

THE ASSASSIN: A COLD,

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The incredible event had an incredible sequel. Lee Harvey Oswald, held as the assassin of President Kennedy, was being taken from a Dallas jail when a man stepped up, shot and killed him. The avenger was Jack Ruby, owner of a Dallas nightclub.

The assassination of President Kennedy—the crime charged to Lee Harvey Oswald—must have been the act of a man who for a long time had harbored wild thoughts but had kept them hidden, churning deep within himself. There was much in Lee's history, in his angry and disorganized intelligence, that would point toward the deed that would horrify the world.

His father, Robert, an insurance salesman, dropped dead of a heart attack in the summer of 1939. Lee was born in October. His handsome blond mother Marguerite Oswald had two older sons to support besides the infant Lee and only \$3,000 from a small insurance policy, most of which went toward medical and burial bills.

Times were hard and Mrs. Oswald sold their small frame house. She began a dreary succession of badly paying jobs in New Orleans, New York and Texas. When Lee was 5 they were living in Fort Worth, and even then he was swimming against the current.

"Other kids teased him because he was so bright," his mother remembered after his arrest. And, near hysteria, she still summoned every ounce of a mother's will to remember only the good things about her son. "He learned to read by himself," she said, "before he even went to school. He was always wanting to know about important things."

Teachers and classmates remember Lee as a "loner," bookish and introspective, resentful of discipline. When he was about 15, a key event in his life took place. From somewhere he obtained a pamphlet about the Rosenberg spy case. It was a passionate argument that the two Russian spies

were innocent and had been railroaded to the electric chair.

"I still remember that pamphlet," he said in later years. "Then I discovered one book in the library, Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. It was what I'd been looking for. It was like a very religious man opening the Bible for the first time."

Frequently Lee came home with torn clothes and a bloody nose. He admitted that he had been fighting, but he would tell his mother:

"You don't understand, and they don't understand."

Just before his 17th birthday, he entered the 10th grade at Arlington Heights High School in Fort Worth.

"He was always bored and restless in school," his mother says. "He used to come home and say, 'I already know all the stuff they're teaching. Why bother with that?' Then he'd go off to the library and read. Not trivial things. Deep stuff, histories, biographies, politics. The school couldn't interest him. Nowadays they have special classes for gifted students, not then. . . ."

If Lee Oswald's intelligence was above average, his report cards were not. He was getting mostly C's and D's and was in danger of failing when he came home one day and told his mother that he was going to enlist in the Marine Corps. "I just want to do something different," he said. Mrs. Oswald wept as he went off. He was trained at camps in the U.S., then shipped to Japan as an electronics technician. His letters to his mother indicate that he was alternately content and dissatisfied with the Marines. He did not tell her that he had stood two courts martial, one for failing to register a pistol, the other for getting into a row with a noncom.

He was a good Marine," claims Mrs. Oswald. "He got the good conduct medal and he participated in

that Formosa business. He fought hard for his country." Some of those who served with him, however, remember him in a different light. "We were trained to work as a team," recalled one, "but Oswald seemed to be different. He was always separate from most of the men and didn't have any close friends that I remember." Another mentions Oswald's bitterness at the tough time his mother had had when he was a small child.

While Lee was in Japan, Mrs. Oswald reached up for a heavy candy carton one day in the store where she worked. The box toppled down and struck her in the head. She was in bed for six months and, very quickly, was destitute. Lee, who had by that time returned to California with still another year to go on his hitch, obtained a special hardship discharge to provide for her. He came home for exactly three days.

What Mrs. Oswald did not know—what nobody knew—was that a cancerous idea now totally absorbed the mind of her strange and withdrawn son. The seeds planted by the Rosenberg pamphlet had germinated: Lee had become enchanted by Communism. He went to New Orleans, got a job on a freighter and one month later, in October 1959, turned up in Russia announcing that he wished to give up his American citizenship and become a Russian citizen.

Marguerite Oswald learned of her son's defection when a newspaper reporter called.

"They said, 'Your son's defected to Russia.' I told them they were crazy. But then I learned it was true. I couldn't understand it. I can't understand anything."

A correspondent named Priscilla Johnson, who was stationed in Moscow when Oswald arrived, remembered him vividly. "He was the most interesting defector I ever saw," she said. "Of the three or four defectors I saw, he was the only ideological one. . . . He talked in terms of capitalists and exploiters and he said something about he was sure that if he lived in the U.S. he wouldn't get a job, that he'd be one of the exploited. . . . He was like a babe in the woods, a lost child."

But there was more to Oswald than that, Miss Johnson found: "As I talked to him, I realized he had a sort of vein in him that was beyond reason, maybe that was fanatic."

LONE MAN

The Russians would not grant Oswald citizenship but allowed him to stay on as a resident alien. He went to Minsk and, a year and a half later, married a pretty, blond, hazel-eyed practicing pharmacist named Marina.

While he was in Minsk he wrote a letter that one day would be dug out of his Pentagon files and read again in a new and terrible light. He had learned that his hardship discharge from the Marines had been changed to "Undesirable" because of his defection, and his letter of protest against the action was directed to John Connally, who he thought was still Secretary of the Navy. There was this key phrase: "I shall employ all means to right this gross mistake or injustice."

He also joined a rifle club and became an expert marksman. (As a Marine he had made only average scores.) He later told a Dallas friend:

"One of the things I didn't like about Russia was that the government wouldn't let you own a rifle. Only shotguns. So I joined a rifle club."

He was also distressed about falling hair. He said the cold Russian winters were making him bald. And he found in Russia what he had found in the U.S.: he was still an outsider.

"People mistrusted him," his Rus-

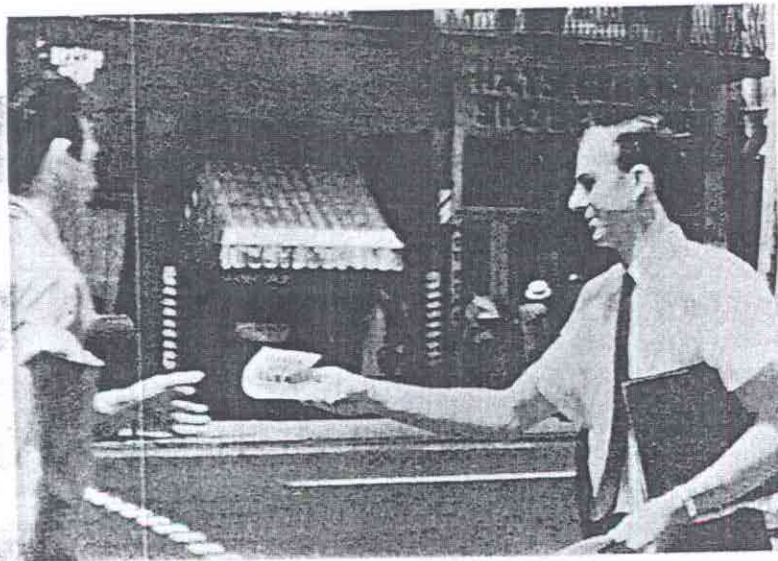
sian wife was to recall. "We didn't have many friends." He actually discovered himself defending America at some parties and in conversations with fellow workers. Disenchanted, he decided to return to the United States with his wife and the daughter that had been born to them. But he had neither money nor permission. In early 1962 he wrote his mother of his difficulties in getting out.

Mrs. Oswald had by that time almost given up on her son.

"But he asked me to help," she said the other day. "And what mother could turn down her son? I went to 12 prominent people in Fort Worth and begged for money, for help, for advice. They said, 'Your son's a Communist. We don't want to help him.' I said, 'If a man was drowning, would you help him first, or ask his political beliefs? He made a mistake, now he wants to rectify it.'"

As it has done in many similar cases, the State Department lent Oswald money to get home, and in June 1962 Lee brought his family to Fort Worth, where he joined his mother.

"He didn't say much about living in Russia," she said. "He just introduced his wife and baby and said he wanted to find a job. He had an awful time getting work. People didn't like the idea of him having a Russian wife. They were awful to him and her. Finally he got a job in a sheet metal factory, I think, but he only stayed a month or so." In late 1962 Lee got a



PRO-CASTRO KILLER. Oswald gave out leaflets favoring Cuba in New Orleans last August. He was arrested a few days earlier for brawling, questioned by FBI.

WHO RESENTED ALL AUTHORITY

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job in a Dallas photo-processing plant. His wife became pregnant again.

Lee was fired from his Dallas job in April when his past became known, and he moved his family to New Orleans. They took a small apartment and he found a similar job. For the first time in his life he became politically active. He got involved with the pro-Castro "Fair Play for Cuba" organization. After a street scuffle with anti-Castro elements he was fined \$10 for disorderly conduct. Later he appeared on a local TV panel show, defending his pro-Castro sentiments.

By early fall, the Oswalds were broke and Marina was nearly ready to have their second child. She returned to Texas to stay with friends in Irving, a suburb of Dallas. Lee promised to follow as soon as he was financially able. He said he had other matters to clear up in New Orleans.

Early last month, in the first week of October, Lee appeared in Dallas and telephoned his wife.

"I'm going to look for a job and get some place to live," he told her. "As soon as I'm able, we'll get the family together." He went to a red-brick rooming house at 1026 N. Beckley Ave. in nearby suburban Oak Cliff and rented a tiny cubicle of a room.

He gave his name falsely as O. H. Lee and paid a week's rent—\$8—in advance. His room was hardly larger than a closet and it was furnished sparsely, an iron single bed painted cream with the paint peeling off, a dilapidated dresser and a closet-cabinet. In the month and a half he spent at the rooming house, Lee was quiet and hardly noticed.

"He left every morning for work—he never told anybody where he worked," his landlady recalled. "But he got up, took a bath and he always washed the tub out. The only guest who did. Some nights he'd come out in the living room and watch TV. Mostly he'd come home from work, make himself a lunch-meat sandwich and lie on his bed reading or writing.

"Sometimes he'd make a telephone call and we'd hear him talking. It was some foreign language, Russian or German or something. We always wondered who he was talking to."

On weekends, Lee would go to Ir-

ving and see his wife and his two daughters and his friends, Mike and Ruth Payne. There he would watch the football game on TV or talk politics.

The weekend before last, Lee visited his family in Irving and told them things were finally looking up. He told Marina that they would be going out soon to look for an apartment and buy Christmas presents for the children. He lifted up his infant daughter Rachel and laughed loudly.

When he left to return to his tiny room and another week of work, he seemed in high spirits.

That was the last Lee Harvey Oswald's wife saw of him until he was under arrest, charged with the murder of President Kennedy. Afterward she wept and managed a few words of English: "I love Lee. Lee good man. He didn't do anything." And his mother pointed at the television set and screamed: "My boy couldn't

have killed the President. I know him. Nobody else knows him. He's been persecuted so long."

But slowly, methodically the police were building their case—connecting Oswald with the mail-order purchase of a rifle like the one that fired the fatal bullet, placing him on the scene of the shooting with a long parcel the size and shape of a rifle, comparing his palm-marks with one found on the murder weapon, finding traces of burned powder on his hands. Then the police turned up the most damn-

ing evidence of all. It was a snapshot of Oswald showing him holding a rifle that apparently was identical with the one that killed the President. But before the district attorney of Dallas County could demand the death penalty, Lee Harvey Oswald, who had achieved such horrifying fame, himself was dead.



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OSWALD'S SHOOTING. Night-club operator Jack Ruby (*right*) shoots the assassin as he is being moved from jail. Oswald died in same hospital as the President.