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Time Gives Back Identity

Oswald's Look-Alike Coworker Haunted for Years

By FLOYCE KORSACK
Staff Writer

The fallout from one of the most traumatic tragedies of the 20th century—the assassination of President John F. Kennedy eight years ago this week—spattered onto the innocent as well as the guilty.

One who innocently got caught up in the controversy was Billy Nolan Lovelady, a look-alike of Lee Harvey Oswald, the young man who the Warren Commission determined was the lone assassin. Both were employees of the Texas School Book Depository on Nov. 22, 1963.

Lovelady was standing in the doorway of the depository and witnessed the assassination.

HE WAS caught in the camera of James W. Altgens, an Associated Press photographer, as the shots were fired. The picture with a big question mark made headlines around the world—"Is this Lee Harvey Oswald? If so, then who killed Kennedy?"

The impact of mistaken identity was to follow Lovelady for four years. Letters and phone calls poured in for him at the book depository. Communications came from every state in the nation and from many foreign countries. People requested

autographs and information about the assassination. There were numerous crank messages and offers to buy the shirt Billy was wearing on the day of the assassination, one similar to the shirt Oswald was wearing. The Loveladys answered none of the communications.

Sensation-seeking writers and photographers literally followed Lovelady and his wife, Pat, around. Months later a station wagon with TV equipment occasionally would park in front of their apartment and their doorbell would ring. Others came on foot. Finally, Lovelady disconnected the doorbell.

Time has passed, the furor has died down, and the Loveladys can look back on the sad events with some objectivity. Until now Lovelady has been reluctant to discuss the assassination for fear of stirring up more confusion.

"I WAS able to answer questions to the satisfaction of officials immediately after it happened, but some people were looking for more. I wouldn't want to go through that again," he says.

For Lovelady, Nov. 22, 1963 began as a routine day of filling orders for books, and a noon-time break to watch the President's motorcade.

"Some of us were on the sixth floor and at first we were going to watch from the windows there. At the last minute we decided to go down to the front of the building. As the freight elevator passed the fifth floor we saw Oswald still at work. The elevator was slow, and we yelled at him through the iron gate and asked him if he wanted to watch the parade. He said he would be down later. That was about 12 o'clock, I guess.

"Just as the motorcade turned on Elm off Houston and traveled about 25 feet on Elm I heard the first shot and thought somebody was celebrating with a firecracker. Then I saw the President slump, and there were two more shots. For a second or two I couldn't think. I thought the shots came from my right, which would be near the railroad tracks, and everybody began running that way. All of a sudden I wondered what in the world we were doing running toward a gunman. We turned around and ran back and entered the depository through a rear door. There was confusion everywhere. It was only minutes before the police were all around and everyone was accounted for except Oswald.

"WE WERE taken to the police station for depositions and were still there when the police brought him in handcuffed. He

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

"The Dallas Times Herald" Dallas, Texas

Date: 11/21/71
Edition:
Author:
Editor: Felix R. McKnight
Title:

Character:
or
Classification:
Submitting Office: Dallas
 Being Investigated

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Lovelady
Depository

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waved his fists in the air as if to say "Look at me!" I couldn't believe it was the same man who was always so quiet at work.

"You know, he wasn't sociable at all. He was polite enough and would ask and answer questions about work, but there was no getting to know him. I knew his wife was expecting a baby and he was having a hard time financially. I would ask about his wife once in a while. He kept wondering how he would be able to pay the hospital bill and I suggested he probably could get her in a Prkland as charity patient.

"When I started to leave the police station that day, one woman pointed to me and said, 'I don't guess he was the killer. They are letting him go.' I am sure she saw the police take Oswald in and thought I was him. That's the first time it had ever occurred to me there was a resemblance."

Pat Lovelady had watched the motorcade in another part of the city and was on her way back to work when she heard the news.

"I RUSHED to the office radio and heard the description of the man they were looking for and that the shots were fired from the Texas School Book Depository," she recalls. The

description fit Billy (clothes and all). Of course I knew there was no way he could be involved, but I got sick all over. I couldn't reach the depository by phone and it was later in the afternoon before he could contact me.

The Loveladys were late getting home that night after eating a snack at a drugstore.

"The FBI was waiting for us when we got there," Lovelady said. "They asked about what had happened on the sixth and fifth floors that day and anything at all I knew about Oswald. Then on Sunday, Nov. 24, they came again with the Allgens photograph and I identified myself in it. Later at their request I went to their offices and had some photographs made."

Just how strong was the resemblance between Oswald and Lovelady? Both were about the same height and weight. Oswald was 24; Lovelady, 26. Both had sandy-blond hair and blue eyes, and the facial bone structure of the two was similar. It could be easy to confuse the pair if you were not acquainted with either and only identifying with photographs.

YET IRONICALLY, there are arguments both ways by those who knew them both well. Once Pat went to the depository to see her husband and she saw Oswald standing with his back toward her. She called her husband's name.

"Oswald turned around and I said it wasn't Billy. He told me he thought I had a young man but he knew who I had. He went and got Billy.

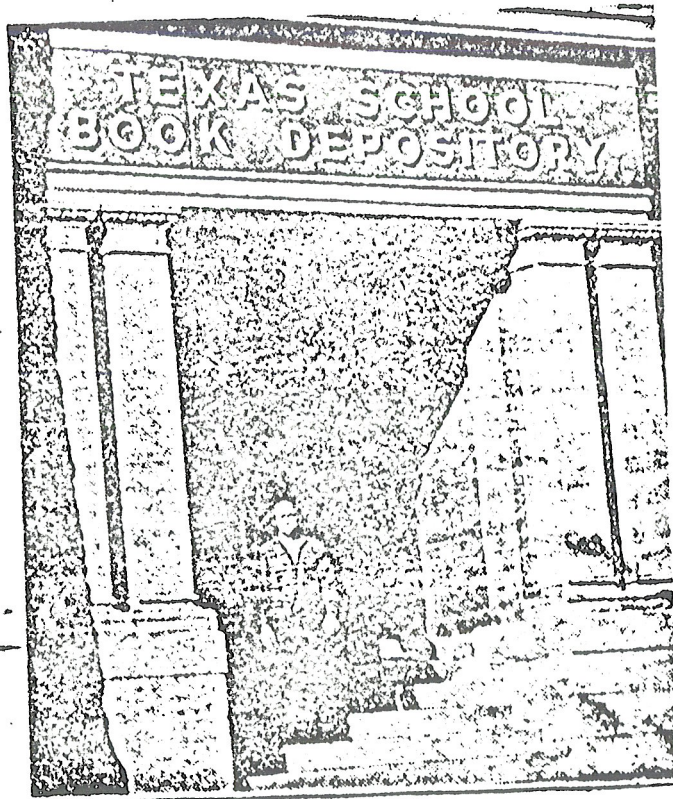
"Our children were very young then, and they showed Oswald's picture on television they pointed to him and said, 'There's Daddy'."

On the other hand, Billy tells the story of the day Oswald's mother visited the depository.

"It was during the Jack Ruby trial and she was in Dallas. She announced she was going to the depository to see the young man who claimed to be the one

standing in the doorway. I was standing at the counter when she came in. She asked me where the young man was and I told her he didn't come to work that day. She turned and walked away."

Eight years have passed since the President died in Dallas. The furor for the Loveladys is over and they are living a quiet and happy life in their own home in another neighborhood.



—Staff Photos by Bob Johnston
Billy Lovelady, mistaken in photographs as Lee Harvey Oswald in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination, poses in the Texas School Book Depository doorway where he stood that fateful day eight years ago. Lovelady, now 25 pounds heavier, is wearing the same shirt he wore the day the President was slain.



ENCLOSURE

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