

Oswald's Widow Describes Him as Unfriendly and a Skinflint

Takes Stand as First Defense Witness in Shaw Conspiracy Trial After Judge Denies Defense Motion for Acquittal

L.A. Times BY JERRY COHEN
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NEW ORLEANS—For the first time publicly, Marina Oswald Porter told Friday of the strange, confining life she led as the wife of Lee Harvey Oswald.

She described the man the Warren Commission said was the sole assassin of President John F. Kennedy as an antisocial skinflint who never confided in her and threatened her with physical violence.

Mrs. Porter, now 26 and married to a Richardson, Tex., businessman, was the first defense witness called by Clay L. Shaw's lawyers as they opened their counterattack on Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's case against their client.

Charge of Conspiracy

Shaw, who was arrested two years ago, has been on trial here since Jan. 21 on charges that he conspired with Oswald and the late David W. Ferrie to assassinate Mr. Kennedy.

Mrs. Porter was summoned to the stand after Judge Edward Haggerty Jr. rejected a defense request for a directed verdict of acquittal. Judge Haggerty gave no reason for denying the motion filed Thursday by Shaw's chief defense counsel, E. Irvin Dymond.

Composed and half-smiling, Mrs.

Porter sat in the witness chair after draping a blue raincoat over its back. She wore a dress with a modified miniskirt, sheer white stockings and her light brown hair swept back in a stylish French twist.

She wore no makeup, a reminder of the Warren Commission's discovery that Oswald ordered her never to use cosmetics.

Mrs. Porter answered questions without hesitation in a pronounced accent. Oswald married her when he was living in the Soviet Union in 1961, and she testified Friday that she did not learn to speak English until after his death.

Asked under cross-examination by James Alcock, Garrison's chief assistant, if she knew of any friends Oswald had here during the brief period in the summer of 1963 that the couple lived in New Orleans, she replied solemnly:

"No. But it seemed like he didn't have many. He was an unfriendly person."

"Did he ever tell you of any of his friends?" Alcock asked.

"No, sir. We had no friends at all."

Careful With Money

Upon direct examination, Dymond asked her about family finances, and she replied that she "had to be careful" about money.

"Who did the grocery shopping?" Dymond asked.

"Well, both of us," she said. "But he paid the bills and took care of the money."

"Who paid the rent?" Dymond asked.

"He did," she replied.

"What is the most money he ever gave you?" Dymond asked.

"A dollar," she replied.

Mrs. Porter also testified that Oswald spent most of his time at

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home reading or sitting in their apartment "holding a rifle a lot."

She said she could not say whether a rifle she was shown, similar to the one taken from the Texas Book Depository, resembled the weapon she said Oswald owned.

"I am not familiar with rifles," she explained. It was brought out that Oswald had threatened her with violence when he ordered her to sign the name "Hidell" to a piece of paper. That name, or a variation of it, was used by Oswald in ordering from a Chicago mail order house the gun the Warren Commission concluded killed Mr. Kennedy.

"Did he (Oswald) ever ask you to sign anything?" Alcock asked.

"Yes, I signed the name 'Hidell' because he told me if I didn't agree he would force me to do it," Mrs. Porter said.

"Was it a physical threat?"

"Yes," she said. In her Warren Commission testimony, Mrs. Porter revealed that upon occasions Oswald had struck her.

Mrs. Porter alluded to Oswald's secretiveness with her when she said he "never talked much," never told her what company he worked for here and never told her what type of work he did.

One of Garrison's chief witnesses, Perry Raymond Russo, contends he was introduced to Oswald by the name "Leon Oswald" by Ferrie, who said Oswald was his "roommate."

Russo testified two weeks ago he overheard Ferrie, Oswald and Shaw discuss ways of killing Mr. Kennedy at a party in Ferrie's apartment in mid-September, 1963. Oswald, he said, was unshaven and slovenly.

Mrs. Porter was called as a defense witness primarily to contradict this aspect of Russo's testimony, already shaken under defense cross-examination.

Mrs. Porter testified that Oswald was never bearded and was meticulously clean.

Russo said he overheard



WITNESS—Mrs. Marina Oswald Porter, widow of Lee Harvey Oswald, arrives at the New Orleans courthouse with her husband, Kenneth, to testify.

(AP Wirephoto)

the party conversation late at night. Mrs. Porter said Oswald was away from their apartment here

only one night—when arrested for distributing pro-Castro leaflets.

She testified she never had seen Shaw or Ferrie, and that her husband had never mentioned their names to her. Dymond reeled off a long list of names of other persons associated with the Garrison investigation and she said she was unable to identify any.

Mrs. Porter recalled that after Oswald's arrest in Dallas, she was permitted to talk to him for "about 10 minutes." Asked what her husband had told her, she replied: "He told me not to worry. He told me everything would be all right."

Could she explain that

remark? asked Alcock. "I can't explain," she said, adding that she could recall nothing else he said.

She also testified that neither she nor Oswald could drive a car, and that he never drove her and their younger daughter to Clinton, La., 120 miles north of here.

This struck at testimony offered by seven residents of either Clinton or Jackson, rural Louisiana towns 13 miles apart. The seven residents were the first prosecution witnesses two weeks ago.

The first witness, a Clinton barber, testified a man he recognized as Oswald had gotten a haircut in his shop while his wife and baby waited in a car outside, and that Oswald asked about employment possibilities in the area.

All the small-town witnesses contended they recalled the time period as "either late August or early September" of 1963.

They said they were able to remember the time so well because Oswald was there during an unusual late-summer "cool spell."

Under cross-examination, the defense had done little to cast doubt on the credibility of their testimony.

But Friday it produced a witness, a U.S. Weather Bureau meteorologist, whose official records showed that average high temperatures in the Clinton-Jackson area were consistently in the high to mid-90s during the last 15 days of August and the first 15 of September in 1963.