

Oswald's Attorney Not Selected Yet

DW-11/24
Who will defend Lee Harvey Oswald at his trial on charges that he murdered President Kennedy?

That question remained unanswered Saturday as the family said it lacked funds for lawyers, and numerous attorneys — including a well-known New York City lawyer—said they would refuse to accept the case.

Dist. Atty. Henry Wade said Robert Oswald of Denton, brother of the suspected assassin, informed him that the family does not have the money to hire attorneys.

Officers said later, however, that a national magazine had offered the Oswald family a substantial payment in return for stories about the background of the murder suspect and his Russian wife.

They suggested that this money be used as attorney's fees.

H. Louis Nichols, president of the Dallas Bar Association, who talked with Oswald for about three minutes Saturday afternoon, reported that the suspect said he would like to be represented by John Abt of New York City.

(A well-known New York attorney by that name has represented a number of Communists on various charges.)

said they would refuse to accept the case.

"We know that our laws guarantee the defendant in these cases counsel," one lawyer said. "We know also that our code of ethics requires lawyers to defend clients to the best of their ability.

"But a large segment of the public doesn't understand. This case could ruin a lawyer for life," he asserted.

If grand jurors indict Oswald, and he says he lacks a lawyer, a district judge will appoint attorneys to represent him. Should a lawyer refuse the appointment, the judge could jail him for con-

tempt.

One report said the American Civil Liberties Union may arrange for lawyers, possibly from another city, to defend Oswald in "the trial of the century" here.

Robert Oswald refused to answer questions of reporters when he arrived at Wade's office. The district attorney at the time was telling Radio Free Europe, which broadcasts behind the Iron Curtain, how state and federal laws would protect the suspect's rights while he awaited trial.

The brother conferred behind closed doors with Wade.

"We spent most of our time discussing Lee Harvey Oswald's background," Wade said. "The brother said he was living in Fort Worth when Lee Harvey returned from Russia. He said Lee Harvey spent two months with him, then left and he hadn't heard from him until President Kennedy was shot."

Nichols, who visited the suspect because he heard he had no counsel, further reported that if Abt is not available, Oswald would want a lawyer from the American Civil Liberties Union, of which he is a member.

Abt, reached at his summer home in Kent, Conn., said he had not been asked to take the case but added, "If I were asked, I would in all probability have to decline.

"It would have to be a very serious decision," he admitted. "I don't see how it would be possible to undertake a case of this magnitude. I have a very heavy litigation schedule," he explained, adding that assuming the case "would not be fair to my other clients," wire services reported.

Abt said Oswald probably thought of his name, because "I have a reputation for representing the underdog, particularly unpopular political minorities."

Numerous Dallas lawyers also