

# Before They Strike

Science offers hope that we can spot a potential  
Lee Oswald by his "personality pattern"

BY THOMAS J. FLEMING

In testimony before the House Appropriations Committee last spring, James Rowley, chief of the Secret Service, revealed the shocking fact that the Service had in its files 130,000 names of persons or groups who may be dangerous to the President. Even more alarming was a special "trip file" of 800 names of persons considered especially dangerous, on a district-by-district basis. Rowley estimated that this list would increase to 2,000 by the end of next year.

Two thousand would-be killers! How can we contain them? Even better, can we detect, in this number, the ones most likely to commit this awful crime? For the first time the answer is a tentative, but at least hopeful, yes.

The hope comes from a pioneering study, done by an alert young psychiatrist, Dr. David Rothstein, on a series of men jailed for threatening to kill a President. Dr. Rothstein, who was with the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Mo., and recently joined the staff of the Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, found similarities in family background and life experience so striking among these men that they often sound like Lee Oswald's psychological twins.

Lee Oswald? None other. The Warren Commission Report has made it clear that Oswald, in firing the shots that killed President Kennedy, acted alone. But it also gave most readers the impression that it was a fantastic coincidence that brought the sick young man and the President together. Now Dr. Rothstein's research makes it clear that Lee Oswald was by no means unique.

The following cases from his files are actual — only the names, for obvious reasons, have been changed.

**A. "Edward King"**— This man had constant fantasies about killing the President. He had had a brief, unsatisfactory military career. He said he wanted to kill the President because he, King, was a socialist. (*Lee Oswald was an admirer of Communism.*)

Adopted at the age of three, King never knew his real parents and disliked his foster parents. His carefully-worked-out assassination plan



included stationing himself in a high position and firing at the President with a high-powered rifle, using a silencer. (*Oswald's plan, except for the silencer.*) King gleefully declared it would be impossible for the President to protect himself against such an attack. When traveling about the country, King regularly used a number of false names (*so did Lee Oswald*).



**B. "Robert Coyle"**— "You're a cunning —, Kennedy," he wrote. "If necessary or expedient, I'll trim you and your — Secret Service with machine-gun bullets . . . violent attacks have been made upon me . . . outrages perpetrated by the United



Similarities to Lee Oswald's personality pattern show up in many other potential assassins

States Military Service. . . ."

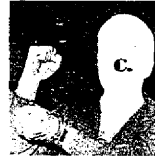
Coyle had barely known his father, who had left home when the boy was six and died in an automobile accident. (*Lee Oswald's father died shortly before his birth.*) Coyle did not graduate from high school (*neither did Lee Oswald*), and he enlisted in the Armed Forces at an early age. He both loved and hated his domineering mother (*like Lee Oswald*) and was given a bad conduct discharge for going AWOL to visit her. Thereafter, he became convinced that the world had not treated him right and admitted a violent animosity "towards whomever was President."

**C. "James Case"**—In January, 1960, he wrote a threatening letter to President Eisenhower, declaring he planned to kill him and his grandchildren, unless he changed his military discharge from undesirable to honorable medical. (*Lee Oswald wrote a similar letter to Secretary of the Navy John Connally about his Marine Corps discharge.*)

Physically, Case was an unimpressive person, small and underdeveloped (*so was Lee Oswald*). Case enlisted in the service at the age of 18 and soon became disillusioned with the experience. He was frequently in trouble with his superiors, going AWOL on several occasions. (*Oswald was court-martialed twice during his hitch with the Marine Corps.*)

After his discharge, Case drifted from job to job, and was hospitalized at one point after a suicide attempt. (*Lee Oswald was a drifter and attempted to kill himself at least once.*)

Case was extremely interested in the possibility of moving to Russia. (*Lee Oswald actually moved to Russia,*



and lived there for more than two years.)

When Federal agents arrested Case, he was carrying a revolver which he had purchased a week before, and his bag was packed for a trip to Washington.

Such amazing similarities recur again and again in the more than 30 would-be assassins Dr. Rothstein examined. It has led him to declare the existence of a "Presidential assassination syndrome." It takes some medical background to realize the importance of this declaration. A syndrome is a set of specific symptoms, which appear often enough, in a sufficient number of persons, to be considered a medical reality. It is the first step in estab- (TO PAGE 12)



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12

## Before They Strike

(FROM PAGE 9) lishing the existence of a disease. No reputable doctor uses this term lightly.

Where does this strange aberration begin? "Very early in life," Dr. Rothstein says. "Fathers are rarely prominent in the lives of these people. They are either absent or ineffective. This makes it difficult for them to relate to figures in authority.

### They hate women

"We know from a study of Oswald's psychiatric history that he was even resentful of people who had fathers. At the same time, the mothers in most of these cases fail to give the child the love he desperately seeks. This frequently results in a deep, severe rage against women. One patient told me that he did not care if every woman in the U.S. died."

Why do so many of these people have bad service records? "The absence of a strong father, plus this rage at women, would seem to result in a very poor masculine identification," Dr. Rothstein says. "These people feel a desperate need to become men, and they have no inner guidelines. So they turn to the service, because military life seems to automatically guarantee masculinity. It also removes them from women, whom they see as a threat. And it supplies another basic wish—to be taken care of. But no military service can fulfill these unrealistic expectations. Once this is realized, the man becomes angry and uncooperative—and soon runs up a bad record resulting in a dishonorable discharge."

Then, Dr. Rothstein believes,

the final stage of the illness begins. Brooding over his failure in the service, the potential assassin soon begins to hate the U.S. government, and particularly the man who symbolizes that government—the President.

The suicide gesture is another very significant symptom in the assassination syndrome. "Lee Oswald certainly knew that the three previous assassins of U.S. Presidents had met death," Dr. Rothstein says. "It didn't deter him.

"These people often have a desire to die, and their other compulsions move them towards killing the President as a way of achieving this wish. One man told me that, before threatening the President, he contemplated attacking a policeman, in the hope that he would be killed."

Why are so many of these men interested in Communism or socialism? "This flows largely from their wish to be taken care of," Dr. Rothstein says. "They tend to think that a radical government of the far left or right would do a better job than the U.S. government in this area. They are not bothered by the fact that most Americans think these governments are bad. It is rather like a sulking child preferring another set of parents."

### Significant signatures

This wish, or need, to be taken care of is one of the reasons why almost all these people sign their names and addresses to their threatening letters. In fact, as Dr. Rothstein mournfully points out, if Lee Oswald had written his threatening letter to the President, and made it a trifle more violent, he would probably have landed in a Federal prison.

The Secret Service has always taken very seriously any threat to

kill a President, and since the death of John F. Kennedy its vigilance is even more intense. Once government agents all but blanketed the nation seeking a retired Air Force captain, one Dorsey Lee Webster, Jr., who had written several threatening letters to President Johnson. After several false scents they finally seized him in Ohio, at Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

Expert and encouraging as this capture was, another case from Dr. Rothstein's files underscores how badly we need more sophisticated psychiatric knowledge to complement police work. Only recently, the doctor had a chance to interview a young man who had written a threatening letter to President Johnson.

### More research needed

The young man was adopted, had a sequence of two inadequate foster fathers, and an immature and undependable foster mother. At one point he tried founding a Nazi-style political party. He then joined the service, but a security check (prompted, ironically, by President Kennedy's assassination) resulted in his swift discharge.

This brought on a mental breakdown and a bitter letter to President Johnson in which he declared it was necessary "for the good of the country" to kill him.

It was, in short, Lee Harvey Oswald all over again.

But no one, neither the psychiatrists nor the man's superior officers in the service, showed the slightest interest in the similarity.

"My hope," Dr. Rothstein says, "is that my exploration of this problem will prompt more research."

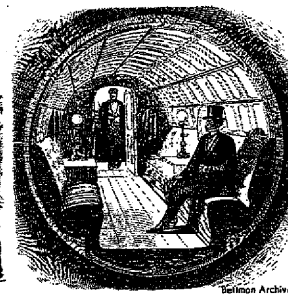
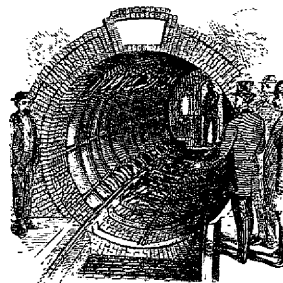
Can anyone think of a better way to spend our money? (THE END)

## LET'S GO UNDERGROUND—FAST

(FROM PAGE 7) seats. Even standing would be no hardship—only seven minutes, for example, from Baltimore to Washington—and no bumping or jolting (sketch, page 7).

How quickly could such a dream railroad be built? How much would it cost over-all? Once legal and financial problems were settled, Edwards believes it would take no more than three years, and it would cost about \$2,400,000,000—well within the reach of private enterprise.

"The men who built our railroads in the last century did a great job," says Edwards. "But we've now got a system best suited to carrying freight. Will we merely patch it up and hand it on to our children? Or will we have the vision to build something new and lasting that we can all start enjoying now?" (THE END)



**PNEUMATIC TUBE TRAIN:** Certainly not a new idea, the prototype for Larry Edwards' 500 m.p.h. modern version of a train propelled by air pressure in a vacuum was made almost 100 years ago by Alfred Ely Beach, early editor and publisher of the "Scientific American." Beach built an experimental one-block subway, pushed back and forth by fan. The principal has been used since for moving mail in big cities. Even earlier, a British company had tried a similar system, using a small tube between the trucks, but it was unsuccessful.