

Oswald camera disappeared during FBI investigation

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By EARL GOLZ

A small German-made spy camera found among Lee Harvey Oswald's possessions by Dallas police disappeared when the FBI obtained the Oswald property less than a week after the assassination, The Dallas News has learned.

Detective Gus Rose has told investigators with the House Assassinations Committee that he found the Minox camera, loaded with film, in Oswald's seabag at the Irving home of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Paine on either Nov. 22 or Nov. 23, 1963. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated here Nov. 22.

After unsuccessfully trying to pressure Rose into reporting he had found a Minox light meter and not a Minox camera, the FBI two months later placed into their records a Minox camera which they said was not Oswald's.

AN FBI REPORT said the Minox III camera was obtained Jan. 31, 1964, from Mrs. Ruth Paine of Irving and that it belonged to her husband. Mrs. Paine's home was where Oswald's wife was staying at the time of the assassination and was where Rose said he found a Minox camera among Oswald's personal effects more than two months earlier.

Mrs. Paine told The News she does not recall being asked to turn over a Minox camera to the FBI, although "I'm sure they (FBI) talked about it and what they did or what we did I just don't remember." Her husband owned a Minox badly in need of repair in 1964, but she could not recall the FBI or any other law authorities searching her house or garage for it after the Dallas police search of Nov. 22-23.

The serial number of the Minox camera reportedly obtained from Mrs. Paine by the FBI was listed as 27259, which did not exist among any of the Minox cameras distributed for com-

mercial sale in this country, according to Kurt Lohn, then in charge of distribution for Minox Corp. in New York City.

All Minox cameras distributed in this country had six digits starting with serial number 135000, Lohn said, so 27259 "is not a registered number ... not a valid number."

Lohn said the "unobtrusive" camera is about three inches long and an inch wide and was used as a "spy camera" by both sides during World War II to photograph documents and other espionage work.

OSWALD WORKED at the Dallas typesetting firm of Jaggars-Chiles-Stovall in 1962, which did classified work for the Army Map Service. There he learned to operate specialized photographic equipment at a job he took several months after returning to this country from Russia, where he defected in 1959.

While Oswald was in Russia he photographed a number of military installations and other sensitive scenes of more interest to an espionage agent than a sightseer. The photos, all taken in the Minsk area where Oswald lived, showed the airport, an army office building, a polytechnical institute and a radio-television factory assembly line.

For 14 years the FBI did not even reveal the Oswald photos in Russia existed until references to them were declassified with other assassination documents last January. Neither the photos themselves nor the location where the FBI found them was revealed.

Rose, a 24-year veteran of the Dallas police force, said the camera he found "was real small, about like a half-pack of cigarettes in size" and was loaded with a cassette of film. He said he didn't know whether any of the film had been exposed.

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STOVALL SAID cameras and camera equipment were found both in the house and in Oswald's seabag in the garage Nov. 22-23, but he could not recall where the German camera was found. He also said he remembers someone — "I think it was somebody from the FBI later on, asking about that deal" involving the camera and light meter.

"They (FBI) were (later) calling it a light meter, I know that," Rose said. "But I know a camera when I see it ... The thing we got at Irving out of Oswald's seabag was a Minox miniature camera. No question about it."

"They tried to get me to change the records because it wasn't a light meter. I don't know why they wanted it changed, but they must have had some motive for it."

The FBI's reported acquisition of a Minox camera from Mrs. Paine two months later occurred after newsmen started asking questions about reports the FBI was trying to pressure Dallas police into altering their inventory of Oswald's property.

ROBERT GEMBERLING, now retired FBI agent who wrote the first report submitted to the Warren Commission referring to the camera Mrs. Paine reportedly supplied to the FBI, said "if that's what the report says, I feel sure that's true."

"It would stand to reason that if we found a light meter that would be used with a Minox camera then naturally we would want to know where the camera is," Gemberling told The News. "Now Mr. Rose, I can't vouch — If he says he thought it was a camera and it was or whether he thought it wasn't, I just can't say. I don't know."

J. Gordon Shanklin, agent-in-charge of the Dallas FBI office during the assassination investigation, said he could not recall the camera incident.

"I am sure it (camera or light meter) went up there (FBI lab in Washington), whatever it was," Shanklin said. "It's probably still in evidence, I don't know ... But I am sure that if it had been a Minox camera and it was found, then it would have been reported as that."

An inventory of property taken from the Paine house and garage was made Nov. 26, 1963, in the FBI office here and listed "one Minox camera" under item number 375. The inventory was witnessed by FBI agent Warren De Brueys and Dallas Police Capt. J.M. English.

IN A SECOND published FBI inventory after De Brueys and another agent, Vincent Drain, delivered the property to the FBI laboratory in Washington on Nov. 27, no camera was listed under item 375 but the words "Minox light meter" appeared for the first time.

Item 377 on Nov. 26 listed 2 rolls of undeveloped Minox film and two rolls of "apparently exposed" Minox film. Under the same item on Nov. 27 the FBI inventory read two Minox cassettes or rolls "(one containing film)" and two containers with "unexposed" Minox film.

No description could be found in the Warren Commission volumes about whether the undeveloped film was developed to determine if any images were on the frames.