

STORY DISCLOSED

Oldtime Cowboy Confused Trail At Oswald Grave

(Editor's Note: The Secret Service and police did not encourage publicity last Nov. 25 when Lee Harvey Oswald went to an assassin's grave two hours after President Kennedy's funeral. Here for the first time is the inside story of Oswald's burial, told by funeral director Paul Groody, called in by the Secret Service to get the body.)

By PAUL GROODY
As Told To

Preston McGraw
United Press International

FORT WORTH (UPI)—The people at the rest home said Mr. Bobo was a real old gentleman with his big blue eyes and his "Thank you, ma'm," and "No, thank you, ma'm," and I hope he did not mind our passing him off as Lee Harvey Oswald. It might have saved some trouble.

Mr. Bobo—William Bobo—was an old-time cowboy from Oklahoma, maybe 75, who died in a rest home Friday, Nov. 22—the same day President Kennedy was killed. We couldn't find his relatives right away and we had his body in our preparation room.

When I brought in a brown suit for Oswald and the reporters asked whether it was for Oswald, I said, "No, it's for Mr. Bobo." The tag on the white spray ordered for Oswald's funeral said

William Bobo." The grave Oswald was buried in was dug for Mr. Bobo. We even shifted tables in the preparation room to add to the confusion.

A few days after we buried Oswald in Rose Hill Cemetery, east of Fort Worth, we found Mr. Bobo's relatives. I told them about it and they said they were glad he was able, in death, to help us in a delicate situation.

SECRET SERVICE CALL

We got the call (at Miller's Funeral Home) the early part of the evening last Nov. 24—6 or 6:30 p.m.—to come to Parkland Hospital in Dallas and pick up Oswald's body. A Secret Service man called and said the family and Secret Service wanted us to handle the funeral.

His mother lived in the neighborhood of our place and I believe the Secret Service also felt it was away from the busy part of Fort Worth—and away from Dallas.

I drove our coach to Parkland, taking along a young man named Jay Phillips to help me. The family, since it was not going to be at the hospital, gave us permission to sign for the body.

We went to the morgue at Parkland. They had him in the cooler there, the kind of thing you shove in an icebox, covered with a sheet. I lifted the sheet to make sure it was Oswald. From the pictures I had seen, I could tell

it was Oswald's body.

I covered him back up and we put him on our stretcher. Four, maybe six, policemen with drawn guns walked ahead of us. Three walked on either side and there were two or three behind us as we went down the hall.

CAR DOORS LOCKED

We loaded him into our car at the emergency entrance of the hospital. When we got him in, we locked all the doors. The officers told us there would be a carload of them ahead of us and a carload behind and to keep moving—if anything happened, they'd handle it.

Dallas police escorted us to the gate of the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. There the State Highway Patrol picked us up and escorted us to the Fort Worth exit. Plainclothesmen from the Fort Worth Police Department picked us up at the Fort Worth exit.

By then our escort wasn't very big. It was around 11 p.m.—the red tape in Dallas had taken a good deal of time—and we were pretty inconspicuous. We pulled right into our garage.

We kept everybody out while we prepared the remains. I covered the black mark under his eye with cosmetics and put cosmetics on various other surface wounds.

I called the cemetery to make

arrangements and talked to the vault company. The people who opened the grave were told that they were doing it for "Bill Bobo."

PERIODIC CALLS

I don't know whether the Secret Service was around. They could have been and they telephoned me periodically. The FBI was there awhile. We kept the body in the preparation room.

Fort Worth Police Chief Cato

Hightower came in and looked at it. So did the assistant chief and some captains. But we wouldn't let anybody else in.

About 1 p.m. Monday we decided to go ahead and announce we were going to bury Oswald at 4 p.m. The reason for this was that we had a service for a Mrs. Ooley scheduled in our chapel.

I felt we had a moral obligation to the family to conduct a decent service for Mrs. Ooley—the body was to be shipped—and we couldn't with Oswald in the place and it surrounded by police and reporters and police dogs.

We loaded Oswald out of our preparation room. We put the casket in the funeral coach and the flowers on top of it. We had a big escort to the cemetery—the sheriff, the police chief, the assistant chief and a lot of other policemen in squad cars and in motorcycles. A police sergeant rode in the coach with us.

REPORTERS PALLBEARERS

I solicited the services of six reporters for pallbearers when the time finally came to bury him.

A little before 4 p.m., the Secret Service brought the family up to the grave in two cars.

Mrs. Oswald—the mother—said she wanted privacy. Marina was talking in Russian but Oswald's mother seemed to understand what they were saying. They wanted a private funeral. So I turned to the police chief and asked whether he could do anything.

He ordered the reporters back 50 feet and police and Secret Service men stood between them and the grave.

I asked if they wanted the casket opened. They did. I went up, moved back the flowers and lifted

the lid. His mother came up first and patted him and kissed him and cried. Then Robert and Marina came up and kissed him.

Marina showed him to the two babies. One cried, but I doubt she knew what she was crying about. Mrs. Oswald—the elder one—said to Marina, "Aren't you going to put the rings on him?"

BURIED WITH RINGS

"Yes, yes," Marina said. I helped put her wedding ring and another little ring with a red or black stone—maybe all they could get for an engagement ring in Russia—on his finger. It wouldn't go over the joint.

They sat down. I shut the coffin lid. The minister talked to them a minute and I told the Secret Service that as far as I was concerned it was over.

But they wanted to see the grave filled. We lowered the casket and vault and each member of the family threw in a handful of dirt. I got a shovel full of dirt and let them take it out of that. They threw the dirt up and over, making a cross with it, in the old custom.

After that, they returned to their cars. I told them if they wanted anything to let me know. After the family left, I remained until the grave was filled.

The cemetery people guard the grave against souvenir-hunters in the daytime now and the police guard it at night.

We put no concrete or anything like that in the grave. But it would be hard—almost impossible—to dig up the 2,700-pound vault.

The vault is hermetically sealed and the temperature down there is 60 degrees year round. We embalmed him over and above what I would normally.

He will look good for the next 1,000 years.