

Juggling Pieces Of The

It was one more funny little unimportant coincidence. An hour or two after hearing last week that the House Select Committee on Assassinations wanted to interview him, George de Mohrenschildt put the muzzle of a 20-gauge shotgun inside his mouth and pulled the trigger.

You'd have to be subject to hallucinations, of course, to see this as anything more than the impulsive reaction of a man with strained nerves.

De Mohrenschildt knew Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, knew him well. And their relationship may have seemed an odd one.

More than 20 years older than Oswald, de Mohrenschildt was sophisticated and cultured, a linguist, a petroleum engineer. "He moved in the highest circles of Texas oil millionaires," says Cyril Wecht, the Allegheny County coroner whose interest in the assassination of John F. Kennedy once moved

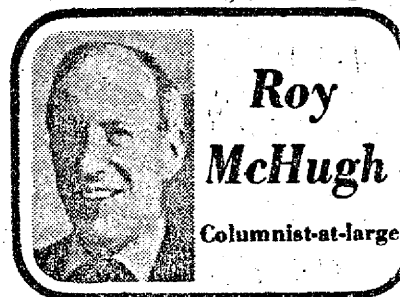
him to seek out de Mohrenschildt for questioning. Oswald, a high school dropout, worked at a menial job in the Texas School Book Depository.

But what law requires personal friends to have similar educations and backgrounds? De Mohrenschildt grew up in Russia. So did Oswald's wife, a few decades later. Probably they talked about Tolstoy a lot.

No, de Mohrenschildt's suicide proved nothing, certainly not the truth of the story told by Willem Oltmans, a Dutch journalist, to reporters the other day and in all likelihood to the assassinations committee.

Oltmans had been preparing an article or a book on de Mohrenschildt. This man, he said, admitted having recruited Oswald for an assassination team that included CIA agents, FBI agents, Cuban expatriates and Texas oilmen, among them the late H. R. Hunt.

Only a nut would pay any attention



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to such babble. It's as far out, as improbable as, oh, let's say a conspiracy hatched by the CIA in which Mafia hit men would try to do away with Fidel Castro by poisoning his cigar.

And only a nut would give any credence to the letter in Oswald's handwriting addressed to a "Mr. Hunt."

Dated Nov. 8, 1963, two weeks before Kennedy's fatal ride past the Texas School Book Depository, it says, "I would like information concerning

JFK Jigsaw Puzzle

my position. I am asking only for information. I am suggesting that we discuss this matter fully before any steps are taken by me or anyone else."

No doubt there are hundreds of Mr. Hunts to whom Oswald might have written those words.

It has been said that de Mohrenschildt himself was in the hire of the CIA, which is clearly preposterous. The CIA, we all can be sure, screens its employes very carefully, and de Mohrenschildt was mentally unstable, as flaky as E. Howard Hunt.

I mention E. Howard Hunt to show how common the name is. Even if de Mohrenschildt were still alive it would be a further waste of taxpayers' money to follow up on Willem Oltmans' testimony.

The Warren Commission, 13 years ago, decided once and for all that de Mohrenschildt wasn't involved. Not only did Oswald do all the shooting in Dallas

— fire the bullet that went through President Kennedy, made a turn of some kind in the air, penetrated the back and wrist of Texas Gov. John Connally, and then imbedded itself in his thigh — it was Oswald's own idea.

All right, de Mohrenschildt went the way others have gone who knew, or claimed to have known, facts inconsistent with the Warren Commission's findings, but these things happen. And the number of incidents has been wildly exaggerated.

By 1975, Penn Jones Jr., the conspiracy buff and retired newspaper editor who turned over the Hunt letter to the Dallas Morning News not long ago, had counted 70 unexplained deaths among witnesses either called by the Warren Commission or expected to be called. Two or three of the deaths, like de Mohrenschildt's, were suicides. Many more, like Oswald's, were murders or suspected murders. But Jones was a trifle melodramatic.

Cooler heads believe there were fewer than 25 such cases — a flimsy reason for starting in now where the Warren Commission stopped.

To think that Lee Harvey Oswald did not pull the job off alone takes extreme gullibility. One would have to suppose that the CIA and the FBI were incompetent or worse, which could never be true.

Richard Sprague, the assassination committee's deposed chief counsel, wanted to spend \$6 million this year going over the same ground the Warren Commission covered, or maybe did not. That is almost as much money as the CIA needs to stay in business from 8 o'clock in the morning until noon. No wonder, in spite of being a skilled and tenacious investigator, Sprague got the ax.

He was a dangerous man. He might have found out that even before Watergate there were coverups.