

Chapter 24--Telescopic Sight

MARINA said she had asked OSWALD. . . what he had done with the rifle because she was worried lest he had left it somewhere where it would be found. OSWALD said he had buried the rifle in the ground far from the actual spot of the shooting. He then mentioned a field and the fact that the field was near a railroad track.

She . . . recalls OSWALD returned to the NEELY Street home with the rifle wrapped in a raincoat on the Sunday following the [Wednesday] night of the assassination attempt. (n.1)

Having hidden his farewell letter in a cookbook, she was now in a position to warn him that if he ever wanted to act funny again with his rifle, she would go to the police. So there the letter remained, concealed in the cookbook. She assumed it would be safe there, and indeed it was until the President was shot. Then the police went through all of the Oswalds' belongings and shook out the pages of every one of the works in their modest collection.

Mrs. Oswald. I asked him what for he was making all these entries and he answered that he wanted to leave a complete record so that all the details would be in it, He told me that these entries consisted of the description of the house of General Walker, the distances, the location, and the distribution of windows in it [but] I was so afraid after this attempt on Walker's life that . . . there would be evidence in the house such as this book.

Mr. Liebeler. Did you talk to Lee about it?

Mrs. Oswald. Oh, yes . . . he showed me this book after his attempt on Walker's life, and I suggested to him that it would be awfully bad to keep a thing like that in the house. (n.2)

It appears that this is one time he did listen to his wife.

. . .next thing she knew he was standing by the toilet with some sheets of paper in his hand and a box of matches. Slowly he tore the sheets in half, crumpled them

into balls, and one by one touched a match to them. As each ball of paper caught the flames, he dropped it into the toilet. He did this thoughtfully, with great reluctance, as if it were the funeral pyre of his ideas. But apparently he destroyed only the details of his plan. He did not burn the [hand-printed] pages which contained his political philosophy and program . . .

. . . Marina had seen how reluctant he had been to burn his papers. "I wonder if he burned them," she asked herself, "because he does not trust me." (n.3)

According to Marina, he now put the gun in a place where she did not see it and did not put it back in his study for another few days, not perhaps for a week after his attempt on Walker.

The Dallas papers of Thursday, April 11, ran front-page stories about the attempt on Walker's life. Lee left the apartment to buy both morning and afternoon editions . . .

Reading [them], Lee roared with laughter. "Americans are so spoiled!" he said, proud of his escape. "It never occurs to them that you might use your own two legs. They always think you have a car. They chased a car. And here

I am sitting here!" Once again he said that before any car left the scene, "my legs had carried me a long way." (n.4)

. . . Lee was astonished at how easily he got off and at the ineptness of the police. They had the bullet, yet they identified it wrongly, and wrongly identified the rifle from which it came. Moreover, they had apparently been thrown off by rumors about cars and co-conspirators, rumors Lee knew to be false. (n.5)

Here, Patricia Johnson McMillan may have taken a false stitch. Just because Lee has declared to Marina that he got away on foot does not mean that he is telling the truth. McMillan follows this, however, with a salient perception:

He had tried something cataclysmic--and he had not been caught. He had not even been touched.

Thus by far the greatest legacy Lee carried out of the Walker attempt was the conviction that he was invulnerable, that he stood at the center of a magic circle swathed in a cloak of immunity. It was a feeling which fitted dangerously with the feeling he already had that he was special, that he had particular prerogatives.

He and he alone was entitled to that which was forbidden
to everybody else. (n.6)

Perhaps Oswald is not so much convinced that he is invulnerable and/or immune so much as that he has moments when he feels enough inner strength to suggest to himself that this might be so, and the recollection of such moments could restore his belief that his intuition was remarkable.

McMillan seems to assume that such beliefs, once arrived at, are as permanent as concrete, whereas the likelihood is that Oswald frequently wavered in his idea of himself, prey at any given moment to puncture or depression. Those of his actions that seem most irrational or needlessly ugly have to be attempts to defend his faith in his powers. He would slap Marina for a small remark because if he accepted her last reductive statement--whatever it was--it could be no more than "You are stupid" or "You are a baby"--his ego would be punctured. Depression would come in a flood. We have to keep reminding ourselves of the great weight he bore. He believed he was the only man alive who could make a profound difference in how the future would be shaped; yet he was dyslexic and half in love with a woman who did not respect him; worse, she

was ready, as he saw it, to go over to the enemy. On top of that, he had just lost the only job he ever liked.

Yes, he is in a most changeable state in the first few days after the attempt on Walker, and into the middle of this come the De Mohrenschildts again. An odd little business occurs:

MARINA said that a few days after the assassination, GEORGE DE MOHRENSCHILDT was in their home on NEELY Street and made a joking remark to OSWALD to the effect, "How is it that you missed General WALKER?" When GEORGE DE MOHRENSCHILDT asked OSWALD this, the latter visibly paled and looked at MARINA as if she might have told DE MOHRENSCHILDT. . . (n.7)

That was in an early FBI report. Naturally, the Warren Commission had to take it up.

Marina Oswald. De Mohrenschildt--as soon as he opened the door--he said to Lee, "How could you have missed, how could you have missed him?"

Senator Cooper. Do you have any explanation for that?

Marina Oswald. I do not know whether Lee told De Mohrenschildt about shooting at Walker, and then Lee looked at me thinking--whether I told De Mohrenschildt about it--I don't know. He even couldn't speak that evening. Lee could not speak that evening. We were on the porch.

Senator Cooper. Did he later ask you if you had told De Mohrenschildt?

Marina Oswald. He asked me if I had told De Mohrenschildt about it and when I said I didn't, he said, "How did he guess it?" (n.8)

Even thirteen years later, De Mohrenschildt was still counting his losses on that particular statement by Marina. George, in his Warren Commission testimony, would go so far as to admit that he said, "Did you take a pot-shot at General Walker, Lee?" but that was not quite the same as "How could you have missed?" In 1977, De Mohrenschildt would write,

"This innocuous remark of mine influenced our lives."

It is enough to account for his animus toward Marina. By 1967, he would lose his sinecure in Haiti, and would attribute part of the damage to her.

Let us try to follow it through. We can begin with George's testimony in 1964:

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. And Jeanne told me that day, "Let's go and take a rabbit for Oswald's baby."

Mr. Jenner. This was on Easter Sunday?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Easter day. I don't remember if it was Easter Sunday. . . . Maybe my wife will remember the date exactly. And so we drove over quite late in the evening and walked up--I think they were asleep. They were asleep and we knocked at the door and shouted, and Lee Oswald came down undressed, half undressed, you see, maybe in shorts, and opened the door and we told him that we have the rabbit for the child. And it was a very short visit, you know. We just gave the rabbit to the baby and I was talking to Lee while Jeanne was talking to Marina about something which is immaterial which I do not recall right now, and all of a sudden--

Mr. Jenner. Excuse me. Mr. Reporter, Jeanne is spelled J-e-a-n-n-e.

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. And I think Oswald and I were standing near the window looking outside and I was asking him, "How is your job?" or "Are you making any money? Are you happy?" some question of that type. All of a sudden, Jeanne who was with Marina in the other room told me, "Look, George, they have a gun here." And Marina opened the closet and showed it to Jeanne, a gun that belonged obviously to Oswald.

Mr. Jenner. This was a weapon? Did you go in and look?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. No; I didn't look at the gun. I was still standing. The closet was open. Jeanne was looking at it, the gun, and I think she asked Marina "what is that?" you see. That was the sight on the gun. "What is that? That looks like a telescopic sight." And Marina said, "That crazy idiot is target shooting all the time." So frankly I thought it was ridiculous to shoot target shooting in Dallas, you see, right in town. I asked him, "Why do you do that?"

Mr. Jenner. What did he say?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. He said, "I go out and do target shooting. I like target shooting." So out of the pure, really jokingly, I told him, "Are you then the guy who took a pot shot at General Walker?" And he smiled to that, because just a few days before there was an attempt at General Walker's life, and it was very highly

publicized in the papers, and I knew that Oswald disliked General Walker, you see. So I took a chance and I asked him this question, you see, and I can clearly see his face, you know.

He sort of shriveled, you see, when I asked this question.

Mr. Jenner. He became tense?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Became tense, you see, and didn't answer anything, smiled, you know, made a sarcastic--not sarcastic, made a peculiar face.

Mr. Jenner. The expression on his face?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. That is right. Changed the expression on his face.

Mr. Jenner. You saw that your remark to him--

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Yes.

Mr. Jenner. Had an effect on him.

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Had an effect on him. But naturally he did not say yes or no, but that was it. That is the whole incident. I remember after we were leaving, Marina went in the garden and picked up a large bouquet of roses for us. They have nice roses downstairs and gave us the roses to thank for the gift of the rabbit.

Mr. Jenner. Do you recall an occasion when you came to

their home. . .when you and Mrs. De Mohrenschildt came to see the Oswalds, that as soon as you opened the door, you said, "Lee, how is it possible that you missed?"

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Never. I don't recall that incident.

Mr. Jenner. You have now given me your full recollection of that entire rifle incident?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Yes.

Mr. Jenner. Weapon incident, and what you said to him?

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. Yes, yes, yes, yes; that is right. How could I have--my recollections are vague, of course, but how could I have said that when I didn't know he had a gun, you see? I was standing there, and then Jeanne told us, or Marina, you know, the incident just as I have described it, that here is a gun, you see. I remember very distinctly saying, "Did you take the potshot at General Walker?" (n.9)

The likelihood is that he and Jeanne have prepared a story. As Jeanne will verify, their visit was at 10 o'clock on Saturday night, April 13, three days after the attempt, and the gun was almost certainly not in the closet at that time.

It is not definite whether Oswald retrieved the rifle from his cache near the railroad tracks on Saturday or Sunday, but even if the weapon was back by Saturday, it was not in the closet. Marina, we recall, told the FBI that he did bring it home and then concealed it for a few days. That, after all, was the day when Marina, in panic, convinced him to destroy his Walker papers. So, even if against her testimony, the gun was in the closet, would Marina have been so careless as to allow Jeanne to get a look, and would Marina then speak of her "crazy" husband?

The larger possibility is that Jeanne De Mohrenschildt had paid an earlier visit to Marina around April 5, five days before the shooting:

. . . She had free time during the day and the use of George's convertible, and she paid her first visit to Marina on Neely Street. Somehow as she was showing Jeanne around, she was drawn, not to Lee's "office," but to a clothes closet where he was keeping his rifle.

"Look at that!" Marina said. "We have barely enough to eat and my crazy husband goes and buys a rifle." She told Jeanne that Lee had been practicing with it.

Jeanne's father had been a gun collector. . . Instantly she spotted something. . . Lee's gun had

a telescopic sight. . . when George got back from New York, she seems to have told him that poor as the Oswalds were, Lee had bought a rifle with a scope and had been practicing. (n.10)

McMillan's description of the event, since it offers no citations, had to have come from Marina. Concerning Jeanne's reactions, there are unfortunately no citations. In Jeanne's Warren Commission testimony, she certainly does not suggest that "she knew her way around rifles" or understood telescopic sights, but then her story is hardly convincing since she admits she loves skeet shooting. While that is hardly the same as target practice with a rifle and scope, still the likely supposition is that after the visit on April 5, she chooses not to admit to any sophistication about a telescopic sight. For if she did, then how could she have failed to tell George when he came back from New York that Oswald now possessed a high-powered rifle with scope? That was certainly not an item she would fail to pass on to George, nor would he, in turn, be likely to miss sending it on to his case officer. And all this, be it noted, before April 10.

Let us look at her testimony which hardly varies from George's except where he states she said "that looks like a

telescopic sight." Let us see then if we can locate the lies, evasions, and blurrings of detail that she is offering because she did pay a telling visit on April 5 to Marina and knew about the rifle in advance:

Mr. Jenner. Now, something occurred in Easter, 1963, when you went to visit them?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Yes.

Mr. Jenner. Was this Easter Sunday or the day after?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No, to my best recollection it was Saturday before Easter. By the way, the first time [the FBI] talked to us about it, I completely mixed all the dates. I thought it was in the fall. But it was the day I [now] remember when we came over with the big pink rabbit for the baby.

Mr. Jenner. Did you arrive there during the day?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No; it was in the evening. I think we were playing tennis, and then we were somewhere, and then I decided we will be busy tomorrow, and I wanted to take the rabbit to the baby. . . . (n.11)

Already she has established that her memory is so poor that she cannot separate fall from spring. Yet she also recalls that it was Saturday night before Easter Sunday. Her difficulty is that she does not know how much Jenner or the Warren Commission knows, nor to what exactly Marina has testified. In such doubt, telling the truth in the briefest possible form, blurring it wherever she can, is probably her most navigable course:

Mr.s De Mohrenschildt. . . . and we came over late at night. It was 10 o'clock or maybe later. And I remember they gave us something to drink.

Mr. Jenner. You arrived there. Were they--had they retired for the night?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I think they were halfway in bed already, because the house was dark. I remember we banged on the door. It was dark.

Mr. Jenner. And Lee came to the door?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I don't remember who came to the door, Marina or Lee. . . .

(n.12)

It is not unlikely that they are arriving late on purpose. They are waking the Oswalds up because they wish to catch them by surprise. If the De Mohrenschildts already know that Lee has a rifle and scope, then we can assume there may have been a directive from George's case officer to find out, if they could, whether Oswald had shot at Walker.

At this point the question of the earlier visit comes up, and Jeanne does her best neither to confirm nor deny that she was there on Neely Street before April 13.

Mr. Jenner. Had you been there before?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No.

Mr. Jenner. That is the first time you had ever been there?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I don't remember. Maybe I was. I don't think so.

Mr. Jenner. All right.

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I don't think so.

Mr. Jenner. You got there. No, just relax--

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I am trying to think hard because every little fact could be important.

Mr. Jenner. But you are excited. Relax, and tell me everything that occurred, chronologically, as best you can on that occasion. You came to the door and either Marina or Oswald came to the door, and you and your husband went in the home?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. That is right.

Mr. Jenner. Then, go on. Tell me about it.

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. And I believe from what I remember George sat down on the sofa and started talking to Lee, and Marina was showing me the house--that is why I said it looks like it was the first time, because why would she show me the house if I had been there before? Then we went to another room and she opens the closet, and I see the gun standing there. I said, what is the gun doing over there? (n. 13)

Now come the disclaimers on the telescopic sight. She admits to shooting skeet and loving to use a rifle in an amusement park because she knows that one of the emigres might mention as much that about her, yet she maintains her fiction

concerning the telescopic sight:

Mr. Jenner. And then other things that arrested your attention, as I gather from what you have said, is that you saw a telescopic sight?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Yes; but I didn't know what it was.

Mr. Jenner. But your attention was arrested by that fact, because it was something new and strange to you?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Yes.

Mr. Jenner. You were accustomed to your husband having weapons?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Well, we had only one rifle on our trip. But my father was a collector of guns, that was his hobby.

Mr. Jenner. And being accustomed to rifles, to the extent you have indicated, you noticed this telescopic lens, because you had not seen a rifle with a telescopic lens on it before? Had you seen a rifle with the bolt action this has?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No; I didn't ever know. I read

it was bolt action, but I did not know.

Mr. Jenner. But you did notice this protrusion, this ball sticking out?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No; I don't recall. The only thing there was something on it. It could be that it was the telescopic sight or something, but it was something on the rifle. It was not a smooth, plain rifle. That is for sure.

Mr. Jenner. Now, when you saw that, and being surprised, were concerned about it?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I just asked what on earth is he doing with a rifle?

Mr. Jenner. What did she say?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. She said, "Oh, he just loves to shoot." I said, "Where on earth does he shoot? Where can he shoot?" When they lived in a little house. "Oh, he goes in the park and he shoots at leaves and things like that." But it didn't strike me too funny, because I personally love skeet shooting. I never kill anything. But I adore to shoot at a target, target shooting.

Mr. Jenner. Skeet?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I just love it.

Mr. Jenner. Didn't you think it was strange to have

someone say he is going in a public park and shooting leaves?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. But he was taking the baby out. He goes with her, and that was his amusement.

Mr. Jenner. Did she say that?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Yes; that was his amusement, practicing in the park, shooting leaves. That wasn't strange to me because any time I go to an amusement park I go to the rifles and start shooting. So I didn't find anything strange.

Mr. Jenner. But you shot a rifle at the rifle range in these amusement parks?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Yes.

Mr. Jenner. Little .22?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I don't know what it was. (n.14)

She loves shooting but will still insist she does not know what a telescopic sight is. If once she admits to that, and it comes out that she saw the gun a week earlier, how could she not have told George?

Again, she is asking Mr. Jenner to believe that not only has Marina led her to the gun, but that Lee is using it exclusively--to shoot leaves! In a public park! If June is with him, presumably other children are in the park as well. Jeanne is doing her best to diminish Oswald's potential for violence in her eyes, and collaterally, her husband's eyes. Indeed, she will go further than George. She pretends that Oswald did not have a large reaction to George's now famous remark:

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. . . . I came back to the room, where George and Lee were sitting and talking. I said, do you know what they have in the closet? A rifle. And started to laugh about it. And George, of course, with his sense of humor--Walker was shot a few days ago, within that time. He said, "Did you take a pot shot at Walker by any chance?" And we started laughing our heads off, big joke, big George's joke. . .

Mr. Jenner. Now, when George made that remark in the presence of Lee Oswald, "Did you take a pot shot at Walker?" did you notice any change--

Mrs De Mohrenschildt. We were not looking for any. I wish I would know.

Mr. Jenner. Please--I want only your reaction. Your husband has told me his. You noticed nothing?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I didn't notice anything.

Mr. Jenner. Were you looking to see whether he had a change of expression?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No; none at all. It was just a joke.

Mr. Jenner. As far as you were concerned, it was a joke?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Sure.

Mr. Jenner. But did you not look at him to see if he reacted?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No; I didn't take it seriously enough to look at him .

Mr. Jenner. You didn't?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. I didn't.

Mr. Jenner. How long did you remain after that at their home?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. Not very long. I think we went on the terrace. And I don't even remember whether we had a drink, a soft drink, or not. And we left. She got me some roses. They had a big rose tree right by the

staircase. And she got me a lot of roses and we went home. The baby was asleep.

Mr. Jenner. Did you see the Oswalds on any subsequent occasions?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No. (n.15)

The De Mohrenschildts would leave Dallas on April 19 for New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. In the Capitol, George would bring his patron, Clemard Charles, president of the Banque Commerciale de Haiti to a meeting with CIA staff officer Tony Czaikowski on May 7, 1963. The indication was that "Charles might prove useful in ongoing efforts aimed at overthrowing Castro." (n.16)

Mr. Jenner. You returned to Dallas in May?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. End of May.

Mr. Jenner. Did you call the Oswalds?

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. No; we didn't. We heard that they

were already gone. I wanted to see them before we went to Haiti. But I understood that they were gone, or they were going. I had no time. So we didn't get in touch with them. But we had a card from them in New Orleans with their address. But I don't think we ever wrote to them. I don't remember writing. We were going to send them a Christmas card. (n.17)

Marina weighs in:

. . .In the meantime, I decided that if Lee did not have a job, it would be better to go to a different city. I was also afraid that in Dallas Lee would be very tempted to repeat his attempt on Walker. I suggested that we leave for New Orleans--Lee's home town. There he had relatives. I thought he would be ashamed to do the same things there as he had done in Dallas. I wanted to get as far as possible from the occasion of sin. (n.18)

George gives one more disclaimer:

Mr. De Mohrenschildt. I repeat again that they were out of my mind completely--after the last time we saw them.

(n.19)

It is worth repeating: The nearest we have come to a smoking gun is Edward Epstein's discovery that the CIA contact reports on De Mohrenschildt for April and May have been removed from the file. Would those contact reports have failed to mention De Mohrenschildt's conclusion that Oswald was the man who had shot at Walker? Perhaps there was even another embarrassment to be found in those missing papers, a larger embarrassment.

In the back-notes to his book, Legend, Edward J. Epstein gives us, without citation, this terse piece of information:

When he testified before the Warren Commission in 1964, George De Mohrenschildt told a friend in Houston,

Jim Savage, that he had inadvertently given Marina the money Oswald used to buy the rifle. Marina said to him that spring, "Remember the twenty-five dollars you gave me? Well, that fool husband of mine used it to buy a rifle." (n.20)

If true, it is hardly clear when she told him, but it is likely that De Mohrenschildt knew exactly why he was giving Oswald twenty-five dollars, and so chose to tell a false story to Savage in order to have a witness to verify his inadvertence should the source of Oswald's purchase money for the rifle be discovered by the Warren Commission.

Let us add up the damage from the CIA's point of view:

1. A contract agent, George De Mohrenschildt, serving as handler for Oswald, knew in advance that Oswald had a rifle with scope and notified the Agency before April 10.

2. After the Walker episode, this handler was convinced that Oswald had been involved in the shooting, and notified the Agency. His people at Langley now possessed the knowledge that a man in Dallas who had once defected to the Soviet Union had now taken a shot at General Walker.

3. If De Mohrenschildt admitted to his case officer that he had given Oswald the money to purchase the rifle, then the

Agency, in the eyes of the media, in the event that disclosure ever came, would be damned for doing nothing about a putative assassin in Dallas whom they were, at one not wholly trustworthy remove, responsible for arming.

4. Points 1, 2, and 3 would be small but containable disasters in public relations if ever confirmed. The more incommensurable damage might reside in how the contact reports that were purged would reveal their routing through the Agency. To a trained eye, it would be evident by the routing symbols which desks and branches of CIA had become privy to the knowledge that Oswald was a putative assassin. If the CIA had any suspicions of its own people concerning the assassination of JFK (and how could they not, given the boiling disaffection at JM/WAVE in Miami over Kennedy's withdrawal of support from Operation Mongoose which had then left all the most highly motivated anti-Castro Cubans stranded?) yes, given such suspicions of their JM/WAVE people, what if the routing of De Mohrenschildt's contact reports showed that his inside knowledge on Oswald had reached some of the most rebellious of the Agency's enclaves? That would open the CIA to the salient suspicion that some of their officers had been involved with the assassination.

Of course the contact reports were removed from the file. If there is real ground to point 4, then the CIA had a great

deal more to be concerned with than a spell of bad public relations.

We must leave it here. If there is any connection between these matters, and Oswald's adventures in New Orleans, it may well take place in some undefined species of Bermuda Triangle then forming between right-wing money, CIA malcontents, and ex-FBI men. The question, for which there will not be one answer, but two, is that Oswald's activities in New Orleans can be comprehended (and more or less lucidly) on two different levels: everything he did was done either because he was Oswald, or, to the contrary, he was engaged in his favorite and deepest games: He was being used as a provocateur. In turn, as he would have seen it, he was using the people who were using him. There will be behavior to ponder over the next five months in New Orleans.

Chapter 25--"A Terrifically Sad Life"

A day less than a month following the attempt on General Walker's life, Myrtle Evans, a contemporary of Lillian Murret and Marguerite Oswald, was paid a visit mid-morning on Thursday, May 9.

Mrs. Evans. . . .this young man was at the door and. . . did I have an apartment to rent ? . . . I told him I might be able to find something for him, and he told me he had a wife and child over in Texas, and that he was going to bring them over here as soon as he could find something . . .

When we were walking down the steps I looked at him real hardlike, and I didn't recognize him, but something made me ask him, "I know you, don't I?" and he said, "Sure; I am Lee Oswald; I was just waiting to see when you were going to recognize me." I said, "Lee Oswald, what are you doing in this country? I thought you were in Russia. I thought you had given up your American citizenship. . ." and he said, "No," he said, "I went over there, but I didn't give up any citizenship." He said he

had been back in the States for quite a while, and that he had brought his Russian wife back with him . . . and so I said, "Well, come on, Lee, I don't know anybody that will take children," I said, "but we will just ride up and down the streets and see what we can find." So we rode in and out and all around Baronne and Napoleon and Louisiana Avenue, and Carondelet, you know, just weaving in and out the streets, and looking for any signs of apartments for rent, so we finally rode down Magazine Street . . . and all of a sudden he said, "Oh, there's a sign," and I said, "Good," so I pulled up around the corner, and we got out and read the sign, and then we went up and rang the doorbell, and they showed us two apartments and this one apartment was very good for the money.

It was really the most for your money, I'd say, so I said, "Lee, . . .this is the best you can do," and I said, "If I were you, I would take it," and it had a living room that was a tremendous room. . . . and they had a bedroom here, and a kitchen that went this way. . . . and it had a front screened porch, and a yard, and the yard was long, and it had . . .an iron fence, like they use around New Orleans . . . I told Lee to give her. . . the deposit, so she could get the electricity turned on, because he wanted his wife to come for Saturday [two days later. Then] we got in the car and rode on home, and I think I . . . ran to the grocery store too and got a pound of ham and some stuff, and we sat and ate lunch, and he drank a coke, I think, and we talked, and I asked him, I said, "Well, how does it feel to be back in New Orleans?" and he said, "I have wanted to move back to New Orleans."

He said, "New Orleans is my home."

(n.1)

That conversation brought back quite a bit of the past and Myrtle Evans thought of how she had not even heard of Lee Oswald's being in Russia until she learned about it by running into Lillian Murret:

Mrs. Evans. . . . I hadn't seen her in years. I am Catholic and she is Catholic, you see, and so they had this card party or some kind of affair over at the Fontainebleau Motel, and a number of ladies was present, and it was for charity, and we played bingo and canasta and things . . . and she said, "Oh, Myrtle, did you hear about Lee, he gave up his American citizenship and went to Russia, behind the Iron Curtain," and I said, "My God, no," and she said, "Yes." . . .

Mr. Jenner. Was this the first you know or had become aware of the fact that Lee Harvey Oswald was living in Russia?

Mrs. Evans. Yes; now, it was undoubtedly in the newspapers and on TV but I sometimes get to doing a million things and I don't get a chance to read a newspaper. I just skip it. And if I don't get around to it, I skip the news on TV too, even the late news. So a

lot of times I don't know what is going on, but she said . . . "You didn't see it in the paper? Lee has done gone and given up his United States citizenship," and I said, "Poor Marguerite, that's terrible; I feel so sorry for her." (n.2)

She did. She spoke to Mr. Jenner about Marguerite Oswald for as long as he wished to hear, and perhaps for a little longer.

Mrs. Evans. Yes; Marguerite has a terrifically sad life, and she was just a wonderful, gorgeous wife. She married this John Pic and had his boy, and he didn't want any children at all, so she left him and went to live with her sister and [her next husband] Oswald. . . was a Virginia Life Insurance salesman [who] started taking her out. He asked her if she would go out to dinner with him. . . and so she did, and then she married him, and she had this baby right away, which is Robert, and they bought a home out around Alvar somewhere . . .and [now] had the two boys, and they were very happy, and then one day he was out mowing the lawn, and he had this terrific pain, and she was pregnant with Lee. She called the doctor right away, but before the doctor could get there, the man was dead. He had a blood clot, and so he left her with two

babies and one on the way.

Now, he left her with \$10,000, I think, in insurance, so she sold her home, and by that time her two boys were old enough, so she put them in this home. . . and went to work [and] she had got this couple to come and stay with Lee; she had put an ad in the paper or something--some young couple. I don't know their names. She said people told her that when Lee was in the high chair, that he used to cry a lot and they thought they were whipping little Lee, so she came home unexpectedly one night, and the child had welts on his legs, and she told them to get out and get out now. . . . [Then earlier] it was either just before Lee's birth or just after his birth, I can't remember; it has been so many years, but I met her on the corner of Canal and St. Charles. I think that was after Lee's birth. I think her husband had died, and I think she had just taken the baby to the doctor, or something. I think she told me they had wanted to have a little girl, but I can't remember all of that just the way it happened, you know. That's been such a long time ago but I can remember meeting her. . . and all her love, I think, she dumped on Lee after her husband died.

You know, she felt awful sorry for Lee because he never knew his father. He was born after his father died, . . . and she always sort of felt sorry for Lee for that reason, I think, and sort of leaned toward him. She felt sorry for Lee because he never knew his father, I think, just as any mother would. (n.3)

Well, Mr. Jenner had been patient and now he wanted to know how mother and son had acted years later when they came back from New York and Myrtle Evans rented an apartment to them in a building she lived in and managed:

Mr. Jenner. What kind of housekeeper was Margie?

Mrs. Evans. A very good housekeeper; very tasty; she . . . had a lot of natural talent that way and she was not lazy. . . . she kept a very neat house, and she was always so lovely herself. That's why, when I saw her on TV, after all this happened, she looked so old and haggard, and I said, "That couldn't be Margie," but of course it was, but if you had known Margie before all this happened, you would see what I mean. She was beautiful. She had beautiful wavy hair.

Mr. Jenner. What about Lee?

Mrs. Evans. Well. . . when he wanted supper, or something to eat, he would scream like a bull. He would holler, "Maw, where's my supper?" Some of the time Margie would be downstairs talking to me or something, and when he would holler at her, she would jump up right away and go and get him something to eat. Her whole life was wrapped up in that boy and she spoiled him to death. Lee was about 13 at the time, I think, along in there [but if you

take it earlier] it's my opinion that Lee . . .demanded so much of his mother's attention that they didn't get along--I mean her and Ekdahl, because of Lee. . . .

Mr. Jenner. That's just your surmise?

Mrs. Evans. Yes, sir; I can't help feeling that if she had put Lee in a boarding school, she might have hung onto her meal ticket, and considering Mr. Ekdahl's condition and everything, if all that hadn't happened, she would have been sitting on top of the world. She wouldn't have had another worry in her life, as far as money goes, but instead her children came first, I mean, Lee. She just poured out all her love on him, it seemed like. (n.4)

Chapter 26--"He Walks and Talks like a Man"

The Big Easy--a.k.a. New Orleans--may be the only American city where the middle levels of the Mafia are all but indistinguishable from the middle class, but then New Orleans offers more tolerance than other places. Perhaps it is the permissiveness of sub-tropical heat; to own a strip-joint while serving as a dedicated church-goer offers little inner contradiction. It is as if people in the Big Easy would take it for granted that humankind is a spiritual house of cards built on flimsy and therefore full of contradiction and collapse. Opposites in oneself are given, therefore, equal welcome.

It could also be said that Lee had unfinished business in New Orleans, having spent part of his adolescence (once Marguerite could no longer afford the rent at Myrtle Evans' apartment) living in an apartment over a pool hall on a street on the edge of the French Quarter, Exchange Alley, which had its share of whores, petty hoods, and petty gamblers. No adolescent who listens to such nocturnal action from a second story window will move on to other places without expectations building up in him of a dramatic street life to come.

Besides, he was not just drawn back to New Orleans. Marina wanted him to get out of Dallas, Marina wanted him far away from General Walker. She would follow Lee as soon as he found a job. In the meantime, she would live with a new friend, Ruth Paine. So, on April 24, Lee had taken a bus from Dallas to New Orleans where he telephoned his aunt, Lillian Murret, on arrival and asked if he could be put up for a few days.

. . .the Murrets were extremely conservative, they disapproved of his going to Russia, and he was afraid they might not welcome him to New Orleans. Anticipating this, Lee had confided to Marina that he suspected the Murrets lived beyond what his uncle's earnings would support. Lillian's husband, Charles Ferdinand, or "Dutz" Murret, as he had been known since his prizefight days, was a steamship clerk, and Lee thought his uncle might be engaged in some other activity on the side, like bookmaking. There is no evidence that this was so:

(n.1)

On the contrary, there is some. The HSCA probed Dutz

Murret's activities and decided he was well connected to:

significant organized crime figures associated with the Marcello organization. . . .an associate of Dutz Murret reportedly served as a personal aide or driver to Marcello at one time. (272) In another instance, the committee found that an individual connected to Dutz Murret, the person who arranged bail for Oswald following his arrest in August 1963 for a street disturbance, was an associate of two of Marcello's syndicate deputies. (n.2)

Mr. Jenner. What kind of boy was Lee Harvey Oswald?

Mr. Murret. Well, I'll tell you, I didn't take that much interest in him. I couldn't tell you anything about that, because I didn't pay attention to all that. I do think he was a loud kid, you know what I mean; he was always raising his voice when he wanted something from his mother, I know that, but I think a lot of times he was just the opposite. He liked to read, and he stuck by himself pretty much in the apartment.

Mr. Jenner. Did you and Marguerite get along all right?

Mr. Murret. Not too well . . .

Mr. Jenner. What was your impression of Lee then, after he appeared at your house after all those years?

Mr. Murret. . . .I just couldn't warm up to him, but he said he wanted to find a job and get an apartment and then send for his wife in Texas, so I wasn't going to stand in his way. (n.3)

Murret would have spoken in much the same manner if he had had a good deal to do with Oswald in New Orleans in 1963, but we do have Lillian Murret's testimony for corroboration, and it gives the clue: Murret may have had his Mob relations, but like many another semi-underworld figure in New Orleans, he and his wife cherished their hard-won respectability and the good education they had been able to provide for their children. Oswald, odds are, would have seemed altogether too bizarre for Murret to take him seriously. Like just about every other semi-respectable figure on the periphery of the Mafia, Murret was an ardent patriot, and so had suffered embarrassment that one of his relatives had decamped to Russia.

Because of Murret, much has been made of Oswald's possible connections to the Mob, but no evidence has arisen that uncle and nephew kept anything other than family

relations if at a good arm's length.

That does not mean that Dutz Murret's covert reputation had little significance for Lee. On the contrary, it could have given him pride and sanction--one significant guy in the family can underwrite crazy possibilities for another.

Lillian was easier. It may have been Lee's good fortune that it was his aunt, not his uncle, who picked up the phone when he called from the bus station:

Mrs. Murret. . . . he was trying to find a job, he told me, and then he said he would send for Marina, his wife, and the child, and I asked him to tell me what she looked like, you know, to describe her, and he said, "Well, she's just like any other American housewife." He said, "She wears shorts," and so forth, just like any other American housewife, and he said he would have to have a newspaper to scan the want ads and try to find himself a job and so. . . he would go out every morning with his newspaper, and he wouldn't come back until the afternoon, till supper time. I had supper anywhere from 5:30 to 6:00 o'clock, and he was there on time every day for supper, and after supper he didn't leave the house. He would sit down about 6:30 o'clock or 7:00 o'clock and look at some television programs and then he would go right to bed, and he did that every day while he was at the house, and so then on the first Sunday he was there, he was talking--we were

talking about relatives and he said to me, "Do you know anything about the Oswalds?" and I said no, I said that I didn't. I said, "I don't know any of them other than your father, and I saw your uncle one time." . . . He said, "You are the only [relative] I know." . . . Now what he didn't tell me was that on Sunday he must have gone to the cemetery where his father was buried . . . He went to the cemetery. I guess he went to ask the person in charge about the grave . . . (n.4)

One morning, his older cousin, John Murret, gave him the white short-sleeved shirt and tie that he would be wearing ten weeks later when he would distribute pamphlets on Canal Street for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee:

Mrs. Murret. Yes, Lee was getting ready. . . and John was in the back getting dressed to go to work, I think, and he didn't think Lee looked presentable. John said it in such a nice way--he can do it, you know, but he asked Lee, he said, "Lee, here's a shirt; take it; it doesn't fit me. You put it on and here's a nice tie to go with it." He said, "Come on, kid, you want to look good when you go for that job, you know," and so he gave the white shirt and

the tie to Lee to go after the job, and Lee took them.

(n.5)

Oswald stays with the Murrets for more than two weeks and it is possible, as we shall soon see, that he is doing a good bit more than just looking for work, but in any event, on May 9, he does find employment with the Reily Coffee Company:

Mrs. Murret. . . . one morning . . . he went down and applied . . . and he came home waving the newspaper, and he grabbed me around the neck and he even kissed me and he said, "I got it; I got it!"

Mr. Jenner. He was quite happy that he had gotten work?

Mrs. Murret. Yes. I said, "Well, Lee, how much does it pay?" and he said. . . "It don't pay very much, but I will get along on it."

I said, "Well, you know, Lee, you are really not qualified to do anything too much. If you don't like this job, why don't you try to go back to school at night time and see if you can't learn a trade or whatever you think you can prepare yourself to do." And he said, "No, I don't have to go back to school. I don't have to learn anything. I know everything." So that's the way it was.

I couldn't tell him any more . . .

Mr. Jenner. Did you get the impression when you were talking along those lines that he really believed he was that smart?

Mrs. Murret. He believed he was smart; yes, sir.

(n.6)

The William B. Reily Company distributed a product called Luzianne Coffee and Oswald was taken on as a greaser for their large grinding machines.

On his brief application there, he may have set his own record for lies. He said that he had been living at 757 French Street (the Murrets') for three years; that he had graduated from a high school that he had attended for only a few weeks; and he gave as references his cousin John Murret, whose permission he did not ask; Sergeant Robert Hidell (a composite of his brother Robert and his own alias "Hidell"), "on active duty with the U.S. Marine Corps" (a fiction from beginning to end); and "Lieutenant J. Evans, active duty U.S. Marine Corps" (the surname and first initial of [Myrtle Evans' husband], combined with a

fictitious Marine Corps rank and identification).

(n.7)

his lies
seem
pedestrian

He understands how job references work. At low levels of employment, who will bother to check? It is economically non-productive. Yet what a creative liar is Oswald Every name he offers is taken from a different sector of his experience. Past, present, and future, family, Marines, and Myrtle Evans' husband, whom he has not met, are drawn upon to shape his lies. What a wealth of sources. If only he had been a poet instead of a liar.

With it all, the false facts have a purpose. He never knows when he will be on the lam, and so he likes to leave a trail with a plethora of off-shoots to befuddle future pursuers.

Besides, he is now obliged to come down from the monumental high of knowing that he was one dreamer, virtually anonymous to others, who had been ready to shoot a villain, and now he will be lubricating big-bellied machines.

Actually, he may have been having a lively time for himself in New Orleans until he found work. There is certainly testimony from Dean Adams Andrews to contemplate. How true it may be, is open to speculation--Andrews did not have a local reputation for punctilio to detail, a "three-hundred pound, forty-four year old jive-talking attorney with a reputation for exaggeration and showmanship." (n.8)

Mr. Liebeler. I am advised by the FBI that . . . Lee Harvey Oswald came into your office

Mr. Andrews. I don't recall the dates, but briefly, it is this: Oswald came in the office accompanied by some gay kids. They were Mexicanos. He wanted to find out what could be done in connection with a discharge, a yellow paper discharge, so I explained that. . . when he brought the money, I would do the work . . .

Mr. Liebeler. The first time he came in he was with these . . . gay kids. By that, of course, you mean people that appeared to you to be homosexuals?

Mr. Andrews. Well, they swish. What they are, I don't

know. We call them gay kids. . . .

Mr. Liebeler. Have you seen any of them since? . . .

Mr. Andrews. Yes. . . . First district precinct. Police picked them up for wearing clothes of the opposite sex.

Mr. Liebeler. How many of them were there?

Mr. Andrews. About 50. . . . I went down for the ones I represented. They were in the holding pavilion. I paroled them and got them out. . . .

Mr. Liebeler. You say that some of the gay kids [that] the police arrested . . . were the ones that had been with Oswald?

Mr. Andrews. Yes.

Mr. Liebeler. Were you able to identify them by name?

Mr. Andrews. No; --we don't even open up files on them. . . We make a few notes and put it in the general week's work. . . .these kids come and go . . .

Mr. Liebeler. Let me try and pin down how long it was after the first time Oswald came in that these kids all got arrested. . . . Was it a month? . . .

Mr. Andrews. . . . Ten days at the most.

Mr. Liebeler. I suppose the New Orleans police department

files would reflect the dates these people were picked up?

Mr. Andrews. I checked the first district's blotter and the people are there, but I just can't get their names. You see, they wear names just like you and I wear clothes. Today their name is Candy; tomorrow it is Butsie; next day it is Mary. You never know what they are. Names are a very improbable method of identification. More sight. Like you see a dog. He is black and white. That's your dog. You know them by sight mostly.

Mr. Liebeler. Do you remember what date it was that that large arrest was made?

Mr. Andrews. No; every Friday is arrest day in New Orleans. . . . It had to be a Friday or Saturday.

Mr. Liebeler. In May of 1963?

Mr. Andrews. Yes.

Mr. Liebeler. After you saw these kids at this big pickup on Friday or Saturday, did you ever see any of them again after that?

Mr. Andrews. No; still looking for them. They owe me a fee. . . .

(n.9)

Mr. Liebeler. Did Oswald appear to you to be gay?

Mr. Andrews. You can't tell. I couldn't say. He swang with the kids. He didn't swish, but birds of a feather

flock together. . . .

Mr. Liebeler. When you say he didn't swish, what do you mean by that?

Mr. Andrews. He is not effeminate; his voice isn't squeaky; he didn't walk like or talk like a girl; he walks and talks like a man.

Mr. Liebeler. . . . Was there anything striking about the way he carried himself?

Mr. Andrews. I never paid attention. I never watched him walk other than into and out of the office. There's nothing that would draw my attention to anything out of the ordinary, but I just assumed that he knew these people and was running with them. They had no reason to come. The three gay kids he was with, they were ostentatious. They were what we call swishers. You can just look at them. All they had to do was open their mouth. . . . With those pronounced ones, you never know what the relationship is with anyone else with them, but I have no way of telling whether he is gay or not, other than he came in with what we call here queens. That's about it.

(n.10)

The enigma of Oswald's homosexuality might now be clarified to a degree, except that we are being told all this by a man whose word is not considered reliable. We have,

then, no more than one more question to carry into Lee's relation with Marina now that she is arriving and he, now that he is working, will, no longer be free during the day and must be occupied at night with the family life he has resumed after this vacation from marriage.

It is worth reminding ourselves, however, of the paradox concerning Oswald. To some degree, he will always remain mysterious; yet that contributes to the sense we develop of him. If he is a man we can never understand with comfort, still the small mysteries surrounding him give resonance to our comprehension. An echo is less defined than the note that created it, but our ear is enriched by the addition to the primary sound.

If this last thought is too resonant, one can offer a small hypothesis on his behavior before Marina comes to town. During that period, she has been living in Irving, Texas, between Dallas and Fort Worth with Ruth Paine, who is also separated (although more permanently) from her husband. Marina is not unhappy with such an arrangement. Life is tranquil with Ruth and Marina is respected. The women grow so close that Ruth, knowing she will be driving to Philadelphia that summer to visit her parents, mentions to Marina that she can her along with her, and June as well. Since there are sizable Russian communities in New York, Philadelphia, and

Washington, perhaps Marina could find a job in that area.

Marina is taken with such an idea, indeed, she is so intrigued that in a letter she mentions the possibility to Lee.

He suffers in silence. Later, when she is with him, he will torment her all summer with charges of spiritual treason--she had not really been ready not to join him in New Orleans after all--but then he will conceal such turmoil while living with the Murrets. He goes out to look for work in a shirt he never bought for himself, knowing that his wife is ready to go off with a girl-friend. If he is homosexual at all, if the inner drama of his marriage is that he is only half-connected to Marina and the other half of him is drawn toward having sex with men, no matter the damage (in those years of the early '60s) to the idea of himself as a man and future leader, and if this need for men has been intermittently expressed in his adolescence, his Marine Corps years and, covertly, in Russia and perhaps in Dallas, then the picture offered by Dean Adams Andrews takes on some credibility. It certainly helps to explain those periods of desire that alternate in him with whole lack of interest in Marina so intense that she complains aloud about it to people she does not even know well. In the sexual sense, it could be said that he only seems married to her fifteen weeks in the year.

Chapter 27--Forbidden Strings

One of those weeks begins on the night of May 11 when Ruth Paine arrives in her station wagon with her two children and Marina and June. That night Lee and his wife:

. . . were happy to be together again--"I've missed you so," Lee said again and again--and they made love three times that night and the next morning. It was the first time they had made love since March 29 or 30, the weekend when Marina had taken Lee's photograph with the rifle. (n.1)

Since we are speaking of Lee and Marina, it was not necessarily so loving as that. In front of Ruth, they had a number of quarrels, but then, the groundwork for disagreements in New Orleans was established as soon as Marina saw the apartment.

Mrs. Paine. . . . Lee showed her, of course, all the virtues of the [place] he had rented. . . . He was pleased that. . . it was large enough that he could invite me to stay. . . And he pointed out this little courtyard with grass, and fresh strawberries ready to pick, where June could play. And a screened porch entryway. And quite a large living room. And he was pleased with the furniture and with how the landlady said this was early New Orleans style. And Marina was definitely not as pleased as he had hoped. I think he felt--he wanted to please her. This showed in him.

Mr. Jenner. Tell us what she said. What led you to this conclusion?

Mrs. Paine. She said it is dark, and it is not very clean. She thought the courtyard was nice, a grass spot where June could play, fenced in, but there was very little ventilation. We were immediately aware there were a lot of cockroaches.

Mr. Jenner. Was she aware of this and did she comment on that?

Mrs. Paine. I don't know as anything was said. He was pretty busy explaining. He was doing his best to get rid of them. But they didn't subside. I remember noticing

that he was tender and vulnerable on this point, when she arrived.

Mr. Jenner. He was tender?

Mrs. Paine. Hoping for--particularly vulnerable, hoping for approval from her, which she didn't give. It wasn't a terribly nice apartment. And she had been disappointed, because when we first arrived she thought that the home we [came to] was the apartment.

Mr. Jenner. She thought the Murrets' home [was where they would be staying] ?

Mrs. Paine. Yes. . . . she said, "This is lovely, how pleased I am." So that she was disappointed by the contrast with the apartment that she really had to live in. (n.2)

Priscilla Johnson McMillan remarks: ". . . it occurred to Ruth that Lee might or might not care about Marina, but he certainly cared about her opinion." (n.3)

Indeed he did. In Russia he had promised that he would provide for them in America; he had not done too well. Now, he was hoping that she would love the new apartment. Once again, fresh hope for his marriage was corroded by the acid

animosity of Marina's equally deep but contrary heart.

Mrs. Paine. . . .they argued most of that weekend. I was very uncomfortable in that situation, and he would tell her to shut up, tell her, "I said it, and that is all the discussion on the subject."

Representative Ford. What were the kinds of discussions that prompted this?

Mrs. Paine. I . . . I do recall feeling that the immediate things they were talking about were insufficient reason for that much feeling being passed back and forth, and I wondered if I wasn't adding to the strain in the situation, and did my best to get back to Texas directly.

(n.4)

Ruth Paine had arrived on Saturday and was gone by Monday, and we can only surmise the inner range of her feelings. Thirty years later, Marina was asked by interviewers whether she had ever suspected Lee of homosexual activity, and she replied that she had never seen evidence of it. Yet, it was also true of Marina that she wished to

accommodate a question, and so after some thought, she remarked that when Ruth Paine had stayed over in New Orleans those two nights in May, Lee had been making love in a new way, and with some embarrassment Marina implied that he had mounted from the rear, an act which he had never initiated before, and at that moment, their door ajar, Ruth Paine had passed. Probably, thinks Marina, Ruth saw them. "Lee," Marina recalled, "was not embarrassed at all," and that to her now seemed some small evidence, perhaps, of homosexual behavior (as if lack of dismay at being glimpsed in the act was not heterosexual behavior.)

In any event, it may have been uncomfortable for Ruth Paine.

Perhaps it is time to describe her: she was tall, she was thin, she had a long narrow freckled face and was a converted Quaker. She and her husband Michael were devoted to madrigal singing and folk dancing. It had helped to bring them together.

Ruth wore rimless glasses. She was serious. In the hundreds of pages of her testimony before the Warren Commission, there are not a great many humorous remarks. Much the same can be said of her husband, Michael Paine. A highly respected helicopter engineer--dry, tall, slim, and quite as serious in his testimony--one gets a picture of two

exceptionally decent people living under the curse of true gentry: they have been brought up to be so decent to others, so firm and uncompromising about not allowing the greedy little human animal within ever to speak, that one can almost hear strings snapping. Needless to say, it was not a happy marriage. Respectful of one another, always respectful of one another, their personal relations, by the time they encountered the Oswalds, had gone cold in the water.

Marina met Ruth Paine at a party in Dallas given the previous February by a geologist named Everett Glover. De Mohrenschildt, small surprise, had managed the meeting (which would later cause considerable suspicion of Ruth Paine until the nature of her careful open testimony, so responsible to the need for certifying, then fortifying, the smallest detail made it evident that she could not possibly be an agent in American or Soviet intelligence since she had no instincts for prevarication. Indeed, we would have to certify her as a great actress if the person she presented to the Warren Commission was no more than a role she was playing.

The emotional facts she offered to explain the friendship were not complex. Ruth had responded to Marina as only a woman who loves her husband and is not loved in return would respond to an attractive waif of a girl who spoke no English inasmuch as her husband did not wish her to learn the language

because then--so Marina explained--he might lose his Russian.

Such sentiment was an outrage to Ruth. So was the pressure that Lee regularly put upon Marina to return alone to Russia. Michael Paine, whose attitude toward Lee and Marina was much the same as his wife's, thought it was next door to a crime that Lee was actually serious about sending Marina back to the USSR:

Mr. Paine. . . . I felt that he was keeping her a vassal and since I was more eager to hear her opinions of Russia than his opinions of Russia, I was eager that she should learn English, and when--Ruth told me that Marina thought she might have to go back to the Soviet Union, and I thought out of the largesse of this country it should be possible for her to stay here if she wanted to stay here, and she quite apparently did, she struck me as a somewhat apolitical person and yet true, just and conscientious...

(n.5)

The Paines might not be living together but they still thought as one. Ruth loved the Russian language, had been studying it devotedly. She came quickly to the conclusion

that if Marina lived with her in that husbandless house in Irving, Texas, where Ruth now dwelt with her children, it might be good for both women. Michael Paine agreed entirely: ". . .it was agreeable to me to look forward to financing her stay until she could make her own way here." (n.6)

It is interesting that on April 7, three days before Lee would make his attempt on Walker, Ruth Paine, with considerable difficulty, wrote a long letter in Russian to Marina. From its tone, we can be certain that Marina had already confided many a secret of her marriage to Ruth, and, quite likely, given the secret agenda of such confessions (which is to clear the bile out of one's system so one can love again), Marina had probably painted a portrait of her relations with Lee that was more miserable even than the reality.

Dear Marina,

I want to invite you to move here and live with me both now and later when the baby is born. I don't know

how things are for you at home with your husband. I don't know what would be better for you, June and Lee--to live together or apart. It is, of course, your affair, and you have to decide what is better and what you wish to do. But I want to say that you have a choice. When you wish, for days, weeks, months, you could move here. I have already thought about this invitation a lot. It is not a quick thought.

It seems to me that it would be pleasant and useful for us both to live together. We can easily help one another. When you converse, it helps me. If you sometimes correct my mistakes in conversation or letters, I would be very happy. It is so helpful to me that I would consider it proper to buy all which we need from the grocery store, food, soap, etc. Lee would need to give you enough money to pay for clothes and medical expenses.

You can get rest here such as you need during pregnancy. During the day it is quiet here, but not so quiet as at your place. You and June would be by yourselves in the room which fronts the street. There you would find privacy.

Here, I think, it would not be difficult to learn English. From me and from my children, you would learn words.

In the course of two weeks you could learn all I know about cooking. I'm bad at housecleaning. Perhaps you could help me with this a bit.

I don't want to hurt Lee. Of course I don't know what he wants. Perhaps he feels like Michael, who at one time wants and doesn't want to live with me. You know, you could live here workdays and return home weekends. You would only need to carry back and forth clothes,

diapers, etc. The other things necessary for June and you are here all the time: beds, sheets, towels, a high chair for June, etc.

Please think about this invitation and tell me (now or later) what you think. If you are interested in coming here earlier than September or October, (about which we have already spoken) I want to write an official letter to you and Lee, and I want him to know all I have said to you. Where you and June live--that is of course a matter which touches him deeply. Therefore I want to speak directly with him about it.

Your

Ruth

(n.7)

It gives a turn in our sense of Ruth that, in fact, she never did send this letter. Her conscience debated whether one had a right, no matter one's good intentions, to come between a husband and wife. As a Quaker, she would not put transcendental weight upon a sacrament, but as a moralist with a failed marriage, how could a husband and wife not seem inviolate?

Then, three weeks after she did not mail the letter, Lee was off to New Orleans. By mutual agreement of all, Paines and Oswalds, Marina and Lee vacated the Neely Street apartment

and Marina moved over to Irving from Neely Street and lived with Ruth for the next two weeks.

Now, on Magazine Street, Ruth, passing their open doorway, catches a glimpse of fornication and Marina is not so unhappy as she has pretended. Small surprise if Ruth leaves next day and with her dutiful conscience hopes for the best for both of them, hopes for it against all the impulses of all the strings that have been forbidden to squeak, forbidden all but eternally.

Chapter 28--Love, Heat and Grease

Marina made no secret of her interest in sex. At the newsstands, where they fairly often found themselves at night, she would pick out the most unwholesome-looking magazines she could find and pore over the photographs of nude men and women. Lee affected to be above it all. . . But more than once she spied him flicking through a girlie magazine.

Aside from June. . . sex was again the brightest feature of their marriage. For all his Puritanism, Lee enjoyed making love. After intercourse, he would go into the bathroom to wash off, singing one of his arias, and lie down with his back to Marina.

"Don't touch me," he would say, "And don't say a word. I'm in paradise now. I don't want my good mood spoiled."

There was a mirror at the foot of their bed, and Lee would pile up pillows at the head of the bed so he could watch them making love. Marina did not like it. She pulled the pillows down or turned her head away. She was hurt that the mirror seemed to excite Lee more than she did.

Sometimes when she was sitting in front of the mirror brushing her hair, he would bend down and kiss her, looking into the mirror. . .

"Who are you kissing--me or the mirror?"

"You mean you don't like it?"

"Of course not," she would answer, and give him a little rap on the rear end. (n.1)

It was infuriating. Her husband, Lee Harvey Oswald, was more stimulated by the sight of himself than by her. But then, Marina had not had a mother like Marguerite to keep telling her how wonderful she was. Since his interior often felt considerably less extraordinary than Marguerite's description of him, he was naturally eager to encounter that other person described as so wonderful by his mother--occasionally, the mirror would be kind enough to offer agreeable sights. What an attractive fellow!

Sometimes in the New Orleans heat, he could get sexy. "He liked to take this pose, that pose, in front of the mirror," Marina said, "and then he would ask, 'Don't you think I'm gorgeous?'" He liked to walk naked. Never ashamed of his body. It was hot and, you know, he would strip everything and sit on the screened-in porch in the air. He just liked it."

And, of course, they fought. From the moment Ruth left, they fought even more. Ruth Paine had hardly been aware that they had been very much on good behavior with her.

They fought about cockroaches, too. Marina sometimes got up at night and went to the kitchen for something cold to drink. The place would be swarming with cockroaches.

"Come in and admire your handiwork," she would call out toward the bedroom--it was "his" handiwork because Lee did not allow her to use the spray.

He would run in naked from the bedroom, brandishing a can of roach spray and squirting it everywhere. Marina laughed, because he was too stingy to buy decent spray, too stingy to use enough of it, and because he put it in the wrong places.

"You woke me up and now you're laughing at me." He was hurt.

(n.2)

During the day, he squirted grease on his machines; at night it was bug-killer on Magazine Street. He stank of oil; he stank of insect poison. He festered in the heat.

He had told her he had a job in photography, but when he came home night after night smelling of coffee and covered with grease and coffee dust, she knew he had lied to her again. She was certain his job had to do with coffee when he started bringing home packages of coffee and coupons. They used the coupons to buy a coffee pot and a huge saucepan for cooking crabs. Marina was pleased that Lee was doing something for their home, but she begged him to stop bringing the coupons home. She knew that he had stolen them, and she said his job meant more to them than the coupons. (n.3)

He could hardly have concealed his job another day. He was beginning to reek of it.

. . . Lee's habits were beginning to change. He was getting very sloppy. By late May and early June, he had become alarmingly indifferent to the way he looked and went around wearing only sandals, work pants, and a dirty T-shirt. Marina would beg him, when they were going out, please to put on a fresh shirt. He refused--and she would cry. She was ashamed to be seen on the street with him.

(n.4)

She could bedevil herself with the thought that she had been ashamed of the way Anatoly dressed in Minsk, and now Lee walked around in outright filthy condition.

"My work isn't worth getting dressed for," he told Marina.

"Do it for yourself, then," she said. "Or if you won't do it for yourself, do it for me."

"I simply don't care," he replied. (n.5)

The grunge at work--the grease from coffee beans and the grease from the machines, the heat, the sense of sliding into new kinds of trouble. His temper is on edge.

Mrs. Garner. . . I said, "Lee, why don't you talk English to your little girl and your wife? That way she could learn to talk English and when the little girl goes

to school it wouldn't be so hard on her."

He said, "She has time enough to learn that," and he never had a nice word to say to me after that. I think that must have made him hate me or something, because he just passed me up all the time too, and never turned his head to look. . . .

Mr. Liebeler. Did you have any other contact with Oswald yourself, personally?

Mrs. Garner. Yes. One time I went for my rent. It was a few days past due, the rent, and I mean, you know, when you let them go they wait too long and they don't ever get it. It was a few days later. . . and he was starting out the drive to catch a bus on the corner, and when he saw me he turned around and looked. . . I said, "Oswald, you got the rent? The landlady is coming for the rent." He said, "Yes, I have it."

He was fixing to go to the bus, so he turned around to walk up the drive to go get the money, and I said, "Go on where you have to go; I will get it later," and he just pushed me aside and went by me and went and got the money and handed it to me.

Mr. Liebeler. Did he actually push you aside physically?

Mrs. Garner. Yes, just like that. . . .

Mr. Liebeler. He actually laid his hands on you?

Mrs. Garner. Put his hands on me just like that and pushed me.

Mr. Liebeler. Did he say anything?

Mrs. Garner. He didn't say a thing. Came back and gave me the money and that was it.

Mr. Liebeler. When was the next time you had any--

Mrs. Garner. Well, I didn't talk to him any more than that because I noticed how he was, wouldn't answer you when you say good morning or good evening, hello or good morning, so I just never bothered. The only thing was at night he used to come past behind the house and always wore trunks, yellow trunks with thongs, no top shirt, and he used to stuff all my garbage cans and all the cans on the street, and never would talk to anybody, pass right by

the door of the apartment of the other people and never
did talk to anybody. (n.6)

He is working on a job for which he feels no affection.
It is poorly paid, and by his fastidious lights--so much a
product of Marguerite's love of the dainty--is absolutely
filthy work. He lubricates big-bellied machines:

Mr. Le Blanc. . . . one of these guys that just didn't
care whether he learned it or didn't learn it. . . .
usually after a week anybody with any mechanical
knowledge, there is nothing to it, because all it is is
finding the grease and oil fittings and we put him on his
own. I put him on the fifth floor and told him to take
care of everything on the fifth floor and I would be back
shortly to check. . . . and about a half hour or 45
minutes or so, I would go back up and check how he is
doing. . . . and I wouldn't find him., So I asked the
fellows that would be working on the floor had they seen
him and they said yes, he squirted the oil can a couple of
times around different things and they don't know where he
went. So I would start hunting all over the building.

There is five stories on one side and four on the other. I would cover from the roof on down and I wouldn't locate him, and I asked him, I said, "Well, where have you been?" And all he would give me was that he was around. I asked him, "Around where?" He says, "Just around," and he would turn around and walk off. (n.7)

Mr. Liebeler. I would imagine from time to time he ended up with grease on his hands and it was a greasy job?

Mr. Alba. Yes; it was a dirty job.

Mr. Liebeler. Did he ever complain about that?

Mr. Le Blanc. Well, he would complain now and then. I would tell him, well, that goes in with the job of oiling and greasing. (n.8)

Being dirty affects him so profoundly that he stays dirty when he gets home. It could be related to sitting in dirty diapers as a child through all those hours when Marguerite was away at work and the young couple she had hired did not take much care of him unless it was to slap his legs. The dirt and grease also turns him on to guns. Of course, sitting in shitty diapers is equal to infantile omnipotence, and the

rifle does bear the same relation to omnipotent sentiments as a pen or a pencil--if you are a writer. So, the dirt and the grease probably do stimulate him to low dirty quietly violent thoughts.

Mr. Alba. . . . employees at Reily told [the FBI] after the assassination, of course, that Lee Oswald spent as much time "Over at Alba's Garage as he did over here at the plant."

Mr. Liebel. Did that seem to be the case to you prior to the assassination?

Mr. Alba. Yes and no; if that is any kind of an answer . . . Lee Oswald would. . . put a nickel in the coke machine and start paging through magazines and just lost track of time.

Mr. Liebel. You said that he was called from your place to go back to the coffee company from time to time?

Mr. Alba. There were anywhere from two to four different occasions that I can remember that someone would come in there and tell him, "Now, Lee Oswald, they are looking for you over there. If you keep this up, you are going to get canned." And Oswald would say, "I'm coming. I'm coming."

(n.9)

But Lee and Adrian Alba had interesting if intermittent conversations while after Lee was reading the magazines in the front office of the garage:

Mr. Alba. Well, we have a coffee urn and a coke machine and some chairs in there, and a coffee table, and on the coffee table I would say that I had approximately anywhere from 80 to 120 magazines. . . . Lee Oswald. . . requested permission to take one or two off at a time, and kept them anywhere from 3 days to a week, and would make the point of letting me know he was returning them. And then a few days later he would ask that he borrow another magazine or two magazines. . . . (n.10)

Mr. Liebeler. Did he strike you as being peculiar in any way?

Mr. Alba. Yes; he did. He was quiet. . . . You could ask Lee Oswald two or three questions, and if Lee Oswald wasn't apparently interested in the course of the conversation, he would just remain paging through the book and look up and say, "Did you say something to me?" . . . but all you had to do was mention guns and gun magazines and Lee was very free with the conversation . . . (n.11)

Mr. Liebeler. I am looking at an FBI report which . . . indicates that you recalled [a conversation] in which you and Oswald discussed the merits of small calibres and larger calibre bullets and the report said. . . that Oswald mentioned that a small calibre bullet was more deadly than the larger one, to which point you agreed.

Mr. Alba. Having been left with a wounding effect you would survive a larger calibre wound, your chances of survival . . . would be greater than with a smaller calibre. We went into the discussion of basing the thing on the ice pick versus the bread knife--I don't think I mentioned this part to the FBI--reflecting the whole picture that you would be better off receiving a wound from a 10-inch bread knife than you would be being gigged into with a 2- or 3-inch ice pick, and that reflecting the difference between the large calibre wound and the small calibre wound.

Mr. Liebeler. What led you and Oswald to agree that you would be better off being hit with a bread knife than with an ice pick?

Mr. Alba. Internal bleeding. (n.12)

As translated by the Warren Commission from a letter written in Russian:

25 May 1963

New Orleans

Dear Ruth! Hello!

Here it is already a week since I received your letter. I can't produce any excuses as there are no valid reasons. I'm ashamed to confess that I am a person of moods. And my mood currently is such that I don't feel much like anything. As soon as you left all "love" stopped and I am very hurt that Lee's attitude toward me is such that I feel each minute that I bind him. He insists that I leave America, which I don't want to do at all. I like America very much and think that even without Lee I would not be lost here. What do you think?

This is the basic question which doesn't leave me day or night. And again Lee has said that he doesn't love me, so you see we came to mistaken conclusions. It is hard for you and me to live without the return of our love--interesting, how will it all end?

Now a bit about the impressions I've received this week. Last Saturday we went to Aunt Lillian's and, leaving June with her, were at the lake. Lee wanted to catch crabs, but caught nothing. I have a very fine opinion of his relatives. Straight-forward and kind people; to me they are very attentive. I like them. We have been to the French Quarter in the evening. It's a shame you didn't manage to get there in the evening. For me it was especially interesting as it was the first time in my life I had seen such. There were many nite clubs there. Through the open doors were visible barely covered dancing girls (so as to say not entirely unclothed). Most of them had really very pretty, rare figures and if one doesn't think about too many things, then one can like

them very much. There were a great many tourists there, for the most part very rich. . . .

Dear Ruth, a thousand apologies that I am not sending your letter back [with my corrections], as I entrusted it to Lee, he put it in his shirt pocket and lost it. We were leaving the house when the letter arrived, and so took it with us to read it. But I have no pockets and so it happened I gave it into Lee's keeping. Dear Ruth, forgive me, please. It will not happen again. I can only say that there were a good many mistakes and it would have been interesting and useful for you to see them, but I liked the style of the letter. In this regard it was even grammatical. . . .

With this I close my epistle. June is feeling fine. And we are happy that she is walking rather a lot. She doesn't like to walk holding onto a hand, but wants to do it herself. June give me much joy and toil. But for one's own baby it is pleasant to do everything, isn't it so?

I kiss and hug you and the children. June sends greetings to [your kids] Lynn and Chris--ha, ha! Greetings to you and Michael from Lee.

Sincerely,

Marina

(n.13)

Mrs. Murret. Now, what he did at home--how he acted around Marina there, I don't know, but when he was in my presence he was very attentive to her and very well-mannered. He would, I mean, open the car door for her and

so forth--very attentive. He would pull the chair out for her and things like that. He was very well-mannered. I have to say that for him.

Mr. Jenner. What was her attitude toward him?

Mrs. Murret. Well, she seemed the same way. They seemed to get along very nicely together, I thought, when they were here in New Orleans. They would take a ride out to the French Market and buy some crabs and some shrimp and come home and boil and cook them. They got a big bang out of doing things like that. (n.14)

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Chapter 29--Fair Play for Cuba

Lee has been after Marina to go back to Russia. As they come together and draw apart, it has become one of the recurring themes in their marriage. Whenever he is most vexed with her, he threatens to dispatch her back to Russia. In October of 1962, hardly three months after they have returned to America, the theme is introduced and on Elsbeth Street, by February of 1963, he has her applying to the Soviet Consulate in Washington for permission to return home. A correspondence commences between Marina and the Soviets in Washington.

Marina can read between the bureaucratic lines. Soviet officials, she can see, are not in a hurry to take her back. Processing her application will require half a year. Even by June 4, after several exchanges of letters over the months between, little has gone forward:

June 4, 1963

Dear Marina Nicolaevna,

In connection with your request for entrance to the

Soviet Union for permanent residence, in our letter of April 18th we requested you if possible to come to Washington and visit the Consulate Section of our Embassy.

If it is difficult for you to visit us we request you to advise us by letter concerning reasons which made you request this permission for entering the USSR for permanent residence.

Respectfully yours,

V. Gerasimov

N. Reznichenko

In Charge of the Consulate

Section of the Soviet Embassy

in United States

(n.1)

This letter did not depress her. A pot such as this could be kept simmering for years. She made no rush to answer.

It is no small matter for Lee, however. If she hates his absorption in politics, he hates the mill-stone of his marriage. It is inhibiting to his political actions. The attack on General Walker had been a shakedown cruise to test his depth of conviction. Did he have sufficient ruthlessness

to kill for political purposes? If he had withdrawn altogether from Marina in the weeks preceding that attempt, it was as if murderous impulses had to be gathered without outside distractions. To continue his marriage was to condemn himself, doubtless, to a life of mediocrity, yet--there is no other explanation for so many of his actions--a sizable part of himself adored Marina, and adored her quite apart from his full affection for June. For that matter, love for June was like an open display of his love for himself. But Marina he adored as his woman, his difficult, caustic, contrary and often wholly attractive wife--whom he could hardly tolerate for most of the month--are half of all young husbands in existence all that unlike him? Or young wives?

Ruthlessness! He must have whipped himself with the thought that he lacked the cruelty to be a revolutionary, stern and disciplined. Now, in New Orleans, on May 23, the first book he takes out from the public library is Portrait of a Revolutionary: Mao Tse Tung, and the author, Robert Payne, says of Mao, "he represented even in those days a new kind of man; one of those who singlehandedly construct whole civilizations." (n.2) If that was the noble role Mao had sculpted forth from history, how could Oswald not have decided--indeed, can we doubt it?--that it is not enough to be a leader; one has to fashion a new kind of existence.

First, however, is the little matter of playing an active role in history. If he had been a warlock, he would have consulted his runes, but he was, as he saw it, a twenty-three-year-old master of new politics on the road to future glory--and the road went straight through Cuba.

. . .Once he got to Havana, he could no doubt find contacts and connections with the Castro government. He even at one point bragged to Marina that he would become a "minister" in the government. In any case, it became clear to Marina, as she later testified, that "his basic desire was to get to Cuba by any means. . . ." (n.3)

He would not have found it hard to believe that if he could get there and reach the ear of those who counted, he could become an intimate adviser on what was going on in the USSR. (Indeed, in retrospect, we can ask ourselves whether Castro's advisers knew any more about Soviet reality than Oswald.)

The problem for Oswald was getting there. Since it was illegal at the time for a United States citizen to travel to Cuba, he would have to obtain his visa at a Cuban embassy outside the country, and to do that, he would need some credentials to prove that he was a supporter of the Cuban government. His game in New Orleans involved creating just such a record for himself.

(n.4)

May 26

Dear Sirs,

I am requesting formal membership in your organization. . . .

Now that I live in New Orleans I have been thinking about renting a small office at my own expense for the purpose of forming a F.P.C.C. branch here in New Orleans. Could you give me a charter?

Also, I would like information on buying pamphlets, etc., in large lots, as well as blank F.P.C.C. applications, etc.

Also, a picture of Fidel, suitable for framing, would be a welcome touch.

Offices down here rent for \$30 a month and if I had a steady flow of literature I would be glad to take the expense.

Of course I work and could not supervise the office at all times but I'm sure I could get some volunteers to

do it.

Could you add some advice or recommendations?

I am not saying this project will be a roaring success but I am willing to try an office, literature, and getting people to know you. [You] are the fundamentals of the F.P.C.C. as far as I can see so here's hoping to hear from you.

Yours respectfully,

Lee H. Oswald

(n.5)

Without waiting for a reply, Lee then set about printing his own literature. On May 29, after he had apparently scouted several similar establishments, he walked into the Jones Printing Company of 422 Girod Street and handed the secretary an 8 by 10 looseleaf sheet on which he had sketched a handbill:

HANDS

OFF

CUBA!

Join the Fair Play for

Cuba Committee

New Orleans Charter

Member Branch

Free Literature, Lectures

Location:

Everyone Welcome!

(n.6)

He would soon receive a letter from the National Director of F.P.C.C., V.T. Lee, telling him not to take an office. Polls would doubtless have shown that the American public was something like 95% against Castro in that late spring of 1963, or at least 95 out of 100 people were not going to be caught saying anything positive to a pollster. If such an estimate is reasonable, and it certainly is for such places on the Southern Rim as New Orleans, need we wonder that Hitler and Stalin could get 99% of a plebiscite? V. T. Lee's letter gives its small hint of a siege mentality:

May 29, 1963

Lee H. Oswald
1907 L/C Magazine Street
New Orleans, Louisiana
Dear Friend:

. . .Your interest in helping to form an FPCC Chapter in New Orleans is gratefully received. I shall try to give you . . . a better picture of what this entails [and so] am enclosing a copy of our Constitution and By-Laws for all Chapters and Student Councils. You will note that

there is a considerable autonomy for an organization our size. We try and let all Chapters operate according to the local requirements [but as we] know from experience it is quite a problem and requires some sacrifice on the part of those involved.

You must realize that you will come under tremendous pressures . . . and you will not be able to operate in the manner which is conventional here in the north-east. Even most of our big-city Chapters have been forced to abandon the idea of operating an office in public. The national office in New York is the only one in the country today and the New York City Chapter is in our office too, so it is the only Chapter with an office. Most Chapters have discovered it is easier to operate semi-privately out of a home and maintain a P.O. Box for all mailings and public notices. . . . We do have a serious and often violent opposition and this [gives rise to] many unnecessary incidents which frighten away prospective supporters. I definitely would not recommend an office, at least not one that will be easily identifiable to the lunatic fringe in your community. Certainly, I would not recommend that you engage in one in the very beginning but wait and see how you can operate in the community through several public experiences . . .

Note: when you contact people by mail we recommend . . . that no full name be on the return address on the outside of the envelope. . . . Many people will respond better with this type of protection against nutty neighbors and over-curious postmen. These may sound like small things to you, but I can assure you we have gone through this a thousand and more times the length and breadth of the country and have learned a great deal over

the last three years through some bitter experiences. . .

We hope to hear from you very soon in this regard and are looking forward to a good working relationship for the future. Please feel free to discuss this matter quite thoroughly with me.

Faternally,

V.T. Lee

National Director

(n.7)

Since Oswald would follow none of this advice, we may be entitled to guess that the prime reason for the letter's stimulation of his efforts, was that V.T. Lee's last name was equal to his first.

To build a record good enough to impress Castro's officials, Oswald had to assemble a dossier: official FPCC letters, such documents as handbills, and, even more important, news clippings. He would have to select actions that would put him in the news. A first step would be to create other officials besides himself in what would be the New Orleans chapter of the FPCC:

Mr. Rankin. Were the words "A.J. Hidell, Chapter President" . . . in your handwriting?

Marina Oswald. Yes. . . . Lee wrote this down on a piece of paper and told me to sign it on this card, and said that he would beat me if I didn't. . . .

Mr. Rankin. Did you have any other discussion about your signing that name? . . .

Marina Oswald. . . . I said, "You have selected this name because it sounds like Fidel" and he blushed and said, "Shut up, it is none of your business."

Mr. Rankin. Was there any discussion about who Hidell, as signed on the bottom of that card, was?

Marina Oswald. He said that it was his own name and that there is no Hidell.

Mr. Rankin. Was there anything else said about that matter at any time?

Marina Oswald. I taunted him about this and teased him about this and said how shameful it is that a person who has his own perfectly good name should take another name, and he said, ". . . I have to do it this way, people will think I have big organization. . . ." (n.8)

Mr. Rankin. Was there anything. . . that caused you to think he was different?

Marina Oswald. . . . After he became busy with his pro-Cuban activity, he received a letter from somebody in New York, some Communist--probably from New York--I am not sure from where--from some Communist leader and he was very happy, he felt that this was a great man that he had received a letter from.

You see, when I would make fun of him, of his activity to some extent, he said that I didn't understand him and here, you see, was proof that someone else did, that there were people who understood his activity.

I would say that to Lee, that Lee could not really do much for Cuba, that Cuba would get along well without him if they had to.

Mr. Rankin. You would tell that to him?

Marina Oswald. Yes.

Mr. Rankin. And what would he say in return?

Marina Oswald. He shrugged his shoulders and kept his own opinion. (n.9)

In the narrative she wrote for the use of the Warren Commission, Marina said:

. . . To tell the truth, I sympathized with Cuba. I have a good opinion of this new Cuba, since when I was living in Russia I saw lots of excellent movies about the new life in Cuba. After seeing these films and reading the literature, I came to think that the people were satisfied . . . and that the revolution had given to many work, land, and a better life than they had had before. When I came to the United States and people told me that they did not love Fidel Castro, I did not believe them. In Russia we did not think this way, since we had only heard good things about him. . . .

But I did not support Lee since I felt that he was too small a person to take so much on himself. He became conceited about doing such an important job and helping Cuba. But I saw that no one here agreed with him. So why do it? And even more in view of the fact that Cuba will get along by itself, without Lee Oswald's help. I thought it was better for him to take care of his family. (n.10)

In her admiration for Kennedy, Marina had only one reservation: he was in "politics." . . . anyone who cared about politics, especially any man who was even slightly tempted to place politics above his own family, must be sick or trying to escape personal unhappiness. (n.11)

How Soviet was such an attitude: My private life is my only wealth! She was in this sense the worst possible wife for Oswald.

She believed it was his family, June and herself, whom he loved in his heart, but that in accordance with his lofty ideas about himself, he disguised his real feelings and forced himself to put politics above everything. It seemed to her that Lee was not being true to himself. Marina longed to cry out to him: "Why do you torture us so? You know you don't believe half of what you are saying." (n.12)

We come back to his basic dilemma--which half of himself can he be faithful to--his need for love; his need for fame? What is never taken seriously enough in Oswald is the power of his confidence that he has the makings of a great leader. If his living conditions are mean, and his role is not taken seriously by anyone but himself, he can still fortify his belief in the future of Lee Harvey Oswald by contemplating

those anonymous early years spent by Lenin and Hitler. So his ideas are at least as real to him as that family he does, indeed, care for--in his fashion:

Public events, however, may have been tipping the balance. On June 11, Kennedy broadcast a nation-wide speech, calling for a new civil rights bill and that same night, Medgar Evers of the NAACP was fatally shot on the doorstep of his home in Jackson, Mississippi.

Jackson was but two hundred miles from New Orleans. The air was boiling in the Deep South and Oswald may have seen it as his personal duty to face into such heat. On June 16th, the day after Medgar Evers' funeral, he went to the Dumaine Street wharf. There, the U.S.S. Wasp, an aircraft carrier, was docked.

Oswald started passing out his newly-acquired Fair Play for Cuba leaflets. Here is the text:

On January 16, 1961, the United States Government issued a ban on travel by U.S. citizens to Cuba. Failure to abide by the ban is punishable by a fine of \$5,000 or 5 years in jail or both. . . .

What mysterious features exist on this tiny island of 6-1/2 million people to become so taboo for American eyes?

Although the policy of the Castro government is to promote tourism everywhere in Cuba, our government innocently explains that the travel ban is to safeguard our welfare. . . .

Why then do other Western countries such as Canada, Mexico, England, France, West germany, etc., find that the safety of their nationals does not require restrictions on travel to Cuba? . . .

Why then is travel allowed and even encouraged to admittedly Communist countries such as Poland, Yugoslavia and even the Soviet Union?

In short, WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT HIDING?

Can it be that the new schools, homes, and hospitals of revolutionary Cuba might contrast severely with the Cuba that served as a US plantation and might weigh heavily on the American conscience? . . .

WE MAINTAIN THAT THE TRUTH ABOUT CUBA IS IN CUBA AND THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO OBSERVE AND JUDGE FOR OURSELVES WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE! (n.13)

Patrolman Ray stated [to a Special Agent of the FBI on July 21st, 1963] that late in the afternoon, possibly between 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm, he was approached by an unknown enlisted man from the "USS Wasp" who told him that the Officer of the Deck of the "USS Wasp" desired

Patrolman Ray to seek out the individual who was passing out leaflets regarding Cuba and to request the individual to stop passing out these leaflets. Patrolman Ray stated that he was between Toulouse and Dumaine Street Wharves when he received this information and thereafter, immediately went to the Dumaine Street Wharf where he saw an unknown white male passing out leaflets. . . . He described this individual as a white male, age late 20's, 5'9" tall, 150 pounds and slender build. He said this individual was distributing these leaflets to U.S. Naval personnel in the area and also to civilians who were leaving the USS Wasp. Patrolman Ray stated that he approached this person and asked if he had permission to distribute the leaflets. This person replied that he did not . . . need anyone's permission since he was within his rights to distribute leaflets in any area he desired to do so. Patrolman Ray stated that he told this individual that the wharves and buildings along the Mississippi River. . . . are operated by the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, and that if this individual received permission from the Board of Commissioners, he could distribute these leaflets. Patrolman Ray stated that . . . this person kept insisting that he did not see why he would need anyone's permission and thereafter, Patrolman Ray informed this individual that if he did not leave the Dumaine Street Wharf, Patrolman Ray would arrest him. Upon hearing this, this person left the Dumaine Street Wharf. . . .

Patrolman Ray stated that he feels this unknown individual who was distributing the leaflets was Lee Harvey Oswald.

(n.14)

We can conceive of the withheld intensity of that confrontation! If Lee is frequently hysterical at home, Oswald is a model of emotional austerity on the street, calm, firm, and quiet-voiced, formal, unbending. He is even--his own favorite word--stoic.

He does not accomplish such concealment of his person without paying for such a psychic contract with himself. In the following week on June 24, he will apply successfully for a passport--his belated reward for paying off the State Department debt, but if he will now be able to leave the United States once more, he knows it will not be as a tourist but as a political adventurer in a game of high stakes. His anxiety now erupts:

. . . one night toward the very end of June he had four anxiety attacks during which he shook from head to toe at intervals of half an hour and never once woke up. Just as in the period when he was making up his mind to shoot General Walker, these attacks appear to have presaged a decision that was causing him pain.

(n.15)

On the following night, Marina was watching him read and he looked up at her:

. . . she saw a look of sadness in his eyes. He put his book down and went into the kitchen by himself. Marina waited a few minutes. Then she put the baby down and followed him. Lee was sitting in the dark with his arms and legs wrapped around the back of a chair and his head resting on top. He was staring down at the floor. Marina put her arms around him, stroked his head, and could feel him shaking with sobs. . .

Finally she said, "Everything is going to be all right. I understand."

Marina held him for about a quarter of an hour and he told her between sobs that he was lost. He didn't know what he ought to do. At last he stood up and returned to the living room. (n.16)

Recalling that night thirty years later, she said that if he had wanted to tell her about the problem he would have, but it was better not to ask. She could feel still his burden.

There was something so heavy he had been carrying and she didn't know what. She never knew. It was sad, she said. He would offer meat from his plate to give to the her; she would offer meat from her plate to give to him. "Save it for yourself later," each of them would say.

That night, they felt so close.

. . . he said suddenly, "Would you like me to come to Russia too?"

"You're kidding."

"No," he said. . . . "I'll go with my girls, . . . We'll be together, you and me and Junie and the baby. There is nothing to hold me here. I'd rather have less but not have to worry about the future." . . .

A while later they were in the kitchen together. Lee held her by the shoulders and told her to write the Soviet Embassy that he would be coming too. He would add his visa request to her letter. . .

That weekend, the 29th or 30th of June, Marina wrote her longest, warmest, and so far her only uncoerced letter to Nikolai Reznichenko, head of the consular section of the Soviet Embassy in Washington. (n.17)

Dear Comrade Reznichenko!

I received two letters from you in which you requested me to indicate the reason for my wish to return to the USSR.

But first of all, permit me to apologize for such a long silence on my part and to thank you for a considerate attitude toward me on the part of the Embassy. The reasons for my silence were certainly family "problems" which is also one of the reasons I wish to return to the Homeland. The main reason, "of course" is homesickness, regarding which much is written and spoken, but one learns it only in a foreign land.

I count among family "problems" the fact that . . . my relatives were against my going to America and, therefore, I would be ashamed to appeal to them. That is why I had to weigh everything once more before replying to your letter.

But things are improving due to the fact that my husband expresses a sincere wish to return together with me to the USSR. I earnestly beg you to help him in this. There is not much that is encouraging for us here and nothing to hold us. I would not be able to work for the time being, even if I did find work. And my husband is unemployed. It is very difficult for us to live here. We have no money to enable me to come to the Embassy, not even to pay for hospital and other expenses connected with the birth of a child. We both urgently solicit your assistance to enable us to return and work in the USSR.

In my application I did not specify the place in which I would like to live in the Soviet Union. I earnestly beg you to help us to obtain permission to live

in Leningrad where I grew up and went to school. I have a sister and a brother of my mother's second marriage there. I know that I do not have to explain to you the reason for my wish to live precisely in that city. It speaks for itself. I permit myself to write this without any desire to belittle the merits of our other cities. . . .

These are the basic reasons why I and my husband wish to return to the USSR. Please do not deny our request. Make us happy again, help us to return to that which we lost because of our foolishness. I would like to have my second child, too, to be born in the USSR.

Sincerely and respectfully,

M. Oswald

(n.18)

By morning, he had changed his mind. Because he had wept, his strength was restored. In the note he enclosed with Marina's letter, he wrote:

Dear Sirs,

Please rush the entrance visa for the return of Soviet citizen Marina N. Oswald.

She is going to have a baby in October, therefore you must grant the entrance visa and make the transportation

arrangements before then.

As for my return entrance visa please consider it
separtably. (SIC)?

Thank You

Lee H. Oswald

(husband of Marina Nicholeyev)

(n.19)

To commit his mind to an action was to do no more than to fashion a mental platform sturdy enough to enable him to spring off in the opposite direction. He was the living extension of the dialectic--how could a thesis fail to create its antithesis? But then it is the nature of narcissists, locked forever into their inner dialogue, to be dialectical. Half of the self captures the argument for a night; the other half will take over in the morning. It prefers the opposite.

Their two letters to the Soviet Embassy are sent off on June 30. The next day, he takes out William Manchester's biography of John F. Kennedy, Portrait of a President. Maybe he is looking to see what possibilities he could be giving up by leaving America. Five days later, he takes out One Day in

the Life of Ivan Denisovitch as if to measure how much more liberal Soviet life has become. An uncompromising book about a prisoner in the gulag can actually be published under Khrushchev. Five days later, he takes out Alexander Werth's Russia Under Khrushchev. He is looking for reinforcement of the idea that it is worth going back. Of course, this is just one theme in the midst of quite a few. Five days later, he will read JFK's Profiles in Courage, and for that matter, he takes out C.S. Forester's Hornblower and the Hotspur on the same day as Ivan Denisovitch. We have to keep reminding ourselves that he is only twenty-three years old, and there are days when spy novels and naval battles are closer to him than politics. On July 18, he took out Five Spy Novels selected by Howard Haycraft.

Of course, the first book he had borrowed from the New Orleans Public Library had been Robert Payne's biography of Mao, and in it he had probably come across the following passage which would have offered reassurance to as devoted a reader as Oswald:

Mao could read twice or three times as fast as any other man. In libraries he surrounded himself with a wall

of books. No one Hsiao San had ever known had ever hungered for such a vast quantity of knowledge on so many different levels. [However Mao would say] that it was perfectly easy to read but that something more was necessary--an understanding of the laws of civilization.

(n.20)

Answers of Lee's proposal to Marina that the Chinese

family go back to Peking, with Paine had written a letter to Marina with a wholly different suggestion.

ENDING

July 13

Dear Marina,

If Lee doesn't wish to live with you any more, and prefers that you go to the Soviet Union, think about the possibility of living with us. It would be necessary, of course, to live dependent on us for a year or two, while the babies are small, but please do not be discouraged. You are an able girl. Later, after a year or two, you would find work in America. I think that after a year or two, I will live in Philadelphia. My sister lives in Washington. There will be work for you somewhere.

You know, I have long dreamed from my parents. I lived "dependent" a long time. I would be happy to be an aunt to you. And I can. We have sufficient money. Richard would be glad. This I know. He just gave me five dollars for the vacation or something necessary. With this money it is possible to pay the whole and

Chapter 30--Atheism and Morality

Unaware of Lee's proposal to Marina that the Oswald family go back to Russia, Ruth Paine had written a letter to Marina with a wholly different suggestion:

Evening

July 11

Dear Marina,

If Lee doesn't wish to live with you any more, and prefers that you go to the Soviet Union, think about the possibility of living with me. It would be necessary, of course, to live dependent on me for a year or two, while the babies are small, but please do not be embarrassed. You are an able girl. Later, after a year or two, you could find work in America. I think that after a year or two, I will live in Philadelphia. My sister lives in Washington. There will be work for you somewhere.

You know, I have long received from my parents. I lived "dependent" a long time. I would be happy to be an aunt to you. And I can. We have sufficient money. Michael would be glad. This I know. He just gave me \$500.00 extra for the vacation or something necessary. With this money it is possible to pay the doctor and

hospital in October when the baby is born. Believe God. All will be well for you and the children. I confess that I think this opportunity for me to know you came from God. Perhaps it is not so, but I think and believe so.

It disturbs me a great deal that I explain my thought so badly. But it disturbs me more not to hear any news from you and not to know what you are thinking and doing.

Marina, come to my home the last part of September without fail. Either for two months or two years. And don't be worried about money.

I don't want to hurt Lee with this invitation to you. Only I think that it would be better if you and he do not live together if you do not receive happiness. I understand how Michael feels--he doesn't love me, and wants the chance to look for another life and another wife. He must do this, it seems, and so it is better for us not to live together. I don't know how Lee feels, I would like to know. Surely things are hard for him now, too. I hope that he would be glad to see you with me where he can know that you and the children will receive everything that is necessary, and he would not need to worry about it. Then he could start life again.

Write, please,

Sincerely,

Ruth

(n.1)

By the time Marina received this, two weeks must have gone by since the night when Lee had cried in her arms, so,

doubtless, matters had shifted again. At the least, Marina would have given her private consideration to the possibility offered by Ruth.

Soon enough, new and depressing events shift the mood of Marina's household:

Mr. Le Blanc. He was standing there by me and watching me, and I asked him, I says, "Are you finished all your greasing?" He said yes . . . So he stood there for a few minutes and all of a sudden, he said, "You like it here?" I said, "What do you mean?" he says, "Do you like it here?" I said, "Well, sure I like it here. I have been here a long time, about 8-1/2 years or so." He said, "Oh, hell, I didn' mean this place." I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He says, "This damn country." I said, "Why, certainly, I love it. After all, this is my country." He turned around and walked off. He didn't say any more.

(n.2)

Mr. Liebeler. Did these absences of his. . .get worse as he stayed there?

Mr. Le Blanc. Well, toward the last it began to get pretty regular, and that is when I think they decided to

let him go. And another thing I recall: he had this habit, every time he would walk past you . . . just like a kid playing cowboys or something--you know, he used his finger like a gun. He would go "Pow!" and I used to look at him, and I said, "Boy, what a crackpot this guy is!"

(n.3)

On July 17, his employment was terminated:

Mr. Alba. . . . When he did leave, he came in the office and he says . . . "Well, I will be seeing you." I said, "Where are you headed? He said, "Out there, where the gold is." I said, "Where is that?" He said, "I told you I was going to Michaud." [the NASA space center] He said, "Well, I have heard from them and I have just wound up things next door at the coffee company, and I am on my way out there now."

(n.4)

He had spent so many grave hours with Alba conversing on such matters as wounds, mortality and the merits of guns. He was not about to tell Mr. Alba that he had been fired. Serious riflemen take farewell of one another in a golden light--"Out there, where the gold is."

Marina was to be twenty-two on July 17, and Lee had promised her something special, a dress or a new pair of shoes. He . . . returned home as usual, oblivious of the date. Over supper, Marina looked morose, and he asked her why. "Today was my birthday," she said.

A few minutes later, Lee said, "Come on. Let's go out."

"The stores are closed now anyway," she answered without enthusiasm.

He took her to the drugstore across the street and bought her face powder and a Coca-Cola.

The next day he gave her the news. . . He had been fired at the Reily coffee company. (n.5)

After he lost his job in the coffee factory, Lee stopped shaving on weekends. Sometimes he would only shave every other day. Sometimes he only brushed his teeth once at night. He didn't wash his face in the morning. He would sit in a chair melting for three days. One night he began to talk in his sleep again--they were very bad dreams.

. . . when he took a bath, he even stopped using soap. He just sat listlessly in the bathtub until he could stir himself to get out. "I'm not dirty," he would say.

He refused to let Marina darn his socks, preferring to go around in old, holey ones instead. She had to steal his socks if she was to mend them at all. He would burp at meals without excusing himself, and he got his hair cut at the nape of the neck so he had hair only on the top of his head. "I'll wear it any way I like," he said.

Marina told him that her Russian relatives had thought he was from a good family because he was clean and good-looking. "If you'd looked this way when I met you, I never would have married you at all."

His breath got bad and Marina used to beg him to brush his teeth, especially if he was going to kiss her. "You're my wife. You're supposed to love me any way I am," and he would come at her, his mouth open, breathing as hard as he could.

(n.6)

Years later, interviewers would talk to the woman who was now living in what had once been the Oswalds' apartment. This woman had been a little girl at the time but she remembered Lee Harvey Oswald because one night, late at night, she saw him wearing a black hat and a black coat and he was rummaging around in the garbage can for a long time.

Since he had never had a black coat, Marina thought that his dark khaki raincoat might have looked black to the girl.

It is possible that part of Lee's anxiety was that he was going to give a lecture on July 27 at a Jesuit seminary in Mobile, Alabama, and this could prove to be a severe test not only of his ability to organize intellectual material for an audience of teachers and students at an advanced college level, but would also demonstrate to Oswald's private estimate of himself how collected he could be before a group who were, at the least, not sympathetic to his ideas.

On July 6, a letter had been sent to him by his cousin Gene Murret, who was studying to be a priest at the seminary.

July 6, 1963

Dear Lee and Marina,

Here at the House of Studies during the summer months we have a series of lectures on various subjects given by different persons from the neighboring areas. These subjects usually deal with art, literature, economics, religion, politics, etc. We usually have a speaker every one or two weeks on a Saturday or Sunday night. Since we are studying philosophy, most of us are interested in the various phases of Communism, as this is a very timely and practical subject.

We were hoping you might come over to talk to us about contemporary Russia and the practice of Communism there. . . .The best time for us to have you speak, if you are willing, is on Saturday night, July 27. The talk usually begins at 7 and lasts for about an hour. Then there is a five minute intermission and the speaker returns for a question period which may last a half-hour or so, [but] be assured we want you to feel at home talking to us. . . .

Sincerely,

Gene

(n.7)

On July 27, Dutz and Lillian Murret drove Lee and Marina to the House of Studies at Spring Hill College, Mobile. Since

the women were not allowed to be part of the seminarians' audience, they were given instead a tour of the grounds.

Before they separated, Aunt Lillian asked Lee if he had prepared any notes in order to leave himself less prone to be nervous, and he, whether ready to lie or feeling confident, said, "Oh, don't worry about me. I give talks all the time." (n.8) In his daydreams, he had certainly given many public talks.

The only record we have of Lee's performance comes from FBI interviews in 1964 with priests who were present:

Father MULLEN said that OSWALD conducted himself very well in giving the speech. He said OSWALD spoke very well and he at the time thought he was a college graduate.

He further recalled that whenever the subject of religion came up, OSWALD passed it off and would not comment on it. He said he definitely received the impression OSWALD was an atheist. (n.9)

Father JOHN F. MOORE, S.J., Professor of Logic and Epistemology, Jesuit House of Studies. . . advised that OSWALD was not an outstanding speaker but in his opinion

was just fair. He said OSWALD used no notes whatsoever during his talk, but handled himself very well. He said he definitely received the impression OSWALD had at least a college education. He also said OSWALD did not appear to be prosperous, but was casually dressed in sports clothing. He further informed that to the best of his recollection OSWALD made no statements indicating he was in favor of a revolution and he did not receive the impression OSWALD was a violent individual. (n.10)

The FBI report goes on to give a summary of the question and answer period that followed Oswald's lecture:

- Q: What does atheism do to morality? How can you have morality without God?
- A: No matter whether people believe in God or not, they will do what they want to do. The Russian people don't need a god for morality; they are naturally very moral, honest, faithful in marriage.
- Q: What is the sexual morality in comparison with the United States?
- A: It is better in Russia than in the United States. Its foundation there is the good of the state.
- Q: What impressed you most about Russia? What did you like most?

- A: The care that the state provides for everyone.
If a man gets sick, no matter what his status is,
how poor he is, the state will take care of him.
- Q: What impresses you most about the United States?
- A: The material prosperity. In Russia it is very hard
to buy even a suit or a pair of shoes, and even when
you can get them, they are very expensive.
- Q: What do the Russian people think of Khrushchev?
Do they like him better than Stalin?
- A: They like Khrushchev much better. He is a working
man, a peasant. An example of the kind of things
he does: Once at a party broadcast over the radio
he had had a little too much to drink and he
began to swear over the radio. That's the kind
of thing he does.
- Q: What about religion among the young people in
Russia?
- A: Religion is dead among the youth of Russia.
- Q: Why did you return to the United States? (The
question was not asked in exactly this way, but
this is its content.)
- A: When he saw that Russia was lacking, he wanted to
come back to the United States, which is so much
better off materially. He still held the ideals
of the Soviets, was still a Marxist, but did not
like the widespread lack of material goods that the
Russians had to endure. [He also] praised the
Soviets for rebuilding so much and for concentrating
on heavy industry. He said at one point that if the
Negroes in the United States knew it was so good in
Russia, they'd want to go there.

Another question:

Q: Why don't the Russians see they are being indoctrinated and they are being denied the truth by these jamming stations?

A: They are convinced that such contact would harm them and would be dangerous. They are convinced that the state is doing them a favor by denying them access to Western radio broadcasts. (n.11)

While Marina does not recall his mood on their return from Mobile, odds are that Oswald was not unimpressed by himself. When they began to talk about the new baby who would be born in October, Oswald said to Marina:

. . . "I am sure this time it will be a boy," he said. "I'll make a President out of my son." He had spoken this way before the birth of his first child, and again . . . before he tried to shot General Walker. But now he went a step further. He said that in twenty years' time, he [Lee Harvey Oswald] would be president or prime minister. It did not seem to matter that America had no prime minister. (n.12)

He was, of course, thinking of an entirely new structure of government. The Atheian System might well decide that a President needed a Prime Minister over his House and Senate.

Following letter to FNC Headquarters in New York:

Dear Mr. Lee,

I was glad to receive your advice concerning my try at starting a New Orleans FNC Chapter. I hope you won't be too disapproving at my suggestions, but I do think they are necessary for this area.

As per your advice, I have taken a R.O. box (no. 1001).

Against your advice, I have decided to take an office from the very beginning.

As you see from the circular, I had jumped the gun on the charter business but I don't think it is too important; you may think the circular is too provocative, but I want it to attract attention, even if it's the attention of the hostile fringe. I had 2,000 of them run off. . . .

In any event, I will keep you posted, and even if the office only stays open for one month, more people will find out about the FNC than if there had never been any office at all. . . .

(2. 1)

Chapter 31--Out of Omens Come Events

Somewhere around the end of July, Oswald sent the following letter to FPCC headquarters in New York:

Dear Mr. Lee,

I was glad to receive your advice concerning my try at starting a New Orleans FPCC Chapter. I hope you won't be too disapproving at my innovations, but I do think they are necessary for this area.

As per your advice, I have taken a P.O. box (no. 30061).

Against your advice, I have decided to take an office from the very beginning.

As you see from the circular, I had jumped the gun on the charter business but I don't think it is too important; you may think the circular is too provocative, but I want it to attract attention, even if it's the attention of the lunatic fringe. I had 2,000 of them run off. . . .

In any event, I will keep you posted, and even if the office only stay open for one month, more people will find out about the FPCC than if there had never been any office at all . . .

(n.1)

V.T. Lee was sufficiently dismayed by this letter to
cease corresponding with Oswald:

Mr. Lee. . . . he had gone ahead and acted on his own
without any authorization from the organization . . .
when somebody writes to you and says they would like to
help you, your immediate response is, "Well, wonderful.
Here is a new contact in a new part of the hinterlands
and, gee, I hope things work out." And then, when
somebody goes off like this, violating all the rules that
you send him, it comes as quite a disappointment because
you had hopes. Obviously, this man was not operating in
an official capacity for the organization. (n.2)

Oswald, however, was as yet unaware that his last letter
had ruptured relations:

August 1

Dear Mr. Lee,

In regards to my efforts to start a branch of FPCC in New Orleans.

I rented an office as I planned and was promptly closed three days later for some obscure reasons by the renters, they said something about remodeling, etc; I'm sure you understand. After that I worked out of a post office box and by using street demonstrations and some circular work have sustained a great deal of interest but no new members.

Through the efforts of some Cuban-exile "gusanos," a street demonstration was attacked and we were officially cautioned by the police. The incident robbed me of what support I had, leaving me alone.

Nevertheless, thousands of circulars were distributed and many, many pamphlets which your office supplied.

We also managed to picket the fleet when it came in and I was surprised in the number of officers who were interested on our literature.

I continue to receive through my post office box inquiries and questions which I shall endeavor to keep answering to the best of my ability.

Thank you,

Lee H. Oswald

PO Box 30061

New Orleans LA

(n.3)

The letter was dated August 1 and postmarked August 4 and it contains not a single true fact apart from the reference to picketing the fleet, which had occurred a month and a half before.

The uncanny thing about the letter is that on Monday, August 5, the day after he mailed it, Lee started to bring about the events he had just described. (n.4)

The essence of magic is to live in a state where past and future are interchangeable. In classical Hebrew, for example, there are only two tenses: the present and one other tense in which past and future are interchangeable. To indicate a past action, it is enough to say, "I went," yet to speak of the future one need only change that phrase to "and I went." It is now equal to "I will go." That is a primitive sense of life which transgresses our modern boundaries between the real and the imaginary. Yesterday's events are not so much facts as intimations of the future or omens received from a dream. In such a world, the recalled event of yesterday and the portents of last night's dream have blended. To say, therefore, that you have done something which you have not yet done may be seen as the first and essential step in shaping the future. Out of omens come events. It is as if the future

cannot exist without an a priori delineation of it. God conceives of the world, then makes it. The cabalistic sense is that in His act of conceiving the world, God has already made it. (The rest is details!)

Let us repeat one sentence from Oswald's letter to V.T. Lee. "Through the efforts of some Cuban exile 'gusanos,' a street demonstration [of mine] was attacked and we were officially cautioned by the police." That was written on August 1.

Mr. Bringuier. Well, the first day that I saw Lee Harvey Oswald was on August 5, 1963, but before we go any deeper in this matter about Oswald, I think that I would like to explain to you. . . my feeling at the moment.

Mr. Liebeler. That is perfectly all right. Go ahead.

Mr. Bringuier. . . . you see, in August 24, 1962, my organization, the Cuban Student Directorate, carry on a shelling of Havana, and a few days later when a person from the FBI contacted me here in New Orleans--his name was Warren C. deBrueys. Mr. deBrueys was talking to me in the Thompson Cafeteria. At that moment I was the only one from the Cuban Student Directorate here in the city and he was asking me about my activities . . . and when I told