

President From Assassination Investigating JFK's Murder

"I love my country, but this was not the way to change it — by killing a President," he said.

Cooper was convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald, whom the Warren Commission said alone was responsible for Kennedy's death, was a Naval Intelligence agent.

Cooper was an ex-Navy man himself, receiving a Presidential Citation when his ship, the U.S.S. Smith, was rammed by a kamakaze pilot in 1942, killing 58 men. He picked up his investigatory knowledge as a Baton Rouge policeman for almost 10 years and later as a law enforcement officer in two Florida towns.

HE BECAME CONVINCED a week-long cruise aboard the aircraft carrier Shangri La in August 1963 — three months before Kennedy's death — involved an intelligence operation.

As a policeman in Florida, he began making written inquiries to the Pentagon to find out the names of those aboard the carrier. He received nine names, but two of them turned out to be aliases.

He continued pressing the Navy Department for more information on the two mystery men. Meanwhile, he left Florida and returned to Louisiana.

"A Naval Intelligence agent followed me from Florida to Baton Rouge to find out how I got this information," he said.

The Shangri La cruise, billed as a pleasure junket, was sponsored by then Secretary of the Navy Fred Korth of Fort Worth.

Korth knew Oswald's family before the youthful onetime Russian defector was arrested for killing Kennedy and subsequently was murdered himself by Jack Ruby. As an attorney, Korth had represented Edwin Ekdahl, former husband of Oswald's mother, Marguerite Oswald, in a divorce suit.

KORTH SUCCEDED Kennedy-appointee John B. Connally, later wounded when Kennedy was assassinated, as Secretary of the Navy.

After the assassination, the names of both Korth and Connally were found in Oswald's address book.

A month before the assassination, Korth resigned his cabinet post during the political controversy over the TFX aircraft, later to become the F-111 fighter plane used in the Vietnam war. General Dynamics, in Korth's hometown, finally received the \$6.5 billion TFX contract after Lyndon Johnson became

President.

The seven Shangri La guests the Navy identified for Cooper were business or political leaders in the New Orleans-Baton Rouge area.

One had worked for the same insurance company with Lee Harvey Oswald's father. Another was a close friend of Dallas law enforcement officials who investigated Kennedy's assassination. Another had family connections with a local Nazi Party leader.

OSWALD HAD SOME interest in the Nazis. The names of George Lincoln Rockwell and Daniel Burros, both Nazi Party leaders, were written in his address book. Both Rockwell and Burros were later shot to death — Rockwell assassinated by an ex-Marine; Burros death ruled a suicide.

The two names on the Shangri La list Cooper couldn't identify were Adolph Vermont Jr. and William Craver Jr. After being

referred from one department to another, finally the Pentagon told him the information couldn't be found in the files and there was no way to track it down.

In his research — the significance of which may never be determined without an official probe — time and time again Cooper ran across the word "Vermont." He wrote to me:

"When the records are opened in the year 2039 you will see the 'Vermont' project was involved in killing Kennedy."



BILLY KEMP (left) discusses the \$25,000 offer he had to fly two mysterious men out of Dallas the day Kennedy was shot with Special Projects Editor John Moulder.

In 1968, when Cooper was chasing the Naval Intelligence theory, he got in touch with D.A. Jim Garrison's staff probing the Kennedy assassination. On July 9, 1968, he was asked to testify before the Orleans Parish grand jury.

Five days later, the steering post came loose on his auto and it crashed into a culvert. The detective's back was broken in three places. His wife had a serious head injury.

Cooper said he never believed it was an accident.

THEN LAST YEAR, Cooper and I located two men in the Baton Rouge area who had once been friends but hadn't seen each other in several years. They had worked together at the sprawling Ling-Temco-Vought defense plant in Dallas in November 1963.

Both men, in separate interviews, said they had been offered a large sum of money to pilot a small aircraft with two passengers to South America on Nov. 22. Both men said they turned down the offer because the flight would be on a no-questions-asked basis and they feared it involved something illegal.

The proposed pilot, Billy Kemp, 52, told **TATTLEER**:

"After the assassination, I was glad I didn't

have anything to do with it.”

Both men said that since Kennedy was killed in Dallas the day of the proposed flight, they felt it was linked to the assassination.

ANOTHER COINCIDENCE: Kemp was married in 1963 to Maxine Kemp, an employe of the Louisiana State Mental Hospital at Jackson.

Mrs. Kemp was a witness in Garrison's investigation. She said Lee Harvey Oswald

went to the hospital and filled out a job application – which has since disappeared – in August of 1963.

Both Kemp, a decorated World War II fighter pilot, and his former partner told TATTLER the name of the man, also an LTV employe, who made the offer.

Kemp said they were never told the destination of the proposed flight “but only that it was in some South American country.”

He feared the occupants of the plane might be arrested on the spot if they attempted an unscheduled landing in a Latin American country

KEMP'S PARTNER said the fee for the flight was to be \$25,000. He told TATTLER that he concluded Kennedy might be murdered after reading in a newspaper the President would be in Dallas Nov. 22, the day of the proposed flight.

“I said, ‘Billy, do you know what they want for \$25,000? I said, Kennedy ain't gonna' get out of Dallas. They're gonna' kill him.’”

Kemp's partner would agree to an interview only after TATTLER promised not to put his name in print. TATTLER carried two stories in two issues last August. Two months later, Cooper was found shot to death in his bedroom.

After Cooper's death, I went back to the Baton Rouge businessman who wanted to remain anonymous.

THE BUSINESSMAN held me to my commitment to still not print his name, though he indicated he would tell his story to any official investigation.



OFFICER William H. (Joe) Cooper

A congressional committee with subpoena power could check out that end of the investigation, unless it determined that a proposed high-priced mystery flight from Dallas to South America on Nov. 22, 1963, is inconsequential.

In a packet of notes I received in the mail from Cooper the day before his death, he noted that the TATTLER stories about the Louisiana connection had some people in Baton Rouge “stirred up.”

Then his death reminded me of all the other mystery deaths concerning scores of witnesses and others involved in some way with the JFK assassination, and of what Cooper wrote me in a letter last summer:

“I am convinced everyone involved will be killed if this thing is not exposed quickly.”



BETWEEN AND BEHIND President Kennedy and Defense Sec. Robert McNamara is Navy Sec. Fred Korth. A month before the assassination, Korth resigned his post in a cloud of charges concerning what eventually became the F-111 fighter jet. Korth's name was one of those listed in Lee Harvey Oswald's address book.