

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

For Marguerite Oswald:

12 hungers

Mrs. Oswald: Lee  
was a U.S. agent

*Mother of the accused assassin  
grants an exclusive interview*

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Being Investigated

By JEAN WYSATTA

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Outside, the winds of controversy gather new strength over Lee Harvey Oswald's mark on history, while inside, his mother in Fort Worth waits and watches, enduring two kinds of hunger.

Inside, on a typical day, she makes three meals out of one quart of buttermilk, or cereal, so she can afford the newspaper to read about the things that happen outside — the growing number of headlines that carry the name Oswald.

Her two hungers:

Always and forever, it seems, Marguerite Oswald has had an obsessive need for public recognition of "this mother . . . this woman in history."

Her immediate hunger is less spiritual. It's an empty stomach.

"I live below the poverty line. I'm not asking for help and I'm not complaining," she says.

Her income is \$165 a month in Social Security and Supplemental Income. She gets another \$25 a month by selling her signature to collectors she will not name.

Mrs. Oswald has always been poor, a condition mentioned often in the torrent of words that flowed forth after her son, Lee Harvey Oswald, was accused of shooting to death

President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, and then was murdered himself two days later.

Of her New Orleans upbringing, she has said, "I was poor but never trashy. I'd know better than to go to the door in my apron."

Her bank account was depleted five months ago.

Lee's father died two months before he was born. Lee's mother, twice widowed and once divorced, had to manage by working as a practical nurse.

In July she will be 67.

The years since 1963 have changed Mrs. Oswald very little.

Her pink-skinned face has fallen somewhat and her hair has whitened. She's on the plump side but pleasantly neat and scented of face powder. She uses her voice, soprano, like a slide trombone, soft and then shrill.

The home she bought in the Arlington Heights neighborhood—mortgage now \$107 a month — is so laundered looking it seems freshly painted. Her living room is early American, sunshiny and presided over by a print of "Whistler's Mother" which she once called "another mother in history."

The passing years have not changed her compulsion to relate to many things that happen on the outside.

Mrs. Oswald had words to say about the death of Aristotle Onassis and his widow, the former Jacqueline Kennedy:

"Here I am, a woman, penniless, hungry. On the same day you have this woman in the news, the richest woman in the world. In the news, always one is high on the totem pole and one is low on it."

Other recent news stories have provided more openings for her views, reinforcing her passionate demand to be "a mother in history."

She was pleased to point out former CIA official George O'Toole claimed that tape recordings of Lee showed him to be innocent because his voice betrayed no stress.

"THE OTHER day a machine said he was innocent. Some people didn't believe Lee Harvey Oswald or his mother. Maybe they'll believe this machine."

Mrs. Oswald, waiting on the inside, has a keen sense of the irony of events outside.

Her memory goes back to 1959 when the news indicated that Lee was a defector to Russia.

"Russia was a bad word, but now history has proven itself. Presidents visit Russia."

Through the years she has insisted as much on Lee's innocence as her belief that he was an American secret agent. At least, as one columnist put it recently, Lee, with his undesirable record in Russia, got back into the United States easily enough.

She appeared before the Warren Commission in early 1964. It was reported that she said:

"Who can prove he is not a CIA agent? He isn't going to say he's a CIA agent, and the government isn't going to say he is. I have as much circumstantial evidence that he was as the Dallas police have that he was the assassin."

WHATEVER information Mrs. Oswald thinks she has, the public will not know until her book is published. She has been making notes for it since 1959, she says.

On Dec. 4, 1963, less than a month after Dallas, she said, "I'm not answering any questions. It will all come out in my book."

So far, no book.

In recent years, faced with the prospect of her poverty, ired by telephone calls from news reporters, she has refused to give interviews unless she was paid. She extended this condition to include taking of her picture and no taping of her voice which she said always sounded "hysterical."

This interview was an exception to her rule.

Now, there are voices on the outside asking for a re-opening of the assassination investigation, expressing doubts about the "lone assassin" theory. But Mrs. Oswald herself has revealed no evidence strong enough to open old, closed doors.

Her remark linking Lee with the CIA is more pertinent in the light of new events.

Remembering it, she says now, "When I said CIA, I meant government intelligence, like the Internal Revenue or FBI."

EXPLAINING she was "just a mother and housewife," she couldn't be expected to use purely accurate terms.

She likens her use of the phrase "CIA" to calling any refrigerator a Frigidaire.

Why did she think Lee was a secret agent?

"I thought it because of extenuating circumstances that caused me to believe Lee had gone to Russia in service of his country."

"In 1961, when I went to Washington to locate Lee, I told those big mucky mucks that I believed my son was a CIA agent. They laughed. Six weeks later they gave me his address. They knew where he was all the time, but for 20 months I didn't know if he was alive or dead."

Pushed for a definition, she says, "Extenuating circumstances means things are not the way they seem. All this is documented in the 26 volumes." (The Warren Commission report.)

MRS. OSWALD spent money to buy the 26 volumes. She has read and re-read them and takes pleasure in pointing out inaccuracies she says they contain.

~~She has~~ penciled notes in margin of the books.

Now, she wants to sell them, along with her sizable library on the assassination.

She has to sell her personal belongings to exist, she says.

Who would argue with that?

Her library consists of 500 hardbacks she keeps carefully wrapped in plastic and lined up neatly on the shelves in the small back sitting room of her home.

A male German police dog guards what's inside from the outside.

The library also contains paperbacks, magazines, periodicals, letters and "documents."

Mrs. Oswald says she has no further need of the library, because she's made notes from the books to use in her book.

"I want to sell to a philanthropist if they'll pay me what I paid and promise to give the library to a college or university for the students."

She says, "Publicly, I'm not putting a price on it. The complete library would run into money. There are thousands and thousands of documents."

If she gets any takers on her offer to sell,

a big part of her son, Lee, will go out of her life.

Lee, from his grave in Rose Hill Cemetery, helped build those rows of books.

DURING FIVE years or more following his death, Lee's letters were auctioned off by a New York gallery for Mrs. Oswald. One letter reportedly drew \$3500 from the highest bidder, or more money than one letter of President Kennedy's, Mrs. Oswald has said.

She took part of the money to buy books, the rest to pay on the loan on her home and to eat.

"It was a heartbreak to sell Lee's letters. I have something left, a letter from Russia, and I need to sell that. But for the past year, no, I haven't sold anything," she says.

The library contains volumes she relates to the lives of the Oswalds, books on Russia, Cuba and New Orleans — "our background." It has books on religion, "Great True Spy Stories" by former CIA chief Allen Dulles, FBI books and the two-volume "The Glory and the Dream" by William Manchester.

She opens the latest Manchester writing and points to one allusion to her as "a strong-minded widow."

"I didn't expect to find myself in that book.

That's the thing, I worry everybody. I worry William Manchester. Don't kid your self, I do," she says.

MANCHESTER IS not accurate, she says, and is one of the writers she has filed suit on for calling Lee an assassin.

Framed pictures are displayed on the library shelves. One is of President Gerald Ford, who was a member of the Warren Commission.

Two identical pictures are of Marina Oswald Porter, whom Lee left a widow. One photograph is of Lee's tombstone.

Lee's face, from babyhood to final bruised countenance the day he died, peers from an assortment of handsome frames.

His mother traded her autograph for the frames.

She regrets people saying that final picture revealed a smirk that said, in effect, an obscure nobody changed history. And his mouth — that's just the way it was.

Has she seen Marina and her two grandchildren since the funeral at Rose Hill? Has she seen sons, John Pic and Robert Oswald?

Her answer is "I have not seen a soul since Nov. 28, 1963."

FORMERLY A Lutheran, she could not get a Lutheran minister or any other minister of a church to officiate for Lee's funeral. Does she attend church now?

She tried, she says. "In a congregation of 200 people, I wasn't accepted."

While it was reported Marina received \$30,000 or more from sympathizers, Marguerite Oswald received \$800, she says.

That money has long since been spent.

When asked if she could work, Mrs. Oswald says, "How can I work? Out of four people, two are against me. Since I am a public figure, no one would employ me. Customers might object."

She still recalls the times she had to move in Fort Worth because landlords thought her the mother of a Russian defector.

Mrs. Oswald, with pride in her appearance, says she has had nothing new to wear in three years. It strained her budget to spend \$5 on gasoline last month.

"I CAN'T TELL you the last time I had a meal. I haven't eaten meat since 1973. Now, I don't want any. I have some chicken, fish and eggs. I'm not starving but I'm not eating properly."

To save on her electricity bill, she turns off the lights at night and watches TV in the dark. She uses cornmeal and grease to stretch the food for two dogs whose coats show them to be in good condition.

The time passes when she gets the newspaper and the mail, answers telephone calls, some of them long distance from persons interested in the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Every year she gets less mail. She averages two or three letters a week after more than 11 years. Some are simply addressed to her name and Fort Worth, Tex.

She is proud she's been invited to speak at TCU and before Arlington Sertoma Club.

SHE'S AN EXPERT, she believes, in making the best of a bad situation. For seven years after 1963, she had no income. At age 62, she began receiving Social Security.

"I have a guardian angel. I'm compensated for the injustice done to my son, whether he was an assassin or not.

"There is no reason why this woman has to suffer. Because of the abuse, because this is a world-wide case, I think am compensated by this influencing, guiding spirit."

It is obvious Marguerite Oswald is angered by her financial situation.

Yet the outside might come inside and provide her a windfall, she reasons.

"My position fluctuates. Tomorrow, I might get an advance on a book or sell a document . . . It's been this way before, and I stuck it out. I'm in perfect health. I'm a strong woman."



The mother of Lee Harvey Oswald is pictured in her library at the rear of her home on Fort Worth's West Side, with her German shepherd pet, a guard dog. Marguerite Oswald would not like to see the assassination case re-opened unless there is full disclosure, including opening the national archives. But, she says, someone might come forward with new facts — "It's a hope and a possibility." — Press Staff Photo by Gene Gordon.