

'He didn't seem to miss having friends'

OSWALD

assert himself particularly in class " in the fifth grade he made two Ds—a failing grade in Fort Worth at that time—in arithmetic and spelling, two Cs, the rest Bs.

Another schoolmate, William Leverich, was struck by Lee's brashness in class. "I remember that he'd scoot his desk chair across the floor to the pencil sharpener—just to get attention of course. The kids would snicker and the teacher would get mad."

Lee was not altogether unnoticed by the fifth- and sixth-grade girls. One recalled that "he had muscles—he was strong." Another had such a crush on him that once, walking home with Lee and another girl, she asked him to kiss her. Lee said he wouldn't unless he could also kiss the other girl, whom he was sweet on at the time. Lee kissed them both.

Mrs. Pat Davenport Baum of Fort Worth, a former classmate of Lee's, said he once wrote her a love note and was bitter when she spurned him. "I never let me for that. He didn't speak to me at all for a long time." Mrs. Baum also recalled that Lee "walked real proud. But he never wore Levis, he wore some other type of jeans, which looked cheaper."

Lee was quite capable of defending himself in those years. Classmate Monroe Davis recalled how Lee beat him one day after school. "He fought dirty, pinching and biting," Davis said. "but he would have licked me anyway." Davis said that as the fight was breaking up, Lee's mother appeared and "she was laughing. She was real proud of him."

Lee finished the sixth grade at Ridgely West in June 1952. He was approaching his 13th birthday—fairly tall for his age, well built and athletic. But he appeared lonely and wore an increasingly noticeable chip on his shoulder. At this time his mother decided to go to New York, a move that was to have a great impact on Lee. She said she wanted to be close to her son John P.C. by her first marriage, who was stationed in New York with the Coast Guard. She

also thought she could do better financially in New York.

They arrived in New York in September, moved into an apartment in the Bronx and Lee entered the seventh grade at Trinity Lutheran School, switching after three weeks to Junior High School 117. His public school attendance record was abysmal. Between October 1952 and January 1953 he missed 47 school days. His grades were barely passing. On the report card where teachers rate a child's personality factor, Lee was judged satisfactory in courtesy and effort, unsatisfactory in cooperation, dependability and self-control.

His truancy resulted in Lee's first brush with legal authority—in his case the New York Children's Court. Mrs. Oswald had moved again in March 1953, and Lee had been transferred to Junior High School 44—his third school in seven months. When he failed to report to the school John Carro, a young probation officer assigned to the Children's Court in the Bronx, got in touch with him.

Carro, a soft-spoken, 30-year-old father of six who is now assistant to New York Mayor Robert Wagner, said, "We talked at my office. My job was to find out his background, his attitude toward school, the attitude of his parents, whether there were any illnesses or extenuating circumstances and so on. I found him to be a small, bright and likable boy. I asked him why he was staying out of school and he said he thought school was a waste of time, that he wasn't learning anything there anyway." He also told Carro that the other children in school made fun of him because of his Texas drawl and his blue jeans.

"I asked him what his hobbies were, and he said he used to collect stamps but didn't do that any more. He said he liked horseback riding [there is no evidence that he ever did any] and said he wanted to go into the Marines. But, he said, most of all he just liked to be by himself and do things by himself. He would get up in the morning and watch television all day. There was no one else at home. The mother worked. He didn't have any friends, and he didn't seem to miss having any friends. He never said anything to me about reading. It didn't seem abnormal to him to stay home and do nothing, but it was.

"In my report I indicated this was a potentially dangerous situa-

tion—dangerous to his personality. When you get a 13-year-old kid who withdraws into his own world, whose only company is fantasy, who wants no friends, who has no father figure, whose mother doesn't seem to relate either—then you've got trouble. I recommended placement for Oswald. I thought of a place like Berkshire Farm in Canaan [N.Y.] or Children's Village at Dobbs Ferry. They have cottages for the kids there, and psychiatric treatment, as well as follow-up therapy. I definitely thought that would help the boy.

"I had the feeling that his mother was completely ineffectual, that she was detached and non-involved. She kept saying that Lee wasn't any problem, and she didn't understand what the fuss was all about. She wanted to go back to Texas or Louisiana, but said she didn't have the money.

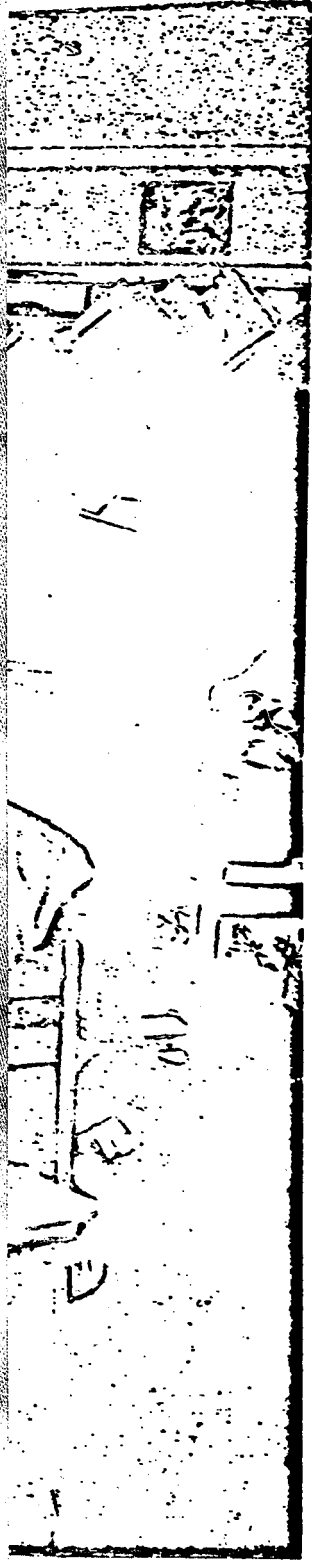
"Finally I remember telling Lee, 'It's either school or commitment.' He said, 'In that case, I'll go back to school.' His mother refused to take him to a court-attached psychiatric clinic. She said that he was attending school by that time and there was no reason for going to the clinic. Lee's behavior was slightly disruptive at school.

"In January 1954, I wrote to Mrs. Oswald, asking her to come into my office and bring the boy. The letter came back, 'Moved. Left No Forwarding Address.'"

Mrs. Oswald's memories of the 16 months she and Lee spent in New York are bitter, perhaps colored by a suspicion that it had been a mistake to move there.

"It was a very, very sad story," she said of Lee's truancy troubles. "Mr. John Carro told me, 'Lee, you'll have to report to me every week.' I said, 'Mr. Carro, my son is not going to report to you. He's no criminal. He's given his word that it's not going to happen again. The first time he doesn't keep his word, then he'll report to you.' I was not going to have a boy of that age and caliber going to a probation officer."

The most penetrating personality analysis ever made on Lee Oswald came from Dr. Renato Harburg, chief psychiatrist of New York's Youth House for Boys. Harburg examined him at the recommendation of the Bronx Children's Court. His confidential report is in the hands of the federal commission now investigating the



CLOWNING AT 13, but as a classroom photograph, sixth-grade English class rehearsing Casey at the Sea, Oswald turns to mug at camera. He got passing grade of 70 in the course.