

The Oswald Films: An Outline

by Martin Shackelford

The following piece, by our Michigan-based Honorary Member, is an attempt to catalogue every known film of Lee Harvey Oswald, with the exception of those many pieces of film taken at Dallas Police Headquarters by a multitude of cameramen. This article has previously been published in JFK/Deep Politics Quarterly (April 1997) and we acknowledge the co-operation of Joint Editor Walt Brown in allowing us to reprint it here.

PRE-ASSASSINATION

0. Speculative Films

There may exist presently unknown footage of several types which show Lee Harvey Oswald. One possible type is home movie footage, taken either by members of the Oswald family, or by relatives, or by people who knew Lee Oswald (schoolmates and their families, Civil Air Patrol cadets, etc.). A second possible type is home movie footage taken when Oswald was abroad, by tourists on the two ships, in Europe or in the Soviet Union or Mexico, or by people who knew him in the Soviet Union. There may be families in possession of such footage who have no idea Oswald is even in it; the Monica Kramer photos of Oswald in the Soviet Union turned up only after an intensive search of tourist photos taken during the relevant time period. A third possible type is footage shot covertly by or for the KGB, the CIA or other intelligence organizations, similar to the surveillance photos published by Oleg Nechiporenko in his book *Passport to Assassination*.

1. The Home Movie (11-22-62)

In one of the many ironic twists in this case, the first known motion picture footage of Lee Harvey Oswald was taken one year to the day before the Kennedy Assassination. It was a home movie taken by his brother Robert Oswald's wife Vada when the family gathered that year to celebrate Thanksgiving. Two color frames published in the October 17, 1967

Look magazine excerpt from Robert's book show a smiling Lee Oswald seated on a couch near his half-brother John Pic and Pic's wife, with Marina standing near Lee, and Robert playing with his son on the floor in the foreground.

These two color frames are also available from The Collector's Archives (Box 2, Beaconsfield, Quebec H9W 5T6, Canada).

On 26 November, 1990, the film was shown on *Hard Copy*, a tabloid television show, featuring an interview with Robert Oswald under the title *Oswald's Home Movie*. This may also be available from The Collector's Archives.

2. The New Orleans Films

Oswald's activities in New Orleans attracted the attention both of tourists and of a professional cameraman.

2a. The Jack Martin Film (8-9-63)

In another of those aforementioned ironic twists, a tourist named Jack Martin was in Dallas in August 1963. His film records his view from the airplane. Next, he visits General Edwin Walker, under whom he had served, and allegedly the target of an assassination attempt by Lee Oswald in April of that year. The film documents the scene of that attempt: the window through which the shot was fired, the bullet hole, and the wall from behind which it was most likely fired, ending with shots of Walker's

flag and mailbox, and a nearby building under construction (allegedly also photographed by Oswald prior to the attempt).

Then we see the entrance to a movie theater, cypress trees, a seal at the edge of a pool, and the statue of Andrew Jackson in Lafayette Park in New Orleans. Aroused by a commotion on Canal Street, Martin crossed to see what was happening, and began filming. We see Lee Oswald, leaflets in hand, standing on the sidewalk, being harangued by anti-Castro militants including Carlos Bringuier. Four police officers are seen arriving. The film ends with a view of the yellow leaflets scattered on the sidewalk after Bringuier knocked them out of Oswald's hands, and a brief aerial view of a subdivision.

Parts of the film have only been used, to my knowledge, on the French television documentary, *Le Mystère Kennedy*. The documentary is available on video, and frames from the film as well, from The Collector's Archives. A still from this film was finally published in Robert Groden's 1995 book *The Search For Lee Harvey Oswald*, an essential photo archive on Oswald.

2b. The James Doyle Film (8-9-63)

James Doyle was a 16 year old teenager, visiting New Orleans with his family in early August 1963. His film begins in Lafayette Park, New Orleans, and includes a view of the Andrew Jackson statue. He, too, then

noticed a commotion along Canal Street, crossed over to investigate, and began filming. Lee Oswald, back to camera, is talking with Carlos Bringer, when a police officer arrives, pushes Bringer aside and talks with Oswald, who gestures. Oswald is then seen through the crowd under arrest, obscured, moving to the left and we see him and the officer at the kerbside.

The film ends with harbor views. To my knowledge, this film has only appeared in one television programme, the British Dispatches: *The Day The Dream Died*, available, as are frames, from The Collector's Archives. A still from this film was also first published in the 1995 Groden book.

2c. The Johann Rush Films (8-12 and 16-63)

Johann Rush was a news cameraman for WDSU-TV in New Orleans in August 1963. He was on hand on August 12th when Lee Oswald appeared at the New Orleans courthouse for sentencing after his August 9 arrest. Rush filmed Oswald's approach, then Oswald posed for the camera in a courthouse corridor. The footage also includes Carlos Bringer and the Cubans.

Rush next filmed Oswald's leafleting at the International Trade Mart on August 16. This is the footage which shows Oswald and two colleagues (one of them Charles Steele Jr.) distributing leaflets, a figure in the background alleged to be Clay Shaw, and two foreground figures alleged to be Charles Rogers and Chauncey Holt. I won't attempt to catalog the sources in which bits of this footage appear, although the videotape *The Two Kennedys* (MPI Home Video) may still carry this title, or try The Collector's Archives. Stills from the footage appear in many places.

2d. The WWL-TV Film (8-16-63)

The most famous still, however, is from a brief bit of footage also taken during the August 16 leafleting, but by a rival cameraman for WWL-TV named Mike O'Connor, and shows Oswald thrusting a leaflet towards a

passer-by. Captioned *GARNER DEPOSITION EXHIBIT No. 1*, it appears in the Warren Report (page 409) and the footage is used in various documentaries.

2e. The Mike Lala Film (8-21-63)

The final bit of New Orleans footage was taken by cameraman Mike Lala during an interview of Oswald at WDSU-TV on August 21.

It shows Oswald in left profile as he speaks. In the semi-fictional film *Executive Action* (1973, National General Pictures, Warner Home Video), the footage is used as a training film for an Oswald imposter. As with the other New Orleans footage, it is widely excerpted.

The Collector's Archives offers two frames from the film. I recall the kindness of the late Bernard Fensterwald who provided me with a copy of such a still when I visited his office/archive in the mid-1970s. This was the archive which evolved into the AARC.

POST-ASSASSINATION

3. The Ron Reiland Film (11-22-63)

WFAA-TV cameraman Ron Reiland was filming at the site of the Tippit shooting when police were called to the Texas Theater, and Reiland went with them. As a result, he got the only footage of Oswald's arrest. One dimly lit scene shows Oswald being held by police inside the Texas Theater.

Underexposed, this appears only on *The Kennedy Tapes*, which contains the complete Reiland footage, and on *Films From The Sixth Floor* which includes the films from the Dallas Book Depository exhibits. Reiland then photographed Oswald being led out, placed into a police car and driven away.

4. The Arrival Film (11-22-63)

An NBC cameraman filmed Oswald when he arrived at Dallas Police Headquarters and was led into the Homicide Division offices, past witnesses and Depository co-worker Billy Lovelady.

5. The Press Conference Films (11-22-63)

Various footage exists from the late-night showing of Oswald to the press and this is some of the best-known footage of Oswald in custody. After the video ends on one film, the audio



A single frame from the Mike Lala footage of Oswald being interviewed on WDSU on 21 August 1963.

track continues with Oswald's voice for a short time longer.

6. The Hallway Films (11-22-63)

The Dallas Police Department hallways were soon swarming with reporters and cameramen. There is footage of Oswald being led from room to room at Police Headquarters taken by ABC, NBC, CBS, local stations and foreign cameramen. This includes the footage of Oswald's various denials: "I didn't shoot anybody, no sir." "I don't know what you people have been told, but I emphatically deny these charges." and his statement that this was all happening "because I lived in the Soviet Union," etc. Many of these films are included in the series *The Men Who Killed Kennedy* (Time-Life Video). There is also Hearst newsreel footage of Oswald in the hallway.

7. The Shooting Films (11-24-63)

ABC footage shows Oswald being led off the jail elevator and through the jail office area. Another piece of footage shows Oswald from behind as he moves out toward newsmen in the jail basement. Then a number of cameras (including the three networks and the Hearst newsreel) captured him from the front as he is led out and Jack Ruby lunges forward and shoots him. He is then out of the scene briefly. Most of this footage is also widely available.

8. The Post-Shooting Films (11-24-63)

When the ambulance arrives, Oswald is brought out on a stretcher and loaded into it. We see Oswald inside as the ambulance drives away. We next see footage of the ambulance containing Oswald arriving at Parkland Hospital, Oswald being pulled out on the stretcher and rushed into the hospital. This is the last known footage of Oswald alive, as well as the last publicly available.

9. The Exhumation Autopsy Videotape 10.4.81

Lee Oswald's body was exhumed on October 4, 1981 at the request of British author Michael Eddowes, with the co-operation of Marina Oswald and over the objections of Robert Oswald. A partial autopsy was performed at Baylor Pathology Laboratories, and the procedure was videotaped. Following a lengthy discussion about the possession of the videotape, it is my understanding that Marina Oswald regained possession of it. There are no plans to make it available to researchers but it may enter the record at some point in the future.

An Appeal:

If you have the remotest idea that anyone in your family might be in possession of footage (or photographs) taken at any time or in any place where Oswald may have been, by all means search through it to see if you can find that "one in a million" piece of documentation. Who knows? It might answer a question or two, or at last give us another piece of the puzzle which is Lee Harvey Oswald.

The author would appreciate learning of any such find in the interest of keeping this catalog updated, but urges that any film or photographs should be donated to the JFK Records Collection (ARRB).

SOME COMMERCIAL VIDEO SOURCES OF OSWALD FOOTAGE

Executive Action (Warner)

Fictional film includes a variety of New Orleans and Dallas Oswald footage. This is the film that sparked a renewal of my interest in the case and turned me into a JFK researcher, as happened nearly two decades later with some who saw the film *JFK*. (1973, National General) *The Two Kennedys* (MPI)

Includes much of the WDSU-TV footage taken in New Orleans as well as some of the Dallas footage; made in Italy. (1972, Respini)

John F Kennedy (CBS)

This has appeared under various titles including *Great Figures in History: John F Kennedy*, and includes Oswald Dallas footage. (1981)

The Plot to Kill JFK: Rush to Judgment (MPI)

Includes some Dallas footage of Oswald (1986; edited from the original 1966 original *Rush to Judgment* by Emile de Antonio, which may still be available in its complete form from The Collector's Archives)

Four Days in November (MGM/UA)

This Wolper documentary includes a variety of Dallas Oswald footage (1964)

The Men Who Killed Kennedy (Time-Life)

Parts 1, 4 and 5 of this 5-volume set of Nigel Turner's 1988 documentary include much of the professional Oswald footage except for the Johann Rush footage. (1988)

Films From The Sixth Floor

Available from the Sixth Floor Exhibit in the former Texas School Book Depository, includes much good Oswald footage in the segment *Crisis Hours*, including the rare footage of Oswald still inside the Texas Theater. (1989)

Men Against Humanity (Front Row)

This low-budget video includes most of the New Orleans WDSU coverage as well as some Dallas footage (1992)

Declassified: The Plot to Kill President Kennedy

An edited version of the Anthony Summers documentary. Also includes a variety of Oswald footage from New Orleans and Dallas. (1988; the original 1978 version was called *The*

1978 version was called *The Assassination of President Kennedy: What We Know Now That We Didn't Know Then*, released on videotape as *The Killing of President Kennedy* in 1982.)

Texas News: John F Kennedy (Independent Historical Films)

This includes Oswald Dallas footage. (1964; like many of the videotapes, it is available from JFK-Lancer, now under the title *Kennedy In Texas*.)

The JFK Assassination: The Jim Garrison Tapes (Vestron)

Includes a variety of New Orleans and Dallas Oswald footage. (1992)

Who Killed Kennedy? Facts Not Fiction (CBS)

Includes a variety of New Orleans and Dallas footage (1992). This was from the CBS 48 Hours program.

Beyond "JFK": The Question of Conspiracy (Warner)

Includes much of the New Orleans footage. (1992; also released in a boxed set with *JFK: The Director's Cut*.)

The Assassination of JFK (MPI)

This includes much of the New Orleans and some of the Dallas footage. (1992; recently re-released in a boxed set with the Zane CD-ROM.)

Lee Harvey Oswald (A&E)

This episode from the *Biography* series includes a variety of footage. (1995)

Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald? (PBS)

This three-tape special presentation of the PBS *Frontline* series includes an assortment of Oswald footage. (1993)

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