

OSWALD SPURNED SOCIAL AID IN '53

Mother Also Saw Little Need
for a Father-Like Friend

By THOMAS BUCKLEY

A social agency here told yesterday how it tried a decade ago to provide Lee H. Oswald with a substitute for the father who died before he was born.

His efforts were frustrated by the boy's mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, and by his belief that he did not need counseling, said the agency, Big Brothers, Inc.

The attempt to help the accused assassin of President Kennedy began on Dec. 15, 1953 and ended on Jan. 6, 1954. During that period a professional caseworker visited the Oswald apartment in the Bronx three times and spoke to Mrs. Oswald three times by telephone.

The caseworker, who has been retired for several years, was not identified.

Oswald, who was 14 years old at the time, was a student at Junior High School 44, Prospect Avenue at 176th Street, the Bronx. He lived with his mother at 825 East 179th Street.

Habitually Truant

In April, 1953, he had been committed by Children's Court to Youth House for Boys, then in Manhattan and now in the Bronx, for observation because of habitual truancy from another school. The psychiatrist at Youth House, Dr. Renatus Hartogs, examined the boy and found him potentially dangerous and in need of psychiatric treatment.

He also found that Oswald had vengeful feelings because of the lack of a father. It was this feeling that led to the boy's later referral by the court to Big Brothers. The agency, which receives no fees, specializes in providing adult male companionship for fatherless boys 10 to 16 years old.

The executive director of Big Brothers, Howard A. Kieval, said in a statement yesterday that its caseworker had reported that Oswald was "friendly, quiet, withdrawn boy who felt he didn't need any help."

Speaking of the boy's mother, Mr. Kieval said:

"Although she displayed some appreciation of the agency's interest she felt that no additional help was really necessary and that Lee had no serious problems."

He also said that Mrs. Os-

wald had expressed annoyance at the continued interest of Children's Court in her son.

A 'Neat, Clean' Home

When asked recently about Oswald, Mr. Kieval said, the caseworker particularly recalled the "neat, clean, pleasant" Oswald apartment.

Lee was quiet, although somewhat friendly, in his contacts with the caseworker," Mr. Kieval went on. "He was displeased with the pressure for him to join in group activities with other youngsters."

The boy was described as preferring reading, model-making, sports and television.

At that time, Mr. Kieval said, he believed Oswald was attending school with fair regularity and attending to his lessons at least "moderately well." He pointed out, however, that for about two of the three weeks the agency dealt with the boy, school was in recess for the Christmas vacation.

Quit School Soon After

About a week after Jan. 6, 1954, the agency was informed by the court that Mrs. Oswald and her son had moved from the Bronx apartment—to New Orleans, as it turned out—and left no forwarding address. The boy's last day of school attendance was given by the Board of Education as Jan. 12.

Adalbert von Gontard Jr., the president of Big Brothers, said: "In retrospect it is impossible to state what might have been the result if the efforts of other community agencies and of Big Brothers, Inc., had been successful in involving mother and boy in some kind of counseling and in our efforts to provide the boy with a favorable adult male relationship."

The agency, which has offices at 223 East 30th Street, is currently working with about 500 boys through professional caseworkers and volunteers, Mr. Kieval said.