

"OSWALD STUDIED RUSSIAN IN MARINE CORPS"

-- Marine Officer Gives Clue to Preparation for Flight--

Special to the N.Y. Times -- Wash. D.C. Dec 4 -- Lee Harvey Oswald studied Russian and read Russian newspapers months before his secret flight to the Soviet Union, his former Marine Corps commanding officer said today

Oswald also played end on his squadron's football team until he was benched for "talking back" to the quarterback, a Marine captain. The accused assassin of President Kennedy was then a private, having been reduced in rank from private first class by a court martial.

These details of Oswald's military career, including the first indication that he may have planned his abortive defection to the Soviet Union months in advance, were described by former Lt. John E. Donovan of Washington, now a physics instructor at Ascension Academy in Alexandria, Va. Mr. Donovan, twenty-nine years old, maintains his connection with the marines as a reserve captain.

Mr. Donovan also provided the first suggestion that Oswald had ever participated in contact sports. He had been described by others as unathletic.

For seven months, from March to September, 1959, Mr. Donovan was Oswald's immediate superior and supervisor at Marine Air Control Squadron 9 at Tustin, Calif., near El Toro Marine Corps Air Station.

Mr. Donovan's unit was a small one of six to eight enlisted men who were often assigned to long watches in the relatively intimate and informal setting of a radar air-control center.

He said that Oswald was an officer-baiting troublemaker. "He used to read most of the time," Mr. Donovan recalled, "histories, magazines, books on Government, and a Russian newspaper he used to get." He continued: "He spent a lot of time studying the Russian language. There were no

pocketbooks or comics for him." "He was smart enough," Mr. Donovan said. "You have to have a G.C.T. (General Classification Test) score of 110 to get into radar. That's the same score for getting a commission."

The General Classification Test included aptitude tests covering such areas as arithmetic, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and clerical ability. It is used primarily to determine eligibility for specialized service schools.

The former commanding officer said that he had to "invite Oswald off the squad" when the 20-year old private "kept talking back in the huddles" of the squadron football team.

When Oswald requested an early discharge from the Marine Corps in September, 1959, on the ground of his mother's financial hardship, Mr. Donovan said, other men in the squadron offered to chip in and help him. Oswald turned down these offers, the officer recalled.

A month later, Oswald turned up in Moscow. "That compromised all our secret radio frequencies, call signs, and authentication codes" Mr. Donovan said. "He knew the location of every unit on the West Coast and the radar capability of every installation. We had to spend several thousand man-hours changing everything and verifying the destruction of the codes". *END*  
"Oswald," Mr. Donovan said, "was a very unpopular man that month".