then they would come right back with something like, "Why did you write this if you didn't sleep with her? Are you crazy?"

They went with him to Minsk post office, and he had to fill out a document saying that he wanted his letter back. So, Marina never received his last communication to her. In fact, he thinks KGB already had his letter, but needed him to request it back to give formal proof they were honoring Geneva Convention.

Before they let him go, they told him not to open his mouth on this subject. It was Pavel's largest reason for leaving Minsk and going to study at Tbilisi, in Georgia. Half of his radio factory knew, after all, that Lee Oswald was his friend, so how was it possible that he wouldn't talk about it if he stayed here? In fact, one or two people actually said, "We hope you didn't mention our names while you were interrogated."

Soon after, KGB agents came to Horizon factory and told all workers to keep their mouths shut about Oswald. By then, Pavel was already in Tbilisi, but he heard that shop people were called in one by one, and KGB had private conversations with them about keeping silent.

Now, in Tbilisi, relations with his father were cold. Pavel had gone down there in December of 1963, and he didn't

come back to Minsk until 1965. At first, he stayed in an apartment with his father while his mother went to a health resort. He was studying at Tbilisi University, and one day in spring of 1964 he came home and his father looked at him and said, "At your age, I was already flying an airplane." Pavel said, "I understand. . ."

He left, and went to live at a student hostel where they found a bed for him. As a practical matter, his father and he never spoke again. Not even when his parents came to Minsk; they didn't speak.

Pavel's father died eight years later of cancer. So Pavel felt twice as bad. He was serving then in army reserve at a place about one hundred kilometers from Minsk, a military camp, and when he received news that his father was on his deathbed, he asked if he could visit, and his officer said, "Tomorrow morning we'll consider your request." But Pavel's father died overnight. Then all these officers around him showed their humanity. It was a weekend, and officer-in-charge of their entire camp happened to be off fishing. But now they wanted to show Pavel that they cared. To leave the camp, he needed a special seal that only officer-in-charge could provide, so they went out to that place where he was fishing and got his seal on necessary papers. Pavel bought some flowers and went to his home, but his mother said, "It's

too late."

Anatoly Shpanko would say that he never felt any pressure from KGB, never had any sensation they were invading his privacy of life. He never had any experience that he was under surveillance, never.

Now, Anatoly is 55 but he has never been interviewed by KGB. His biography is clean. So, how could you report on him? Anatoly insisted that he did not know what had happened to Marina. He did not know her history. When told her husband's name, and that Oswald was alleged to have killed President Kennedy, only to be himself killed two days later, Anatoly replied, "Somebody kills somebody, and then is killed in two days--it's very dubious if he really did it. There is somebody un-accused who is guilty. It's very negative to me."

As he remembers, there was, in November, 1963, no information in Minsk that this man, Lee Harvey Oswald, had lived in their city for two years. He never saw any stories in local paper. Nobody talked about it. He didn't know that that was Marina's husband, absolutely not. Maybe some people knew but kept silent. If they learned they just went deeper

with silence--they were afraid to discuss it. Today is first time he learns, he said. Asked if it was a shock, he replied: "Approximately."

Sasha came by one day to knock on the door of Ilya and Valya's apartment. There was no answer. He came another time and knocked a third time, and then some neighbor opened a door across the hall and said, "They don't live here any more. They left this place." These neighbors said to Sasha that nobody knew where they had gone.

Ilya suffered a lot from that assassination. It didn't matter how many years he lived. All that had happened took life away from him. He suffered a lot because his life was in his career and now everything was in jeopardy and his situation took away some of his health. They didn't fire him, but they didn't promote him any more. Ilya never talked much about that assassination except to say it was organized. Said that once. Killing Kennedy was organized. If they had used Alik, it was because he had been in Soviet Union.

Everyone in his family was scared, afraid that many people would find out that it was Ilya's niece over there who had become partially involved in Kennedy's assassination.

At this time, he and Valya had an apartment with three rooms. They were only two people living in three-room apartment. So shortly after assassination, everyone started to blame them, began to say they lived in too luxurious an apartment. Not true. Just a nice apartment with a lot of books. There was even an article in one newspaper that Ilya was a Communist Party member and lived in a more privileged way than other people. Valya said, "My husband was a very honest person. So when this one man from Byelorussian Star, military paper, came to us, then wrote an article: 'Look at these people, they're two and they live in this luxurious apartment,' Ilya decided to move. Some of our neighbors said, 'Don't hurry. Wait. Something will change,' but Ilya said, 'No, I don't want my name to be used in this way; I don't want to know this type of shame,'" and they moved to a smaller two-room apartment.

On the other hand, five people moved into the old 3-room apartment. So, maybe that was fair.

Ilya never showed what it cost--he still remained interested in painting and in books, his second hobby. He kept buying new sets of books and lining every wall of his apartment with them. You couldn't say he lost interest in life.

Among Ilya Prusakova's collected sets of Russian authors in five to twenty volumes were Tolstoy, Petrov, Lermontov, Kuprin, Nekrasov, Adamov, Bunin, Ilya Ehrenberg, Chekhov, Alexei Tolstoy and Konstantin Simonov, Turgenev, Pushkin, Esenin, Sholokhov, and Dostoyevsky. In collected sets translated into Russian were Jules Verne, Swift, Emily Dickinson, Romain Rolland, Zola, Dreiser, Balzac, Hugo, deMaupassant, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Heine, Feuchtwanger, Stendhal, Steinbeck, Boccaccio, Prosper Merimee, Galsworthy, Proust, and Jack London.

When Kennedy was killed, and then Alik two days later, both Ilya and Valya thought, "What sort of Mafia work there?" Valya was crying for Alik, but about Marina even more. She wrote to Marina, but no letter came back. Everything stopped after that assassination, and Ilya blamed himself for not

having kept Marina from going. All his sisters blamed themselves too that they could not stop her. All suffered over it.

Whatever good they had done Marina, they were left with these consequences. Of course, she was their niece, but then Ilya and Valya had twenty-three nieces and nephews between them, Ilya and Valya. If they were to suffer for each of them as much. . .

Thirty years later, late in 1992, Valya and Marina spoke on the phone. They cried, and Marina said, "I understand that you were very upset about Ilya and all that happened to him after I left, but you know, Ilya didn't die when I left, he was 80 years old when he died, and I became a widow with two children when I was 22."

After Ilya's death in 1989, Valya was going through his papers and discovered that he had had a collection of nude pictures. Professional photographers had taken them; they were postcard size. Something he had bought. But she was

philosophical about it. She said to herself, "Of course every man has a secret life. That's why he's a man." So, in her heart, she allowed him everything. She allowed him to like young women.

When Kennedy was assassinated, Ella was waiting to be asked, "Come and sit in KGB offices. Give us your information." But she was never approached.

Ella remarked that she could invent stories now: "It's very fashionable to say, 'I was abused by KGB. They ruined my life; they spoiled my life.' Now it's very high style to have been approached by them and suffer." She says she could invent a story, but she'd rather tell the truth. She was not approached; never approached.

After that assassination she had worried that they would come, and she did live in fear, kept thinking they were going to ask her to come to their office, but nobody approached. Now that she thinks about it, she would say she might have had friends who were approached. From what she's learned since, she believes Lee must have been watched constantly and she thinks she must have been watched too. But since there were only two of them, she thinks Pavel must have been more

interesting because Pavel brought people to meet Lee. She was always alone with him, so maybe she was of less interest.

She remembers there was a young woman working near her, a very quiet young woman, who woman used to ask certain questions, wanted to know what movies she saw with Lee-- nothing intimate, general things. And, of course, they often walked in that park which encircles Minsk Opera House and maybe someone followed them. Maybe such a person sat on a bench and listened to what they were talking about.

Sometime around the end of March in 1962, his uncle, Professor Bondarin, told Kostya that he was living a wrong kind of life in relation to women. Moreover, it was not considered proper that he had a pornography collection. (He gathered that this information came to his uncle from Nikolaev, the KGB man at the Medical Institute.) His uncle told him, "If you don't want to be expelled, then stop chasing after skirts." And Konstantin had to destroy all his French postcards and his diary. He was keeping a purple diary at this point where he maintained a brief record of personal events whose references only he could understand--he had never written "Marina," for example, but "M."

When the assassination occurred, Kostya was summoned to KGB and so, too, he is certain, were his friends. They all went in different directions afterward, and didn't have anything to do with each other. Konstantin Bondarin knows Titovets had a lot of problems but he has had no idea what KGB said to him. They tried not to have contact with each other. Kostya was asked to explain to KGB what his relation to Lee had been, and KGB did call him in on two occasions. But never before Kennedy's assassination.

Afterward, they summoned him once at his Institute and then again to KGB's main office. In all this time, he had not known Oswald's last name, knew him only as Alik, and so he had to piece it together. Kostya could figure it out only because he saw a newspaper photograph accompanying a story that said Oswald had been married to a Russian woman from Minsk. Within that week, he received a subpoena from KGB telling him to appear on a certain date.

This was years after Stalin's time, ten years later, but contact with the Organs evoked fear. They could take you off somewhere. You might not return home.

His own family had suffered from them. In the thirties, under Yezhof, his grandfather was called in several times. During the civil war he had served as an officer in Tukachevsky's army, so naturally, when they arrested that

general in the late '30s, this affected his grandfather as well. Kostya's family grew up hearing about interrogations conducted in Stalin's time.

When Kostya walked through the front door of KGB's building, he felt as if he had just taken a good shot in boxing. His legs were weak. But actually, it proved to be only a short conversation: What sort of relationship had he had with Alik, and had he corresponded with Alik and Marina? He was able to reply in the negative. They did not ask him whether he ever slept with Marina. This man who was interrogating him sat down at a desk and Kostya stood. There was someone else present, also in civilian clothes, but Kostya didn't know whether he was taking notes or not--never dared to look in that direction.

This man who spoke to him did not introduce himself. Conversation was directed at him in a military manner: "You have to tell me if you know anything." He wanted to know if Konstantin possessed photographs of Alik and Marina. Kostya had had a few but by now they were ashes in his stove.

Given their knowledge that there was surveillance of Alik and Marina, Yuri and Kostya and Sasha had stopped seeing them,

but Erich stayed on. Since it's very difficult to believe that Erich was not called in by KGB to cooperate, could it be, his interviewers asked, that Titovets had served as a source of information for them? To which Kostya replied that Erich had managed to keep everything he wrote during that period. Everyone else had their papers confiscated or took pains to destroy them, so Konstantin was surprised when Erich said, "You all ran. You hid like a bunch of cowards and threw everything overboard." But why was Erich so brave? One could only guess.

In any case, it seems to Konstantin that in this period after the assassination, KGB would have come to Erich first. They would have shaken him like a pear tree. Yet, he got out of it; nothing really happened to him even though of all of them, he had had the closest relationship with Lee.

As for his present opinion of Oswald, Igor Ivanovitch said, "Lee was the scum of society, a person spoiled from the cradle, so to say. Not serious, inconstant, something was probably wrong with his state of mind."

Igor Ivanovitch was asked, "After the assassination, you must have felt bad?"

And he replied, "Bad? I felt horrible. In fact, it was worst moment of my life."

When asked if KGB called in any informants or sources for interrogation after the assassination, Igor Ivanovitch became emotional. Extraordinarily emotional. He looked as if he were going to burst into tears. He did not answer the question. Instead, he cried out: "Everybody blames me for this! It was as if I knew he would shoot." After a minute or two, he added, "There were no data. You could not find a single person from his Minsk surroundings who would say, 'Yes, he had intentions to go back to America and cause all this trouble.'"

He and Stepan had tried to consider where they could have failed. Their inner fear: "What if the preparation of this action commenced in Minsk?" They were considering everything.

Then he added, "Quite frankly, we were not worried about public opinion, nor opinion of American services, but about what Moscow would say once we sent them Oswald's file. Would they consider job done by myself and my employees as being well worked-out? That was what we were most worried about."

When Stepan Vasilievitch heard the announcement on the

radio, he immediately thought, "It's impossible! It is impossible! How could it have happened? That this inconspicuous person who didn't evoke any suspicions on our part, commits this crime? It cannot be. That was first thought I had. Automatically." His second thought? "When we began to hear various broadcasts, I started to interpret, I started to come to a conclusion that he could not have done it alone. Oswald was sucked into it somehow. Because they were ready to exploit primary fact--he was in Soviet Union. That was their convenient shield. At that point, American press and mass media started blaming everything on Soviet Union. My opinion is that it was all sewn together with white threads. To cover their tracks in this crime."

When asked how long it took for word to come from Moscow that they wanted the Oswald file, his reply was that Moscow Center's request came late that night of November 22. Igor Ivanovitch was given an order, and he told Stepan to take this file to Moscow. Gather it together and leave.

No preparations were necessary. Both men knew these materials well. Their file had been put away in archives, but that was located in their building. So it all went quickly. File had been properly processed, certified, and signed by Stepan personally before sending it to archives. Now, all he had to do was pack it up now in a bag and leave. He used one

gray mailbag, that kind which is used for sending large quantities of mail. Here, it was not even all that filled. Then Stepan flew to Moscow on November 23. Arrived at Lyubertsy Airport (for military planes), accompanied by another KGB man from Minsk who was armed. It was not a normal flight since Moscow wanted it quickly, but a military plane that carried official passengers had two seats open, and gave it to them. In Moscow, they were met by KGB representatives, and Stepan handed his file over to no one because it had been entrusted to him. They just got in a car and took off. It was not a police car, no signs, ordinary plates.

When asked if he was very nervous, he said, "I don't think so. I didn't feel any guilt. I was pure as crystal. What could I be afraid of? Of course, it was a tragic situation. But my being nervous, hands shaking, so forth-- why? I was flying to Center in Moscow with a clean conscience. I didn't have supernatural emotions or anything like that. Only thing I thought about was what sort of questions they would ask. I had only one answer: Oswald doesn't have any relation to our agency. What worried me was whether official people were going to meet me at Lyubertsy Airport because otherwise, how would I get to Moscow on public transport?"

But there were people who greeted him right away,

introduced themselves, showed identification, and their car took off. It was an overcast day but no rain, no snow. Gray.

They went to main building, to Lyubyanka, and were received by high-ups, maybe KGB Assistant Director. Stepan didn't know directors personally. It was his first visit to Moscow Center, and this building was full of labyrinths so he had to make sure to follow closely whoever was in front of him. They drove directly into building, and then went by foot. Through labyrinths. Narrow halls with a thin red carpet running entire length of each long hall.

Later he would go to Lubyanka many times on business trips, so he was able to figure out those hallways somewhat, but he never got it all down. You could go around in circles, walk and walk, get lost. If he had to get out of that building on his own he'd lose his way. He knew what it looked like from outside, a large building of yellow stone, but inside. . .strange with those narrow corridors. In Minsk, corridors were wide and you could walk more freely.

When he finally was led to appropriate office, several people were sitting there waiting for him. It was a reasonably-sized room, but there wasn't anything on their table. He doesn't know if it was American Division or some other department, but Stepan merely said, "According to your instructions, file on Oswald is now delivered." And they

said, "Good, just leave it here."

Their first question came: "Did you attempt to recruit Oswald?" He said, "You can cut off my head, but not only did we not try to, this very thought did not even enter our minds. Read these documents. It's very clear what direction we were working in. In accordance with your instructions."

He looked at them and noticed that they kind of sighed with relief. He wasn't worried about their believing him because Oswald documents made it clear; it was all reflected there. Exactly what kind of work they had been doing. You couldn't falsify something like that. These were original documents. Of course, Stepan was somewhat disturbed but he didn't have any large fears. He wouldn't exaggerate it. These documents spoke for themselves; they were precise. It was clearly visible in which direction they had been conducting their operation.

Afterwards, when slanders concerning Soviet Union kept circulating, he thought maybe Nikita Sergeivitch Khrushchev would give these files to US so Americans could read them and this matter be cleared up. All rumors would then burst like a soap bubble. But it didn't happen.

At his meeting, they invited him to sit down; they were polite; he remembers he even tried to stand up, and they said, "Sit down, sit down," but there was nothing on their table, no

tea. He doesn't recall whose picture was on the wall, maybe Dzherzhinsky's--no flag, that he would have noticed. And that room was brightly lit. The last thing they said was, "Leave this file. And thank you. Your mission is over. We'll organize a return ticket for you."

He took regular night train back to Minsk with same fellow he had taken off with. Before leaving, they strolled around Moscow and went shopping. He bought something for his children.

On his return trip, Stepan didn't have special thoughts. Absolutely most Oswald could have done in Minsk for CIA was to gather information in a contemplative way, not manifesting anything, not being an active agent. He could study Soviet way of life, and then disclose such information later in America. That version could not be excluded. Such could be applied to any foreigner who spent two years in Soviet Union. "So there was no contrition on our parts that Minsk KGB had missed something. Besides, when Oswald came to Minsk in January 1960, Kennedy wasn't yet elected president. So Oswald could not have been sent with that goal in mind."

If he had troubled thoughts on this train, therefore, it was not over his performance. He explored various scenarios; thoughts came into his head; various versions appeared, but in the end he said to himself, "Ach, it's time to go to bed."

Americans cooked it up. Let them figure it out."

When he got home, which was Sunday morning, it was midnight in Dallas, so Oswald would not be ambushed by Ruby for another ten hours, about six in the afternoon on Sunday in Minsk is when Stepan would receive that word. So when he got back Sunday morning around 8 o'clock, first thing he did was return home to shave. Leaving in such a hurry for Moscow, he had not brought his shaving kit. He washed, then had something to eat, and went straight to work where he reported to his superiors. People, of course, were talking about it in the building. Everyone was listening to radios. It was an event to attract attention of all. Even then, a lot of his colleagues did not know he had worked on this case, but their opinion was stirred up. After all, it was a shadow on Minsk.

People who knew Oswald immediately said Alik couldn't have done it. So said people who knew him.

Even many people who didn't have contact with Lee didn't believe it could be: We're getting along with America a little bit better, so now all this business?

They didn't do further analysis. Their file was in Moscow; they didn't have materials. Besides, no necessity. When the file came back from Moscow some twenty-seven years later, everything was there, nothing had been removed, everything was there as he recalled it, certified and signed

by him, his signatures from that time. Stepan was asked about Igor Ivanovitch's reaction, when he said, "Everyone blames me," and Stepan indicated that Igor was more sensitive than he was.

Yuri waves a finger at the interviewers, speaks of his father and mother as important people, yet when they received their big Soviet encyclopedic and an order came to cut out certain pages, his father would do it. Yuri's parents were not average people, but still were afraid of system. For example, Les should not mentioned in his father's private library, but his father's pages were not truthful. They never said that every day Yuri was taken go over to KGB. It was a nightmare.

That was what he started to understand life. Every day, he could tell you, he was called to come to KGB, terrible nightmare.

"When was that?" they asked.

He waved his hand. "First they said 'Confess, confess, confess. Are you an agent of Japan? Are you agent of CIA?' Instead of going to Medical Institute for his lessons every day he went instead to KGB every day except Sunday. Spent his whole working day there. Each time he went, he had to register himself; then, he had to sit in front of one person, Captain Nikolayev. This Captain would sit with a newspaper in

## Chapter 6 -- Veracity

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front of his face and he would pour so much hot coffee for Yuri that after this period Yuri couldn't stand coffee, vomited when he saw it. For a long time.

They asked: Was this after Lee was accused of killing Kennedy?

"No," said Yuri, "I don't believe Lee killed Kennedy. But yes, it happened after assassination."

The interviewers asked, "When Lee Harvey Oswald was in Minsk with Marina, did KGB ever bother you?"

"No," said Yuri. His parents were high people. Whenever Yuri did something that KGB did not like, they would call his mother and say "Your son got drunk" or "He is making love with a certain girl, the wrong girl." His family was watched because they were such high-ranked people.

But, after the assassination he was called into KGB. It happened in this manner: Every Institute had a resident officer from the Organs, in his case, Captain Nikolaev. This man invited him into his office at Medical Institute and had a conversation with him there. Conversations that followed, however, were in KGB building on Lenin Street.

First questions asked: What kind of relationship did you have with Lee Oswald? What did you talk to him about? Was he a spy? CIA? No one was taking notes, just two of them.

"Tete a tete," said Yuri.

This officer did not write his answers down. Yuri had heard rumors about KGB so naturally he feared he'd be arrested. After his first meeting, he went back home and told his parents, and they responded with fear. They didn't blame him; they started to discuss what protective measures could be taken. Wanted to use their friends.

Next interrogation from KGB was started on the following day when they called him at home and asked him to come over to their main building. He went alone. He bought a pack of cigarettes and walked in.

By their entrance was a booth with a window and there he gave his name and showed his passport and Nikolaev came down in civilian clothes and took him back to his office where they sat at a table. He answered again exact same questions he had been asked at his Institute, and thinks this new room may have been bugged, although Nikolaev did take notes. Their meeting consumed six or seven hours and every day after that they met except on Sundays. It was now Yuri's job to go to main KGB building on Lenin Street.

He smoked cigarettes. There were always Prima cigarettes on Nikolaev's table, and coffee. Sometimes when Yuri arrived, Nikolaev didn't even speak to him. Merely read his newspaper while Yuri sat before him. They would give him an hour for lunch. Then he had to come back. He didn't sign anything.

They told him to, but he never signed one paper. His parents told him not to. This officer said, "Don't want to sign? Don't. Punishment will be through a court; they will decide how to punish you." Of course, at that time you didn't need a lot to be punished. He was accused of being a Japanese spy. He didn't know why they'd choose that except that Oswald had been in Japan. There were no Japanese in Minsk.

Since he went every day to KGB office except Sunday, he stopped going to his Institute. Of course, education wasn't something he worried about. Not at this time. And every day when he went home he told his parents what had happened, and every day they listened and gave advice. They thought that maybe some of his friends were also being questioned but he didn't worry too much about that. When you spend your entire day at KGB, you don't think about your friends. He had even been warned by KGB not to talk to anybody and he assumed it was equal for them.

These interrogations went on for a few months--same time, same man, same room. It was a big stone on his shoulder. Only picture in this office was a portrait of Felix Dzherzhinsky. Plus a safe, table, chairs. That's it. A window through which he could see outside street. And every day he went with a fear that this would be the day they would not let him leave. He had a signal to give his parents. If

he was not home by a certain hour. . .

His mother worked at Academy of Science. She was doing secret work on space. So there were KGB colonels who worked in association with her. His mother was always trying to use such a connection to save him. During this period, his parents were worried much more about him than over their own careers. And his father kept telling him not to sign anything because among such papers usually there is a special paper which states that you are not allowed to leave your city. An idea came to his father that he could leave, and his father told him, "Just go. Don't take things, don't take suitcases, just go the way you are in your own suit, but take a night train to Moscow."

They gave him lots of money, several thousand rubles, and he went to Minsk train station and jumped on a Moscow train without a ticket and paid the conductor. In Moscow, he never lived for more than two days in any hotel; changed his residence every two days. He had many relatives in Moscow, and many good friends, but he never went to visit any of them. He had arrived with no more than what he was wearing on his back, and he never worried about growing a beard or dyeing his hair.

Back in Minsk, they called his parents who told KGB they didn't know where he was. He doesn't know how many times KGB

called his parents but it was many times. Neither his father nor mother were taken in, however, to be questioned.

In Russia all you needed to travel was your passport, said Yuri, so on each night that he went to a new hotel, he handed over his passport, and by morning he'd be given it back. Then, in two days, no more, he would move.

For two months, he did that. He spent each day in museums or the movies and enjoyed his time. He was free, he was not under arrest. He never called home, never wrote a letter. He had fear inside him, of course. It was uncertainty. So he only made new acquaintances. Because it was safer, he never took a single room. That would attract attention. Better to share with strangers.

Then, on December 31, 1963, he decided to go back to Minsk. He still had a lot of money but he also had loneliness and desire for one good New Year's Eve. He bought an airplane ticket and flew to Minsk, took a taxi, came home. His parents were pleasantly surprised and happy. He hadn't called in all that time.

They told him that his file was closed, whole investigation was closed. He thinks maybe some people in KGB had wanted to make a career on his mother, his father and himself, wanted to damage his parents through him. But it hadn't worked.

In fact, it damaged Nikolaev, that man who interrogated him. His mother told him about it and his father: His parents had gone to the highest people in Byelorussia.

Yuri saw this Nikolaev again, fifteen years later on Lenin Street. Nikolaev smiled at Yuri, came up to him and said "How are you?" as if nothing had happened. As if after fifteen years, best friends had met. Yuri was so taken aback that someone could behave that way he just turned away, was trying not to spit into his face. Nikolaev even asked him to obtain some medicine for him.

The interviewers were puzzled. Yuri's story had taken them around one turn too many. KGB had interrogated him all day long, six days a week, for months? What had they talked to him about? They encouraged him to tell his story again. In more depth.

Underneath all of this, Yuri said, was under-text. It concerned Komsomol. Rivalries in Komsomol. To which he had not wished to belong. For a long time he was the only medical student not a member of Komsomol. He hadn't wanted to make some big career. Other people considered it essential, however. They talked to him about it. But he didn't join

until he could find no more excuses.

There were really two groups studying then at Medical Institute: First were young men who had already done military service, and were now Komsomol members. They took all high student positions available. Then there were those like himself who had come into Medical Institute from high school and so had been in severe competition to pass entrance exams. Therefore, they could study better. They were, you might say, more Westernized. So, people from that first group who had done military service tried to humiliate them.

For example: When students went out in summer to work on a collective farm bringing in potato crop, these Komsomol people said that Yuri, Kostya Bondarin, and Sasha Piskalev had stolen a large piece of salo--which was high grade pork fat and very tasty with pickled cucumbers, bread and vodka. A thin slice of salo coated your stomach. You could drink more.

Salo cost very little, but Komsomol acted as if such an act was highly irresponsible activity. It was built up into one big moral issue--Yuri and other boys are educated, cream of their country with best chance for future, educated free and with stipend from taxes of other people and so their future belongs to the country, not themselves. Such stealing brought moral damage to Medical Institute--one piece of fat, five centimeters by ten centimeters by ten centimeters! And

who has such negative attitude, Yuri asked? Same Komsomol members from military! It was disgusting.

Now, when Yuri was brought up before a Komsomol meeting at Medical Institute, he had his feelings treated with contempt. "They mixed me up with dirt." Called him bad names: Anti-Soviet person, crooked, a thief--everything bad which can be said about a person. And his friends Konstantin Bondarin and Sasha Piskalev were also mixed with such dirt.

Since Yuri's father was vice president of this Institute, all such dirt passed through Yuri and went on to his father. After all, Yuri was not only one of golden young people, but so much so as son of Merezhinsky, President of Science, and here was Konstantin Bondarin whose uncle was Chairman of Academy of Science. But at this same time, opposed to them were young people from Soviet army who had no intellect, people whose best entertainment was to get drunk in a hostel, get on their knees to fart and put a match to their ass--lightning! This was very best entertainment in their life. These were Komsomol leaders at his Institute. Their judges concerning theft of salo! "Now there was a chance for them to take revenge on us."

On their next meeting, the American interviewers went through Yuri's story again. Nikolaev who worked at Minsk Medical Institute in Third Department for KGB had asked Yuri on the second or third day after President Kennedy's assassination to come to his office--that began this process of going to the main office of KGB for a whole day, every day. That went on for two months. This, of course, created a discrepancy in time. The interviewers pointed out that since Kennedy's assassination was November 22, 1963, Yuri must have been called in perhaps on the 24th or the 25th of November, and so if he had gone to KGB offices for two months, it would have been well after New Year's before he went to Moscow. And if he stayed in Moscow for two months, it would have been close to three months after New Year's before he came home.

Now, Yuri decided that KGB had begun to interrogate him before any assassination. Oswald had gone back to America in June of 1962, which would be a whole year and more before August of '63. So, now he was stating that in first days of August in 1963 he did come back from vacation after his embarrassment of helping steal a little pork fat, and they interrogated him for a very long time, for two months, until October, he would guess. Then, after the assassination, he went to Moscow. In fact, he now remembers every detail of how he left town. He was with friends and they were all drunk,

and he was drunk, and they went to Minsk railway station to see somebody else off on another train to another place. But next train was for Moscow, so he got on. And slept on third bench, in a third-class car. There was a first bench for sleeping, and a second one above, and then third one high up where mattresses and pillows were kept. He slept there.

It had been planned he should go away. His father helped him. His father was quite a guy. In early days, when Stalin ate a meal, his father had to eat with him: He was the man chosen to be in charge of Stalin's food. If Soviet leader took one piece of meat, his father had to take two. His father's name was Mikhail Fedorovich, and he had learned a lot, so he also knew how to run away from KGB. His father had once been on a business trip but they had taken him off his train and put him in a line. He had asked, "What is this line about?" and they said, "Here is where they take away your Party membership."

His father said: "You didn't give me my Party membership and you're not going to take it away."

That very same day Mikhail Fedorovitch took his wife and son and went away to the Urals. Years later on a day when his father was in his own office and his mother was standing next to him, it happened that officers came in and said to Yuri's mother, "Good news for your family. Here are official papers

proving that your husband was shot for nothing back then." They didn't even know Mikhail Fedorovitch had not only not been shot, but was standing there. Obviously, Soviet system was like an organism in which different processes, opposed processes, were happening at same time. No central core to system. Not really. So, it was his father's fear that if Yuri stayed in Minsk, they would select him as a victim. But if Yuri went away--bureaucratically speaking, they would be soon be paralyzed. It was a big machine, and you could exploit it.

Now, as for once he was in Moscow, he could say that when you were on the run you didn't care whether your roommate for one night was simpatico or zhlob. Main thing was that your roommate should not be a danger. But Yuri was lucky. He met good people. If someone asked him why he was there, he just said, "vacation." He was a student. He was young. He was big, he looked respectable, so no one was interested in a young student. Of course, he had to say he was from Minsk because of his passport.

Nor was he afraid of being robbed. At each railway station, they had deposit boxes. For 15 kopecks a day, he would leave most of his money in a locker. While he was in Moscow, he stayed at Peking Hotel, Leningrad Hotel, the Ukraine, the Exhibition--everywhere. If you took a map of

Moscow he would live two days in one hotel, then he would take a taxi cross-town. No system--he would just go far away from his last hotel. He stayed at Kievskaya, near Kievskii Railroad Station, at Volga Hotel. In those days you could get into any hotel, it was easy.

Nor were rates bad. At a restaurant you could drink vodka and eat expensively or just take a side of cabbage. Of course, he didn't count his money; he had so many rubles he never looked at how much he spent. It was cheap. One meat pie cost 7 kopecks. With good meat and beer, 22 kopecks. Movies, 20 kopecks. Everything was kopecks, not rubles. A bottle of vodka, 2 rubles, 87 kopecks. If you had a buddy, you could go to hotel dining room or hotel canteen, and sit together without taking food. There was bread free of charge, then put mustard on bread, plus pepper, salt, then pour a glass of vodka, have more bread--it was a meal.

He had no close calls in Moscow and he didn't worry about it, but he was homesick. He was young, and it was hard to say he was exactly having a good time. Exciting but empty. Not, however, a problem with girls--he didn't have to find his pennies in garbage. Never paid for a woman. He was young, good-looking, he knew how to talk. If he liked a woman, he invited her to a restaurant. Beautiful women were everywhere plus shop girls. Then he flew back to Minsk on New Year's to

see his parents. At that time he could drink a whole case of vodka, six bottles. Today he can only drink two bottles of vodka, as he had done today. Two bottles before he came to this interview.

After he saw his parents on New Year's Eve, he went to Medical Institute hospital and spent his night there. By morning, he left. Everybody was drunk and it was New Year's and he was full of nostalgia. In those days he and a buddy could drink their first bottle of vodka in 15 minutes, second in 20, third in 30--85 minutes to the max for 3 liters. Now at this stage, he can still drink a lot of booze, but not like then.

Whatever was to be made of his story? On their last interview with Yuri Merezhinsky, his mother, Lidia Semonova, who has the title of Honorable Scientist of Byelorussian Republic and looks like a Supreme Court Justice, like Ruth Bader Ginsberg, for example, was present.

Lidia Semonova works on marrow chemistry and radio-biology, and she was proud of having travelled on scientific business trips to a number of countries and to international congresses, even through America. When she came back to Minsk

in 1961, she was asked to read a lecture.

At this point Yuri cut in to say "It wasn't like that at all," and his mother said: "Don't interrupt me."

She went on to say: "I came back from the United States and they asked me to share my impressions. They asked me to tell stories not only about United Nations but my visits to different universities." A great many students wished her to speak. She thinks it was those students who even arranged to have her lecture at Trade Union Palace.

After her lecture, Oswald, as one member of her audience, came over to say that he was an American. Yuri then asked if this American could come home with them. That's how he visited their apartment on March 17, 1961.

She didn't have a first impression of him--she was busy talking after her lecture. He was just a young man, a boy really.

At that time she was working on radiation problems. They did research on a nuclear reactor with cobalt sources and X-ray sources and she was laboratory head at Institute of Physiology in Academy of Science. She had a large group under her, about 30 people, her project was under closely-held security like all other subjects in radiation. After Oswald appeared at her house, the Organs soon told her it was undesirable and inadmissable that he should come again. Such

sentiments were also passed on to her husband, Professor Merezhinsky. Their house was not a house where just any unknown foreigner could come. They were doing research on constructing their own nuclear reactor.

When the interviewers asked her about Yuri's trip to Moscow, she told them that he had gone in the fall of 1963. He had been ill, and had stayed in a hospital there.

Yuri interrupted at this point to say: "Mother, I ask you. . .the truthful way of life. Please. Forget that you are a Party member. Don't lie."

Mother: "Then, I won't talk. I am saying how it was."

"Say the truth," said Yuri.

"I'll say the truth," said his mother. "There was an unpleasant story from the farm, an unpleasant story. . . Komsomol had a case where these three boys should be excluded from Medical Institute."

It was not enough reason, Lidia Semenova said, to try to expel Yuri from Medical Institute. She doesn't exclude that it was connected with his acquaintance with Oswald, for exact same reason that she and her husband were warned not to let Oswald into their house. But what has to be understood is that at this farm, Yuri had been sick with a temperature of 39 degrees Centigrade. Inexplicable temperature. Since their daughter already had TB, obvious question was whether he now

had it. No doctor in Minsk Hospital, however, was ready to diagnose what Yuri had. Since his parents were so high in medicine, these Minsk doctors did not wish to make some serious mistake. A leading doctor at Minsk TB Institute said Yuri's glands were affected but maybe he didn't have TB, and if they took Yuri into Minsk TB Institute, where they had many contagious cases of TB, he might catch it. They told him it was better to go to TB Hospital at Second Moscow Institute. So Yuri spent four months that fall in Moscow, fall of 1963, and was given a leave from his Institute in Minsk. When he came back, in order to prevent more talk, Yuri's mother made her son a lab assistant at her own Institute and he worked there for a while under her colleague.

Yuri: Mother, be truthful at least once in your life.

Mother: I'm saying only truth.

Yuri: Throw away your Party card.

Mother: It has nothing to do with my Party card.

Yuri: You have Party card in your brains. Why did I leave for Moscow? Because I was ill?

Mother: You were ill.

Yuri: No doctor in Minsk put a diagnosis to me except your doctor.

Mother: They were afraid to put a diagnosis to you because you were a professor's son. So I went to Moscow.

Lidia Semonova would explain: She didn't want to have to listen to medical opinions from boy and girl doctors in Minsk. She took Yuri to Moscow because she had a lot of friends there, scientists and professors.

She would explain further: this man, Nikolaev, had participated in a situation against Yuri because he was also participating in a campaign against her husband. The energy of Nikolaev was not directed against Yuri so much as against her husband. Yuri had been used. Which was one more reason Yuri had gone to Moscow--so he wouldn't be expelled from his Medical Institute because of his trouble with that fat in summer of 1963. Once he was in Moscow, Nikolaev and his people couldn't hurt Yuri, and so couldn't hurt her husband. Since this also coincided with Yuri's inflammation of his lungs, their move had logic. She could say that because Yuri had caught this inflammation, it did help her to send him to Moscow, but she was also trying to find a doctor who could help him. Also, she didn't want him to be expelled from his university. She was well aware of all that trouble then.

Being a nuclear researcher, she had her own KGB people to inform her, a colonel, for example, KGB people who were on her side. Other Colonels, too. They reported to her everything that was happening in her son's Medical Institute. Therefore, she knew even more than her husband was able to learn; she was close to her Colonel because he would go abroad with her when she went to international congresses and he always alerted her: "Lidia Semonova, keep in mind that this particular person travelling with you is useful. If you run into any problems, go to him." So she always knew how to call on necessary KGB man or woman. So, she also knew what was going on with Yuri. Whenever trouble started, her Black Colonel was always telling her, "Lidia Semonova, please keep in mind, don't let Yuri see this person. It is better he does not meet with them." They told her about Oswald and how it was better Yuri didn't meet with him. They talked to her about Yuri's different relations with different women. They didn't advertise it, but she knew all about Marina and her bad biography in Leningrad. Marina was a beautiful girl, and Lidia Semonova was worried that Yuri should be with her, because she had been warned that this relationship should be stopped.

When, in early fall of 1963, she heard that Yuri was going to be expelled from his Institute, she went to City

Committee of the Party and told its Secretary that there was a campaign in Minsk Medical Institute against her son and a retired colonel was called in, and a few days later, told her, "Lidia Semonova, don't do anything with these doctors here. Go to Moscow." And Yuri's mother used a slang expression, motaite. "'Skip town,' they said. 'It's not advisable to deal with it here. If Yuri is unhealthy, get an official consultation in Moscow. Skip town; don't waste your time here. Do not put yourself in position to bow in front of all these professors who will always be afraid to say anything. Get out of town and take Yuri with you. Smatyvat---take off!'"

So from Minsk she made a reservation in Academy Hotel in Moscow, booked a room for her son and herself, a hotel where academicians of all republics go. She made her reservation from Minsk and once in Moscow took him to a proper hospital where he stayed for four months and by then this problem with Nikolaev was solved by itself. A paper was sent from Second Medical Institute in Moscow saying that Yuri Merezhinsky was staying there for medical treatment. He had had such and such a diagnosis and needed an academic vacation.

Yuri: Do you remember how I was living in Moscow?

Mother: I lived with you in Academicheskaya Hotel.

Yuri: Don't do this, Mother. Once in your life be honest. I can't stand it. I'll leave.

Mother: I told everything as it was.

Yuri: Yes, of course, long live the Communist Party.

Mother: It has nothing to do with Stalin and the Party.

Yuri: Lidia Semonova, have you read a simple thing, "Gulag Archipelago?"

Mother: No, I didn't.

Yuri: I read it when it was distributed in manuscript.

Mother: Then Father read it.

Yuri: If you read article about Gulag, you'll know better about Soviet reality. I read it when it was not published. Today we have two copies and you don't want to read it.

Mother: No, I don't want. You know, it all passed through our life when they started arresting people. And we ran away from Kiev. . . Don't you remember? The wave went through us. I'll tell you when I joined the Party, I joined it in 1960.

Yuri: Why, Lidia Semonova?

Mother: Why? You remember? I remember. Can't you understand that my position forced them to make me join the Party? They had a special direction for me.

Yuri: Why does all the world hate Russians, Communist revolutionaries. . .

Mother: OK, you hate me. So what can I do?

Yuri: And you hate me. That's why I am telling.

Mother: Why would I hate you?

Yuri: No. I know that she hates me.

Mother: You ought to be ashamed to say so! . . .

She was old and he was ill. At fifty years of age, still handsome, he was bent over and coughing, curled around his glass of vodka like a leaf seared by heat. And she was in her seventies. Together they fought. Bitterly, and with all the rage of young love that only a mother and son can feel at the outrageous amount of control each can exercise on the other.

## Chapter 7 -- Elegy

It was hard for her to remember details. After Warren Commission--everybody accused her of lying, but she was just a human being and if she was lying, it was honestly--because she was floating over foggy substance. Memories kept coming, going. Maybe it was self-protective mechanism. Could keep her psyche from collapsing. Don't you think so? People were saying to her, "You're so strong"--stupid baloney. It was not heroic effort. It is in every one of us--you just dare not to die, that's all. Nothing heroic.

Now that she is 52, Marina would agree that one doesn't need to approach her as good woman, bad woman, villainess, heroine, someone who's been treated unfairly, someone treated too well. "You can be combination of all in one person," said Marina, "one is villain, and next time a hero.

"If we go through Lee's character, I myself would like to find out: who is he? Was he really that mean of a person?--which I think he was--but it's a hard road for me to take

because I do not understand this person. I do not want to understand him. I have to tell you in advance that, as far as Lee's concerned--I don't like him. I'm mad at him. Very mad at him, yes. When a person dies, people have such anger. They loved their husband or wife for a long time so they say, 'How dare you to die on me?' OK, but that's not a reason for me. For me, it's 'How dare you to abandon me? And in circumstances like that? I mean, you die but I'm still here licking my wounds.'

"All the same, I'm definitely sure he didn't do it. But I'm still mad at him. Even if he's innocent. Because he shouldn't have been married, he shouldn't involve a wife and family if he was playing those kinds of games. Yes, I do believe he was on a mission, and maybe even when he went to Russia, but first I have to figure out what he was doing here. It wasn't just happening here all of a sudden in America. It's a continuation. In my mind, I'm not trying to convince you or American public--I have to resolve it for myself. But I think he was sent over to Russia, maybe. I think so. I have no proof. I have nothing.

"I asked myself yesterday, why did I marry Lee? Just analyzing myself. And that can drive you nuts. Sometimes over-analyze yourself too because sometimes things just don't have a reason at all. Say just that I was very curious about

life. Why this flower is yellow, why it's raining--I was curious. And I think Lee was curious about life too. I think he was more human than has been portrayed. And I'm not trying to make an angel out of him. I think he was curious about human conditions maybe. I was interested in him because he was different. So he'd broaden my horizon. With other men, the ones I want had been taken or didn't want me.

"In those days, you could get BBC, but not Voice of America. Here was a human being who could tell me all about that. World had to be bigger than Iron Curtain and I just wanted to know. When they told me that by Soviet constitution you're free, I knew in reality, wasn't so. Because they told me, no, you cannot go abroad. So I said, I'll go; that's my world."

Every time she watches a film and sees an actor playing Lee, this actor is nothing like Lee whatsoever. Actor does turn his head like Lee, or waves his hair same way, but American public knows Lee only from a few photographs, and that is what this actor is copying. So that is how public perceives him as they say, "That's Kennedy's murderer." They see him with his bruises. She still sees another Lee, fellow that she lived with, but she does not know the psyche of that fellow. She still has it to discover.

If, at times, when he was so cruel to her, she'd seen him

as a brute, there were other times when he let himself go--he could be nice and tender. There are tender moments she salvaged. That's all it is. Just one little segment of Lee. For a short while. She does not know that man who came to her. Very secretive. Like when she asked him about his scar on his arm, well, he didn't want to talk about it. So she understood it was a sensitive part of this man's life. But when you're freshly married, it's a new relationship, brand new, and you don't go around insulting your mate asking questions. Not if they want privacy respected. She would agree that until there is some idea what Lee's nature was like, there is not much use in trying to figure out whether he was innocent or guilty. She would agree completely. If you want to know the character of a person that history has to deal with, well, she wants to contribute some little--she can't find the word--wants to shed some light on--she cannot finish the sentence. Maybe, she says, she wants to make his personality more alive. More than what we know from documents.

The most humiliating thing that ever happened to Marina was her walk from car to police station. After they told her

Lee was arrested, when police took her out of her car, she had to walk--she didn't know how far; it looked forever. Maybe it was some short distance, she does not recall. But it was like sleepwalking. Such shame--most degrading, humiliating thing ever in her life. Just from car to building. Reporters shout and it's nothing she can understand. She wishes earth would open and swallow her. She even believed Lee had committed this crime because she believed authorities. She blindly believed them. They had made an arrest, so what else could there be? She was from Russia. When that black wagon came (what in Russia they call voron -- black crow) you are guilty, automatically guilty. Then she walked through a tunnel jammed with reporters. She couldn't believe it. This nightmare had herself in it--she was playing a sleepwalker.

All of a sudden, someone shouted to her in Russian, "Mrs. Oswald, did your husband kill American President?" That Russian voice kind of woke her up. Fortunately. She was feeling as if she could have drifted out of everything forever.

She had crossed the ocean for him. She thought they'd make it eventually, even if he was cold to her in America, and she was sometimes starving. Sometimes she even had nothing to feed their baby. And he had abandoned her with this reputation--wife of an assassin; man who killed the president:

She not only had to live with that but go back into it again and again.

Her interviewer asked how she would have felt if a truck had hit Alik in Minsk--if she had been his widow then, would she have thought of him fondly? She said yes. She would have thought it was just a stormy beginning but they were breaking ground that they would later stand on in their marriage. After all, she took a chance on him by going to America even though she was afraid of him already, even if little by little, she had been learning that she did not know, never knew, where she stood with him. A see-saw. Down, then hope, down again. But at least you could hope.

On the last Thursday when he visited at her friend, Ruth Paine's house, where Marina was staying in Irving, Texas, on the night before that Friday morning when the assassination took place, he kept making advances to her in bed, but she played hard to get. He had been staying at a rooming house on North Beckley Street in Dallas--they were sort of separated except for his visits to Ruth Paine's house--and when Marina had telephoned that address to ask for Lee Oswald, they did not know who such a person was. She could not forgive him for

lying to her one more time. He had been calling himself O.H. Lee. He had promised he wouldn't lie any more but he had. O.H. Lee! She said to herself, "No, if I don't teach you this lesson right now, this lying will continue, so don't butter up to me." She tried to discipline him.

Afterward, after the assassination, she thought, what if he really wanted to be close to me then? What if I put him in a bad mood? It torments her. What if she had made love to him that last night instead of refusing him? But maybe she is the wrong person to talk to about that, because she is, she would say, not a sexual person. Sensuous but not sensual. She didn't like sex, she would say. She was not expert, nor could she tell you how grandiose something had been because she'd never experienced that. No Beethoven or Tschaikovsky for her, not in bed, no grand finale.

After the assassination, there were times when she was close to ending her life. She wondered when her breaking point would come. She had crossed an ocean for nothing. Still, she tried in best way she knew how to survive. It was a very lonely life. Every day.

Marina: I look at America, it's all wonderful. But you go to the damn grocery store and it's 200 varieties of cereal. And basically it's only oats, corn, how many things. . . So just somebody going to make extra million off that. . . It's so unnecessary. If that's progress, if that's abundance, how stupid for us to want it. 300 bags of poison, maybe only two or three good. And if you go with kids, they're always saying, I want that. They don't know what is in it but they want it. So that kind of progress I don't think we should strive for. To me, that makes me nobody. And I love money to the point that it buys you food and shelter, you can give education, you know, health insurance. I have nothing against money if people have millions and use it for good deeds, but when money combines a power to oppress somebody or do wrong with it. . . Or I can buy 300 dresses. What in heck I need 300 dresses? Do I make any sense to you? Or I'm just complaining?

Interviewer: No, I agree with you.

Marina: In Texas, sun is very intense for me and very harsh, very bright. I love moon. It's cool and it's shiny and that's my melancholy period. . . And some people are shining and they are bright and they burn. You know what I mean? I'm not sun. I'm a moon. . .

When Priscilla Johnson did that book with her, Marina had told her she was a virgin on her wedding day. But that was to protect her daughters. And to protect her own reputation as well. Why make herself dirty? She had already been dirtied

enough by Lee.

All her life Marina had been called names. When she was a child people would be angry with her because she was a wild child, or she was called bastard. Later, when she grew up, she was called prostitute. Then, when she was already married, she was called wife of killer of the president. So sometimes she felt as if all her life people had been calling her by bad names, and they were the wrong names.

Out in Irving, after their last full weekend together, before he visited that last time on Thursday, November 21, they had an argument about Ruth's address book. His name had been listed in it and he was afraid that if FBI came again, they would look through that book and copy his phone number. He wanted Marina to cross his number out, or make certain it was illegible. She said, "I can't. It's not my book. I have no right to touch it." They fought. He kept telling her it was a question of his own privacy from the FBI. But she wouldn't listen. It was Ruth's book. He kept saying that address book would enable the FBI to find him at his rooming house. She kept saying it was Ruth's book.

He kept saying, "Just give me one more week and we can

look for an apartment. It won't be long before we can be together as a family once more."

Although she would not allow him to feel it, she was actually in a good mood. She felt that maybe they would be able to live together again as a family.

When they would go window shopping together, he would talk about what he would like to buy on that day he could really furnish a house for them. She was surprised: he didn't have bad taste. Some things he chose--if he could have afforded them--were nice. She would keep insisting that basically he cared for humanity. Might not be a person who liked individuals particularly but he was concerned: It was important that the world not go to hell.

When they asked Marina what she now believed had happened on that day in November, thirty years ago--not to prove anything, just what she thought had happened--she would say maybe he knew he would have to go into hiding. But things didn't turn out how he thought they would. She would assume he was involved in something like an underground and Lee had to be some kind of chameleon, show this face and that face because his life was in danger. She thought he'd have to be in hiding for quite a while. She didn't think he was pro-Castro, really, or pro-Communist, she even thinks he liked America pretty well: under it all, he liked America. And she

didn't think he wanted to climb very high above the horizon-- maybe a job that was not manual but mental. He wanted something that would give credit to his own intelligence. He was not a stupid man. He played with people so well and made all those charades and left all those clues--he wasn't a stupid man. She had the feeling that maybe he knew something was up that day and--she didn't know who "they" were--but "they" had said to him, "This is the last thing you have to do for us." She had that feeling. It was because of the reassurance he had given her that everything was going to be OK: "Just hold on for one or two more weeks"--that was what he'd said at Ruth's on his last two visits. He was making plans. Everything would be fine; they'd be together. Even this last time when she was angry at him, he told her that he missed her and that he wanted to talk and everything would be OK. She said, "I'm not going back with you. Are you playing games with me?"

She kept telling him that she wanted him to earn money for his children and he would tell her she was too bourgeois and Fort Worth Russian people had spoiled her. That was not fair. She never envied anybody because they had a bigger house. She did not expect Lee to bring Oswald family up to standard of living that Fort Worth Russian people had--no, you had to have your own standard. Worst of her pain was that

maybe she loved him more by the end than in their beginning.

Yes, even with all that had happened.

Because in beginning you were involved with love and then for a while it's complete dependence and then you try to help this other person, when you and he are two lost souls.

She doesn't know if they would have stayed married, but still, Lee was the person she would have liked to have been able to make it with. Through life. There was some goodness in him to hold onto and on that last unexpected Thursday when he came to visit, he was kind of sheepish because of his lie, that big lie he had told, O.H. Lee.

And when he came in, he said "Hi," nice and everything, and she said, "What are you doing here?"--cold and rude.

Later, she couldn't understand why he had involved himself in all that he had. Maybe he didn't love her, maybe he cared less for her, but he loved his children. He loved his little girls enormously and even 30 years later she heard a story about how when he lived on North Beckley, he was playing with grandchildren of the woman who ran this rooming, his last rooming-house. These children called him Mr. Lee. He asked one of those boys "Are you a good boy?" and that kid shook his head, said "Uh-unh," and Lee said, "Never be so bad

that you hurt somebody." This kid was now grownup, but he still remembered that, still told that story.

Maybe something would be definitely solved in her life to show he was guilty or innocent. She knows, she told her interviewers that she would not want to talk about the year after Lee was killed.

That year somebody was always taking care of her kids and herself, and she was always between one testimony and another --Warren Commission, FBI. She doesn't know what she said to them or what she didn't say--she does not recall. It's like a long sleep. People would tell her, "You said this, you said that"--she doesn't recall. It was coma.

Grieving was just beginning to happen now! Maybe! Because she had never really had such a process. That's why she was talking now; she was doing it for all these years of being numb with pain always there. Anger at Lee, anger at media, anger at American government for not being honest. Who was pulling all these strings?

She thinks Lee did know about the assassination of Kennedy. That's her speculation. They told him they would put blame on him temporarily, they would arrest him and then

they would get him out. He didn't have to do the shooting.

Let's assume, she said, someone else on the 6th floor. Because he was on that second floor. She doesn't know what they told him but it's possible they said it would be temporary trouble. She cannot comprehend in her mind that Lee willingly involved himself in shooting President Kennedy. No way.

She thinks maybe he was like a man who pretends to be a drug dealer, even buys and sells so that in time drug people will trust him. Meantime he is feeding his information to someone else undercover. So they tell him it was a very big mission. She doesn't know what kind of mission, but is sure he was not all by himself.

The morning when he left, Friday morning, November 22, 1963, she did not get up with him when he arose very early. She tried to, but he said, "Don't worry. Go back to sleep." And he kissed her goodbye and left quietly.

She had gone to bed after him the night before. He was already asleep or pretended to be. Then, because she woke up in the middle of the night to check on baby Rachel, she took a look at him. Only illumination was by nightlight, very low.

But Lee scared her. It was like he had died. She said to herself, "Is he alive?" He looked so still. Absolutely gone. She couldn't hear his breath. She had to bend over very closely to feel his breathing--she thought he had died on her. Isn't that funny? For all these years she remembered saying, "Thank goodness he's alive." And he made no sound all night and never moved.

In the morning, he must have made himself coffee, picked up a sandwich, and went off to work.

## EPILOGUE

## EPILOGUE

## Chapter 1. A word to the reader

One stimulus to the writing of this book was an offer from the Belarus KGB to allow a look into their files on Oswald. While it proved to be less of a purview than promised, it was still an authorial equivalent of an Oklahoma land-grab to be able to move into such a large and hitherto unrecorded part of Oswald's life. As a corollary to such researches, the termination of the Cold War encouraged people who would not or could not have spoken to us even ten years earlier to free up habits of discretion as old as themselves and as ancient as the Russian centuries. So we had interviews that gave us a reasonable portrait of Alik and Marina and of their lives in Minsk.

Then, an old hunger came alive. One wished to come closer to an answer: Did Oswald kill President Kennedy? To anyone who has read this far, the only answer that Minsk provides is that one cannot tell as yet--much too much of Oswald's story lies ahead.

Of course, the task in Minsk was not to look for such answers. We are dealing, after all, with the largest mountain of mystery in the Twentieth Century, a metaphor first employed when approaching KGB officers for interviews. Why are you here, they would ask; what do you expect to find? And for reply one could only say that this was not a search for a smoking gun, not in Russia, no, it was more one's aim to come close enough to this Russian period of Oswald's life to be able to set up a base camp on the slopes of such a mystery. To the degree that one could have a comprehensible picture of Oswald as he lived in Russia--a portrait drawn by Russian eyes--one might be contributing to a future attempt by others on the summit of the mountain. So, our venture might prove of real use. Oswald was forever being put on a bed of Procrustes to fit the dimensions of a plot, or was portrayed as a patsy to fit the dimensions of someone else's plot. In this welter of scenarios, much of our understanding of what did happen might be improved by coming to know Oswald better; we could then, at least, avoid plots he did not fit. Before we can understand a murderer--if he is one--we must discover his motive. But to find the motive we do well to encounter the man. In Oswald's case, that is no simple task. How many young men are as timid and bold, tortured and complex, as hysterical yet single-minded as Lee Harvey Oswald?

If this metaphor of a base camp proved useful to explain our presence to those KGB officers who did not look upon us with the bemused suspicion that we were representatives of some new exotic venture of the CIA, it can also be admitted that it proved useful to us, first as a metaphor, and then it became real. Few who build a base camp have no ambitions on the summit.

The book on Oswald in Minsk is done, but questions remain. One had been perhaps too close to Oswald's life. Working through the fall of 1992 and the winter of 1993 in Minsk with but short trips back to the U.S., or further east to Moscow, consuming nearly a half-year in interviews and literary cohabitation with the first 15 volumes of the House Select Committee on Assassinations and 26 of the Warren Commission Hearings, one's own thoughts had to reach the surface after so much immersion in a subject, precisely those thoughts without proof or witness on what might have happened --speculation, in short.

Of course, the impulse to speculate beyond one's facts is a product of the conceit that a half year of intense research will inevitably produce--one begins to feel that one understands Oswald fairly well. After all, to know a man is to be able to do no more than predict what he will do next even if you do not have a clue as to why he does it. To

understand a person, however, is to have comprehension of his reasons for action. One acquired the conceit that one understood Oswald.

Hence, this epilogue, this other book. Naturally, to understand Lee Oswald more definitively, one could wish for more material on his childhood, adolescence and Marine Corps service, but unhappily no major biography of him exists. Our best resource--despite all its torpid stretches--remains the Warren Commission Hearings. They are filled with insights concerning his young life (at least, if one does the work to locate such passages), and it is startling to discover as one pans these government volumes for bits of gold, how much gleams in the sludge. One can make a career as a minimalist writer (of the second rank) by laying out these testimonies in two and three-page narratives.

An attempt to approach the first nineteen years of Lee Harvey Oswald's life seems in order then--we can appreciate it all the more for our knowledge of his behavior in Minsk. Indeed, to encompass his childhood in Texas, New York, and New Orleans and his young manhood in the Marine Corps is not difficult. An author need occupy the foreground no more than would a literary usher who makes certain that all transcripts are assigned to their proper pew.

To the abbreviated biography, then, of his youth. For

any reader who feels that he or she has invested time in a long work, and enough reading is enough--I can only assure them that their book is done. This epilogue is an author's self-indulgence, and can be ignored as such, indeed once we have traversed Oswald's early years, the remainder of the epilogue will be obliged to wander out into those Indian territories of speculation where every fact can turn into an ambush.

After all, Oswald was a secret agent. There is no doubt about that. The only question was whether he was working for any more established service than the power centers in the privacy of his mind. At the least, we can be certain he was spying on the world in order to report to himself. For he is one of the principalities of his universe, or so, at least, he is forever being assured by his ego. We will understand the proportions of Oswald's psychology better when we comprehend that ego has analogies to architecture. Most egos are comparable to a peasant's hut, a trailer home, or a ranch house, but a few take on resemblance to such separate and immense edifices as Mont St. Michel, the Pentagon, the Eiffel Tower or the World Trade Center. It helps our understanding of Oswald if we look to locate his sense of certainty (and his mother's) in the ego-land of mansions, palaces, and consummately ugly high-rises.

## Chapter 2--Mama's Boy

The first personage to escort down the aisle has to be  
Marguerite Oswald:

. . .Chief Justice Warren, I will start with Lee as a  
baby.

Lee was born October 18, 1939, in New Orleans,  
Louisiana. His father's name was Robert Edward Lee, he was  
named after General Lee . . . .

Lee was born 2 months after the death of his father,  
who died from a heart attack, coronary thrombosis.

Lee was a very happy baby.

I stayed home with the children as long as I could,  
because I believe that a mother should be home with her  
children.

I don't want to get into my story, though.

Lee had a normal life as far as I, his mother, is  
concerned. He had a bicycle, he had everything other  
children had.

Lee has wisdom without education. From a very small  
child--I have said this before, sir, and I have publicly  
stated this in 1959--Lee seemed to know the answers to  
things without schooling. That type child, in a way, is  
bored with schooling because he is a little advanced.

Lee used to climb on top of the roof with binoculars, looking at the stars. He was reading astrology. Lee knew about any and every animal there was. He studied animals. All of their feeding habits, sleeping habits . . . that is why he was at the Bronx Zoo when he was picked up for truancy--he loved animals.

Lee played Monopoly. Lee played chess . . . Lee read history books, books too deep for a child his age. At age 9 he was always instructed not to contact me at work unless it was an emergency, because my work came first--he called me at work and said, "Mother, Queen Elizabeth's baby has been born."

He broke the rule to let me know that Queen Elizabeth's baby had been born. Nine years old. That was important to him. He liked things of that sort...

(n.1)

Robert E. Lee Oswald was Marguerite Claverie Oswald's second husband. Her first was Edward John Pic who lived with her long enough to father a child, Lee's half brother, John Pic, who joined the Coast Guard in 1948 when Lee was nine years old.

By 1948, however, Marguerite had come to the end of two other marriages, the last being to Edwin A. Ekdahl who will appear briefly. Between Edward Pic and Ekdahl, she was married in 1933 to Robert E. Lee Oswald, and they soon had a son, Robert Lee Oswald, Lee's middle brother. Five years

later, Robert E. Lee Oswald died while Marguerite was in her seventh month of pregnancy with Lee who then was born on October 18, 1939.

So much for natal and nuptial facts. The immediate reality of Robert E. Lee Oswald's death was borne in isolation by Marguerite who was proud of her self-acquired Southern gentility, just as proud as any good-looking younger sister in a large working-class family who is full of airs and aspirations, and even achieves a measure of gentility with her second marriage. After his death, however, Marguerite was reduced to genteel penury. Her life had become a journey through stunted little commercial enterprises--moves from low-paying jobs to business ventures so small that the heart of their profit was chewed out before she began. But we can leave these details to John Pic, Lee's oldest brother.

Mr. Pic. Well, while we lived on Bartholemew Street, my mother opened in the front room a little store called Oswald's Notion Shop. I think she sold spools of thread and needles and things like this.

Mr. Jenner. Did she sell any sweets or candy for children?

Mr. Pic. Yes, sir; I remember we used to go there and swipe it.

Mr. Jenner. And it was in a segment of the home at 1010 Bartholemew?

Mr. Pic. Yes, sir; it was the very front room . . . we had a dog and the dog's name was Sunshine . . . I remember the house.

Mr. Jenner. Was it a nice neighborhood? . . .

Mr. Pic. Well, digging back in my Sociology courses, I would say it was upper-lower class, if there is such a classification . . .

Mr. Jenner. Now, I ask you again to recall the circumstances under which you entered the Bethlehem Orphanage, you and your brother Robert?

Mr. Pic. . . . I think properly the notion store wasn't a booming business, and she had to go to work and since we were reminded we were orphans all the time, the right place to be would be in an orphan home.

Mr. Jenner. Would you elaborate on that, please?

Mr. Pic. Well, sir; she constantly reminded us that we were orphans, that she didn't have the money to support us in everything . . . and I remember she . . . went to work at about the same time that [Robert and I] entered Bethlehem.

Marguerite had an older sister, Lillian Murret, who had five children, but Lillian would add Lee to her household for periods.

Mrs. Murret. Yes, that's when I took care of him. I told her, I said, "Well, I'll keep Lee for a while, as long as I could." I offered to keep Lee at an age when he was a very beautiful child. I would take him to town, and he would have on one of these little sailor suits, and he really looked cute, and he would holler "Hi" to everybody, and people in town would stop me and say, "What an adorable child he is," and so forth. The children at home liked him. I had 5 children in 7 years, had to get my own five children ready for school, and I didn't have any help on that and it kept me pretty busy, and that's why I guess it was that Lee started slipping out of the house in his nightclothes and going down the block and sitting down in somebody's kitchen. He could slip out like nobody's business. You could have everything locked in the house, and he would still get out. We lived in a basement house, and we had gates up and everything, but he would still get out.

(n.3)

Lillian Murret's daughter, Dorothy, is more than ready to corroborate her mother's description of Lee's agreeable presence.

Miss Murret. . . . He had a certain manner about him that other children never had. I mean he was very refined, he really was, and extremely well-mannered. . . .

. . . When he was a very young child, he was very--he was darling, and very outgoing and a very pretty child. He was adorable, and I mean if you walked on the street with him, everybody would stop because he lived with us until he was two, a little over two, but if my mother took him to Canal Street, everyone stopped to admire him. He was a very pretty child, and very happy, very cute.

(n.4)

Relations, however, between Marguerite and Lillian were frequently on edge.

Mrs. Murret. . . . You couldn't explain things to her, I mean. If you thought differently, then you were just wrong.

Mr. Jenner. And she was sufficiently vociferous about it?

Mrs. Murret. She was very independent. She didn't think she needed anyone at any time, no matter how much anyone would try to help or how much they would try to do for her, she never thought that anyone was actually helping her. Sooner or later it seemed like she would just take one little word or something that she would think was wrong, and we would have these little differences.

(n.5)

While his brothers John Pic and Robert Oswald were in Bethlehem Orphanage, Lee would go back and forth from the orphanage to the Murrets.

Mr. Jenner. The record shows he was released from the home on the 19th of January, 1944, and that he entered the home on the 26th of December, 1942.

So he was there 2 years.

Mr. Pic. No, sir; that is not right . . . he didn't spend

full time there that long. You see she may have pulled him out for a couple of weeks to stay with the Murrets, or even longer and still have him charged against Bethlehem.

Mr. Jenner. I misspoke when I said 2 years. It would be the period from December 26, 1942, to January 29, 1944, which is 1 year and 1 month. . .

Mr. Pic. Well . . . I know he wasn't in there a full 13 months at a clip. He was in and out of there in 13 months. At that school if your parents wanted to they took you home for a couple or 3 weeks.

(n.6)

He has a reason for recalling this so well . . .

Mr. Pic. . . . Robert and I enjoyed Bethlehem. I mean we were all there with the kids with the same problems, same age groups, and everything. Things for myself became worse when Lee came there, that is why I know he wasn't there too long.

Mr. Jenner. Tell us about it.

Mr. Pic. At Bethlehem they had a ruling that if you had a younger brother or sister there and they had bowel movements in their pants the older brothers would clean them up, and they would yank me out of classes in school

to go do this and, of course, this peeved me very much.

Mr. Jenner. He was only [2 or] 3 years old?

Mr. Pic. Yes; but I was 10. . .

(n.7)

In the course of those difficult years, Marguerite met an electrical engineer, a Yankee from Boston described by John Pic as "Tall...over six feet. He had white hair, wore glasses. Very nice man." He proved to be one electrical engineer who had an eye for ladies with verve, and he and Marguerite travelled together on his business trips through Texas for months, and Lee travelled with them until he was old enough for school at which point, Mr. Ekdahl bought a house outside Fort Worth in a suburb, Benbrook, Texas, and married Marguerite.

Her economic situation now eased, John and Robert came out of the orphanage and were sent to military school in Mississippi at an academy called Chamberlain-Hunt which they liked, but Marguerite's life with Ekdahl soon began to deteriorate. Their disputes were many and usually over money; they would quarrel and separate, come together and fight once again. During one of these separations in the summer of 1947

when John Pic was home from Chamberlain-Hunt and closing up the store in which he worked, Marguerite and Mr. Ekdahl "drove up and told me that they were going downtown to the Worth Hotel. This was one of their reunions." (n.8)

Mr. Pic. . . . So, I went back and told Lee and Robert, and this seemed to really elate Lee, this made him really happy that they were getting back together. Mr. Ekdahl, while Robert and I were at the academy would write us, he was a great one for writing poetry. He would send us a poem about ourselves or something, treated us real swell.

Mr. Jenner. . . . did Lee like him? . . .

Mr. Pic. Yes, sir; I think Lee found in him the father he never had. He had treated us real good and I am sure that Lee felt the same way, I know he did. He felt the same way about it, because Mr. Ekdahl treated all of us like his own children. (n.9)

The marriage, however, proceeded to come further apart. Marguerite had "strong suspicions."

Mr. Pic. . . . Mr. Ekdahl was seeing another woman and she was following him [but] she knew where the woman lived and everything.

So, one night my friend Marvin, Goldie, Sammy, my mother and I all piled into this young couple's car, went over to these apartments, and Sammy acted as a messenger, and knocked on the door and said, "Telegram" for this woman, whoever she was, I don't remember the name. When she opened the door, my mother pushed her way in, this woman was dressed in a nightgown negligee, Mr. Ekdahl was seated in the living room in his shirt sleeves and [my mother] made a big fuss about this. She's got him now and all this stuff. . . . (n.10)

Lillian Murret tells the same story with more detail:

Mrs. Murret. . . . this woman opened the door.

When [Marguerite] pushed the door back, Mr. Ekdahl was sitting in the living room . . . his coat and tie and shirt was off, and he had his athletic shirt on . . . so she questioned him about that, and he said he was there on business, which was absurd, because you know you don't disrobe yourself on business, so that's what started off the Ekdahl case, and then of course she wanted to get a divorce from him right away, you see, and that's why I say

she's quick, you see, because I would not have gotten a divorce. I would have got a separation, because he was making a big salary, and so forth, but anyway, she wanted a divorce it seemed like, but it seemed like he had connections and he must have gone to get the divorce before she could get it, or whatever it was. She had gone to her pastor and told her pastor about it, and her pastor told her that if she would press this case against Ekdahl, that he would have a heart attack and that would make her a murderer, that she would be the cause of him dying, so he was in the hospital, I think, so she went to the hospital to see him, and I think they had a roarup there . . . . (n.11)

Mr. Pic. . . . Then sometime in the summer of 1948, the divorce took place in Tarrant County, city of Fort Worth. I had to testify. I think they attempted to put Lee on the stand but he said that he wouldn't know right from wrong or truth from falsehood so they excused him from being a witness being he was under age.

I don't remember my testimony completely. I do remember that my mother had made the statement that if Mr. Ekdahl ever hit her again that she would send me in there to beat him up, something which I doubt that I could have done.

I was told by her that she was contesting the divorce so that he would still support her. She lost, he won. The divorce was granted. I was also told that there was a settlement of about \$1,200 and she stated that just about

all of this went to the lawyer . . . (n.12)

"It wasn't very long," said Lillian Murret, "before Mr. Ekdahl died, so that was the end of the Ekdahl affair."

Mr. Pic. . . . At this time Robert and I were informed that we would not return to Chamberlain-Hunt in the fall. This, I think, was the first time that I actually recall any hostility towards my mother.

Mr. Jenner. On your part?

Mr. Pic. Yes, sir; this was quite a blow to me because . . . I did want to finish there.

Mr. Jenner. How did Robert react to that?

Mr. Pic. He felt the same way, sir. He wanted to go back. But we were informed because of the monetary situation it would be impossible . . . I was 16 at this time. In September, Lee and Robert returned to school, and I went to work. I obtained a job at Everybody's Department Store which belonged to Leonard Bros. I was a shoe stock boy at the salary of \$25 a week.

Mr. Jenner. Did you pay some of that money to your mother?

Mr. Pic. I think at least \$15 out of every pay check I did . . . (n. 13)

As soon as he is old enough, John joins the Coast Guard and so is able to leave home. Robert was going to school in Fort Worth and working. Marguerite was working, and Lee was alone much of the time at home.

Mrs. Murret. Yes; she told me that she had trained Lee to stay in the house; to stay close to home when she wasn't there; and even to run home from school and remain in the house or near the house. She said she thought it would be safer to have him just do a few chores in the house, like taking the garbage cans out and things like that, than to have him outside playing when she wasn't there. She figures he wouldn't get in any trouble in the house. Maybe she thought she was making it safer for him by doing that, rather than being out with the other children, but I don't know. I guess that's what happened. He just got in the habit of staying alone like that. That's probably the time that he got like that; he was

with himself so much.

(n.14)

Chapter 3. Indian Summer, New York

John Pic adds the telling detail:

In 1952 Marguerite sold her house, got into her car with Lee and drove to New York.

Mr. Jenner. Do you have an opinion as to whether this atmosphere in which Lee lived had an effect upon him and his personality?

Mr. Pic. I am sure it did, sir. Lee slept with my mother until I joined the service in 1950. This would make him approximately 10, well, almost 11 years old.

Mr. Jenner. When you say slept with, you mean in the same bed?

Mr. Pic. In the same bed, sir.

(n.15)

Mr. Pic. In 1952, because I joined the Marines in July of 1952, and that was my reason for going. So at this time I was living in my daughter-in-law's house and son. And we were not welcome, sir.

Mr. Pic. The impression that my wife and myself had was

Chapter 3. Indian Summer, New York

In 1952 Marguerite sold her house, got into her car with Lee and drove to New York.

Mrs. Oswald. . . .my older son, John Edward Pic . . . was in the Coast Guard, as a military man, stationed in New York. So I had no problem of selling my home and going there . . . the main thing was to be where I had family.

Mr. Rankin. And what date was that?

Mrs. Oswald. That was exactly August 1952, because I wanted to get there in time for Lee's schooling . . . Robert joined the Marines in July of 1952. And that was my reason for going. So at this time I was living in my daughter-in-law's home and son. And we were not welcome, sir. (n.1)

Mr. Pic. The impression that my wife and myself had was

they were coming to visit, sir, and we had nothing against this. My mother-in-law . . . was visiting her other daughter, in Norfolk, Va . . . so we had room for them.

(n.2)

It was a railroad apartment, what John called "a freight-car type," one room after another--in the Yorkville section of Manhattan.

Mr. Jenner. . . . And your impression was that your mother and Lee were just visiting for the summer months . . .

Mr. Pic. Just a minute, sir. That is where I begin my notes. August 1952, my mother and Lee came to New York. They brought with them quite a bit of luggage, and their own TV set. On my way home from work I had to walk about 8 or 10 blocks after the subway, and Lee . . . decided to go up and meet me. We met in the street and I was real glad to see him and he was real glad to see me. We were real good friends. I think in a matter of a few days or so I took my leave. Lee and I visited some of the landmarks of New York, the Museum of Natural History, Polk's Hobby Shop on 5th Avenue. I took him on the Staten Island Ferry, and several other excursions we made.

Mr. Jenner. Go ahead.

Mr. Pic. Well, sir; it wasn't but a matter of days before I could sense they moved in to stay for good, and this not being my apartment, but my mother-in-law's apartment, my wife kind of frowned upon this a little bit . . . my mother-in-law . . . was due back in a matter of a month or so.

During my leave I was under the impression that I may get out of the service in January of 1953, when my enlistment was up, so I went around to several colleges. My mother drove me to these colleges, Fordham University, for one, and Brooklyn . . . I remember one conversation in the car that she reminded me that even though Margy was my wife, she wasn't quite as good as I was, and things like this. She didn't say too many good things about my wife. Well, naturally, I resented this, because I put my wife before my mother any day.

Things were pretty good during the time I was on leave but when I went back to work, I would come home and my wife would tell me about some little problem they would have. The first problem that I recollect was that there was no support for the grocery bill whatsoever. I don't think I was making more than \$150 a month, and they were eating up quite a bit, and I just casually mentioned that and my mother got very much upset about it. So every night I got home and my wife would have more to tell me about the little arguments . . . It seems that there was an argument about the TV set one day between my wife and my mother. According to my wife's statement my mother antagonized Lee until he was very hostile towards my wife and he pulled out a pocketknife and said that if she made

any attempt to hit him that he would use it on her. At the same time Lee struck his mother. This perturbed my wife no end. So, I came home that night, and . . . my wife told me this in private, sir. I went and asked my mother about it.

Mr. Jenner. Was Lee present when you spoke with your mother?

Mr. Pic. I am getting to that, sir. So I approached Lee on this subject, and about the first couple of words out of my wife he became real hostile toward me, and let me get my notes on it. When this happened it perturbed my wife so much that she told them they are going to leave whether they liked it or not, and I think Lee had the hostility toward my wife right then and there, when they were getting thrown out of the house as they put it.

When I attempted to talk to Lee about this he ignored me, and I was never able to get to the kid again after that. He didn't care to hear anything I had to say to him. So in a matter of a few days they packed up and left, sir. They moved to the Bronx somewhere . . .

(n.3)

Marguerite's version has a few variations on this:

(n.4)

Mr. Rankin. Was there any time that you recall that there was a threat of Lee Oswald against Mrs. Pic with a knife or anything like that?

Do you remember that?

Mrs. Oswald. Yes, I do. I am glad you said that . . . it was not a kitchen knife--it was a little pocket knife, a child's knife, that Lee had. So she hit Lee. So Lee had the knife--now, I remember this distinctly, because I remember how awful I thought Marjory was about this. Lee had the knife in his hand. He was whittling, because John Edward whittled ships and taught Lee to whittle ships. He puts them in the glass, you know. And he was whittling when this incident occurred. And that is what it occurred about, because there was scraps of wood on the floor.

So when she attacked the child, he had the knife in hand. So she made the statement to my son that we had to leave, that Lee tried to use a knife on her.

Now, I say that is not true, gentlemen. You can be provoked into something. And because of the fact that he was whittling, and had the knife in his hand, they struggled.

He did not use the knife--he had an opportunity to use the knife.

But it wasn't a kitchen knife or a big knife. It was a little knife.

So I will explain it that way, sir.

So immediately then I started to look for a place. I did find a place, I think off the Concourse . . . in the Bronx. And it was a basement apartment . . .

(n.4)

Mr. Pic. Well, prior to this particular incident, I would consider us the best of friends as far as older brother-younger brother relationship. My wife always said he idolized me and thought quite a bit of me . . .

(n.6)

Robert, taking his first leave as a Marine came to visit Lee and Marguerite at their apartment, and John and Marjory travelled to the Bronx for a family dinner.

Mr. Pic. . . . Robert was already there when we arrived. When Lee seen me or my wife he left the room and sat in the front room watching TV and didn't join us whatsoever . . . Didn't speak to me or my wife.

Mr. Jenner. That kind of put a pall on the visit, did it not?

Mr. Pic. Yes, sir. . . Lee walked out and my mother informed us that he would probably go to the Bronx Zoo. We had Sunday dinner, and in the course of the conversation my mother informed me that Lee was having a truancy problem and that the school officials had

suggested that he might need psychiatric aid to combat his truancy problem.

She informed me that Lee said that he would not see a head shrinker or nut doctor, and she wanted any suggestions or opinions from me as to how to get him to see him, and I told her just take him down there. That is all I could suggest.

Mr. Jenner. What was her response to that?

Mr. Pic. Well, Lee was still the boss. If he didn't want to go to see the psychiatrist, he wasn't going . . .

Mr. Jenner. Did you discuss that with her?

Mr. Pic. No, sir; she discussed it with me. I mean she told me that she couldn't control him and so forth . . . He was definitely the boss . . . I mean if he decided to do something, regardless of what my mother said, he did it. She had no authority whatsoever with him. He had no respect for her at all. (n.7)

Mrs. Oswald. I have that information here.

Went to school in the neighborhood, Public School 117, which is a junior high school in the Bronx. It states here he attended 15 of 47 days. This is the place we were living that Lee was picked up by the truant officer in the Bronx Zoo.

I was informed of this at work, and I had to appear before a board, which I did.

Lee went back to school.

Then he was picked up again in the Bronx Zoo. And I had to appear before a board committee again.

Then the third time that Lee was picked up, we were-- I never did get a subpoena, but we were told he had to appear at Children's Court . . . I did not think it was anything serious, because the Texas laws are not like the New York laws. In New York, if you are out of school one day you go to Children's Court. In Texas the children stay out of school for months at a time.

(n.8)

(n.11)

## Chapter 4. The Youth House

Mr. Carro. Yes, he was remanded. . . to the Youth House because he had not even bothered to report to school. I forget whether he had just turned 13 or was still 12, but in New York State we have a law that requires each boy to attend school until at least 16, and this was a young man of tender age who had at this point taken it upon himself to just not bother to go to school any more, and furthermore, this was not the usual hooky-playing type-- when I say hooky, the type of boy who [goes] to truant with his other friends, to go to the park, fish, play, or whatever it is. This is a boy who would not go to school just to remain home, not do anything.

The judge felt that since there was no father figure at home and it was just a mother who worked, that this was not a salutary situation for a boy this tender age to be in, and he felt he wanted to find out a little more about this boy before he made a decision, and consequently he asked for the study at the Youth house . . .

(n.1)

Mr. Liebeler. Would you say that Oswald was more mentally disturbed than most of the boys that you had under your supervision at that time?

Mr. Carro. Not at all, actually. I have handled cases of boys who committed murders, burglaries, and I have had some extremely disturbed boys, and this was just initially a truancy situation, not one of real disruptive or acting out delinquent behavior. No; I would definitely not put him among. . . boys whom we have placed who turned out to be mentally defective, mentally retarded, quite psychotic, and who really had gradations of mental illness of disturbances that were far, you know, greater in depth than those displayed by Oswald.

Mr. Liebeler. . . .would you say that it was just as much a function of environment, the environment that he found himself in here in New York?

Mr. Carro. . . .in my mind there was an inability to adapt from the change of environment. One of the things that probably influenced me in this is that I came to New York City when I was 9 years of age and when I came here I didn't speak a word of English, and I lived in what we call East Harlem, in an area where there was a Puerto Rican community within a Negro area, and I recall when I went to school there were four Puerto Rican boys in a class that was otherwise all Negro, and I used to virtually run home every day in the first 2 months I lived in the city because at one point or another the Negro boys would be waiting for me outside to take my pencils, my money, and anything that I had in my hands.

Then eventually I made friends with the three other boys, and when somebody took my books, one of the other boys stayed with me, and I fought with the Negro boys until things worked out--and, as I remember, things didn't work out. I had to transfer to another school.

But . . . you meet the situations. Either you meet them head on or you retreat from them.

Now he apparently had one or two incidents where he was taunted over his inability to speak the same way that the kids up here speak and to dress the same way [and] apparently he could not make that adaptation, and he felt that they didn't want any part of him and he didn't want any part of them . . .

(n.2)

There are Youth House reports.

Lee has constituted a problem here of late. He is a non-participant in any activity on the floor. He has made no attempt at developing a relationship with any member of the group and . . . seems content just to sit and read whatever is available . . . Each evening at 8:00 p.m. he asks to be allowed to go to bed.

(n.3)

Later, Marguerite would tell the social worker who interviewed her that she had never had any difficulty in Fort Worth. He had always been a very quiet boy.

A psychiatric social worker, who writes well, Evelyn Strickman, seems to take an interest in her.

. . . he volunteered almost nothing about himself. Toward the end of the interview he occasionally would say something gratuitously without my asking him, but on the whole everything had to be pulled from him. What is really surprising is that this boy has not lost entirely his ability to communicate with other people because he has been leading such a detached, solitary existence for most of his life.

He told me that he was at Youth House for truancy and his truancy is caused because he feels he would prefer to do other things which are more important. Questioning at first elicited "Oh, just things," but what I finally learned from him is that he spends all of his time looking

at television, leafing over various magazines or just  
sleeping . . . (n.4)

. . . he feels almost as if there is a veil between him  
and other people through which they cannot reach him but  
he prefers this veil to remain intact. When I questioned  
whether it was painful or disturbing for him to [talk  
with] me today. . . he let me know that. . . he was not as  
disturbed in talking about his feelings as he thought he  
might be. This gave me an opening to inquire into his  
fantasy life and what I got was a complete rejection of  
any probing and a reminder that "this is my own business."  
I let him know that I respected this but there were some  
things I had to know. Suppose I asked him questions, and  
if he wanted, he would answer. He agreed to this and  
actually answered every question that I asked. He  
acknowledged fantasies about being all-powerful and being  
able to do anything he wanted. When I asked if this ever  
involved hurting or killing people, he said that it did  
sometimes but refused to elucidate on it. None of these  
fantasies, incidentally, ever involved his mother. . . .

[He did confide] that the worst thing about Youth  
House was the fact that he had to be with other boys all  
the time, was disturbed about disrobing in front of them,  
taking showers with them, etc. Actually if he could have

his wish he would like to be out on his own and maybe join the service. He acknowledged the fact that in the service he would have to live very close to other people and obey orders and follow a routine which he finds extremely distasteful, but he said he would steel himself to that and make himself do it . . . (n.5)

There is a rather pleasant, appealing quality about this emotionally starved, affectionless youngster which grows as one speaks to him. . . (n.6)

. . . His face lighted up from its usual impassive expression when he talked about the three-month-old baby [at his brother's house] and admitted that he had found a good deal of enjoyment in playing with it. (n.7)

Concerning his home life with his mother in the apartment off the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, the interviewer noted:

. . . His mother had found work as an assistant manager in a women's wear shop and she is away again all day. He

mostly makes his own meals . . . (n.8)

Mr. Pic. I remember once, it may have been . . . this hosiery shop that you are referring to, that she told me that they let her go because she didn't use an underarm deodorant. That was the reason she gave me, sir. She said she couldn't do nothing about it. She uses it but if it don't work what can she do about it? (n.9)

Perhaps there are spiritual illnesses that will assert themselves through any deodorant. Marguerite may be passing through the worst period of her life up to this point.

Mrs. Oswald. . . . And I hope someday to rectify this because I think conditions of this kind in our United States of America are deplorable. And I want that to go down in the record . . . I had to stand single file approximately a block and a half, sir, with Puerto Ricans and Negroes and everything, and people of my class, single file, until we got to the main part of this building, which had a wire, a very heavy wire, partition wire, a man sitting back of the desk, but a man in front of the gate

that let me in. I had packages of gum and some candy for my son. And the gum wrappers were taken off the gum, and the candy wrappers were taken off.

And my pocketbook was emptied, Yes, sir, and I asked why. It was because the children in this home were such criminals, dope fiends, and had been in criminal offenses, that anybody entering this home had to be searched in case the parents were bringing cigarettes or narcotics or anything.

So that is why I was searched.

So I was escorted into a large room where there were parents talking with their children.

And Lee came out. He started to cry. He said, "Mother, I want to get out of here. There are children in here who have killed people, and smoke. I want to get out."

So then I realized--I had not realized until I went there what kind of place we had my child in.

We don't have these kinds of places in Texas or New Orleans, sir.

(n.10)

Evelyn Strickman is less taken with the mother than the son.

Mrs. O. is a smartly-dressed gray haired woman, very self-possessed and alert, and while making a superficial appearance of affability, I felt that essentially she was

defensive, rigid, selfish, and very much of a snob.

One of the first things she wanted to know was why Lee was at Youth House because she had no clear understanding of the purpose of the institution. Before I even had a chance to explain to her, she went on to ask me if he had received a complete medical examination and in my answering in the affirmative, confided to me that she had noticed lately he had gotten very big "down there" and that while of course he was getting a little too big for her to look at him, she had been worried lest anything was the matter with his genitals.

Mrs. O., incidentally, bathed all her children herself until the time they were 11 or 12 and then said in an embarrassed manner that at that age they got a little too old for her to look at . . .

She went on to tell me that she had had him to a doctor six months ago for a head to toe examination and the doctor had examined the boy in her presence. He had apparently not examined the boy's genitals and Mrs. Oswald had insisted upon this so he asked her to step from the room. She said she wasn't gone but a few minutes when he called her back and said there was nothing the matter, and she somehow felt very dissatisfied with the examination . . . When I indicated we had found nothing the matter with his genitals, she then looked at once relieved and I felt a little disappointed.

Mrs. O. gave her current "analysis" of the reason for Lee's truancy--the upset in moving from Fort Worth. She went on to tell me. . .that she had found it very difficult to adjust to New York and is sorry she came here. She indicated that she has always been a manager of shops of one kind or another and made it a point never to

mix with her help. She said they were always respectful to her at home but here in New York, employees talk back to her, etc., and she finds it extremely difficult to take, complaining of their arrogance. Furthermore, she feels that life moves at a much faster pace here; living conditions are unsatisfactory, etc. Later on in the interview after I had gained her confidence much more, she confided in me that she had come from Fort Worth because she thought that it might be better for Lee since he was suddenly left alone after Robert joined the Marines and she wants to be close to what family she had for his sake. With her eyes filled with tears at this point, she told me that she had come to New York to be close to her son, John. There had been an exchange of letters and long distance phone calls and apparently John and his wife were very anxious for her to come, but she said that when she got here, she found an extremely cold reception. Her daughter-in-law is only 17 and apparently went out of her way to let Mrs. O. know that she could not settle with John and herself permanently. She said she was made so uncomfortable, that she moved just as soon as she could to an extremely inadequate one-room basement apartment. The living conditions were extremely miserable and she felt that Lee was becoming very depressed but she could not help herself. Just as soon as she was able, and had found another job, she took a three-room apartment in the Bronx and said that Lee seemed to perk up considerably after that.

(n.11)

Lee did perk up. He would go out in the morning and take the subway to the Bronx Zoo. We can enjoy the thought that Lee was happy with the animals. Wild beasts and little children were natural companions. Nothing in the record tells us, however, which animal he was studying at ten in the morning when a truant officer collared him long enough to ask a few questions.

Near the end of the interview she confided in me in a burst of confidence that she had lost her husband when she was seven months pregnant with Lee. He died suddenly one morning at 6 A.M. of a heart attack [and] she had had a rupture with her husband's family at this time, since . . . she wanted him buried the same day. Her thought had been for herself and the baby she was carrying, since she felt she could do her husband no good by having a wake and a funeral, and she thought it would be just decent to get him out of the way as quickly as possible. His family had been completely aghast, said that they never saw anything as cold in their whole life, and had not spoken to her from that day to this. She had to rely upon her neighbors' help when Lee was born and she had never had anything to do with her husband's family since that time. She justified herself at great length to me, said that she did not feel it was cold but only sensible, and that her husband, when he used to joke with her had always said,

"Mag, if anything ever happens to me, just throw some dirt in my face and forget about it," and she felt she had acted according to his instructions.

When I offered that it must have been rather difficult for her to have to be both parents and bread-earner at the same time, she told me very proudly that she had never found it so. She said she was always a very independent, self-reliant person who had never wanted any help from anyone, had always had "high fulutent" ideas, which she felt she had to a large measure accomplished, and she always was able to pull herself up by her own bootstraps . . . (n.12)

She could. She did. At a certain point, enmeshed in the counselling that followed upon Lee's provisional discharge from Youth House, she made her move.

Mr. Carro. . . . the judge ordered a referral to the psychiatric clinic of the court, and to the Big Brothers who subsequently accepted the boy for working with. With that the mother took off in January, without letting us know . . . (n.13) I wrote to her to come in, having heard, and the letter was returned, "Moved, address unknown." I was asked about what happens then, and, well, there is very little that one can really do. We don't have extra-

state jurisdiction and we didn't even know where she had gone. . . (n.14)

Marguerite had a quality that would have been valuable to an actress. She could be harsh and poignant at once. As the coda to her sad adventures in New York, we can use John Pic's account of one of his rare visits to her after she was asked to quit his apartment.

Mr. Pic. . . . I was usually alone, I went to see her myself, my wife didn't care to see my mother . . . and when I would ask her about how Lee was doing she would say, "OK," but would not elaborate.

Said, "He is OK, but he doesn't have a brother, an older brother to talk to or no one to do anything with."

(n.15)

If, to all the dismay of established faith and liberal reason, reincarnation should prove to be indeed a revolving wheel of humanity, then what an interesting explanation might

be offered for Marguerite Oswald's most special character. One could suppose she was a queen in her previous life, a cruel queen in a kingdom of many grievances and so was punished in this life by being obliged to live as a commoner among the masses while brimming over with her own grievances. That would help to account for Lee as well. He could be seen as the prince of a kingdom not quite large enough for two.