

# Kennedy witness 'owed' FBI

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By EARL GOLZ

An FBI witness whose testimony knocked down strong evidence of an assassination conspiracy only days before the Warren Report went to press has told The News he was indebted to the FBI at the time.

Anti-Castro gunrunner Loran Eugene Hall said he still thinks FBI agent James Hosty Jr. may have helped him get his release from jail without further repercussions one day after Dallas police arrested him for possession of dangerous drugs. The arrest was Oct. 17, 1963, a little more than a month before President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

Hall, then living in the Los Angeles area, said he believes Hosty was the FBI agent who told him after a lengthy interview in a Dallas jail. "We've got nothing on you and, as far as we're concerned, you're free to go."

Hosty, who monitored Lee Harvey Oswald's activities in Dallas before the assassination, denies he ever met Hall or "dealt with him" in any way.

Dallas oilman Lester Logue, who was helping Hall in his anti-Castro efforts at the time, asserts he alone was responsible for Hall's release from jail the day after his arrest.

But radio newsman Art Kevin of Seattle, Wash., a longtime friend of Hall, said a "highly placed federal source was responsible for his getting out" of jail in Dallas.

**HOSTY, NOW** with the FBI office in Kansas City, Mo., recently said the House Assassinations Committee is "afraid" he will drop some "bombs" if called to testify publicly during the committee hearings in Washington.

He refused to be more specific, but the Hall jail incident could not be one of the bombs, he said, because Hosty "didn't work Cuban matters (in 1963), and I don't know how he would have my name."

Hall was one of the casualties when Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba. Then 29, he was working in the Hotel Capri, casino in Havana when Castro ejected American mobsters from Cuban gambling operations in 1959. He found himself incarcerated in the same prison cell with reputed Florida Mafia don Santo Trafficante Jr., who owned the Capri casino.

Trafficante's freedom reportedly was a project that involved the efforts of Dallas nightclub operator Jack Ruby for several months of 1959. After Hall and Trafficante were released from the Havana prison that year, they maintained a loose association through plots during the early 1960s to remove Castro from power.

Hall was called before the House Assassinations Committee in public session June 7, 1977, but invoked the Fifth Amendment when asked whether he was in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, the day of the assassination. He testified in private session later last year after he was given immunity from prosecution.

**HOSTY, ONE** month after the assassination, was one of two FBI agents who interviewed Sylvia Odio, a Cuban emigre active in the anti-Castro movement in Dallas.

Mrs. Odio's story, which subsequently became one of the Warren Commission's most troublesome unanswered questions about a possible assassination conspiracy, seemingly was discredited by Hall on Sept. 16, 1964. His statement was taken by the FBI eight days before the Warren Report was published Sept. 24, 1964.

Mrs. Odio told Hosty and another FBI agent nine months earlier that Oswald, along with two Latin men, showed up at her Dallas apartment in late September 1963 soliciting funds to oust Castro. She said one of the two Latin men, who introduced Oswald as "Leon Oswald," quoted him as saying, "I'll bet you Cubans could kill Kennedy for what he did to you at the Bay of Pigs," according to Hosty's report.

Mrs. Odio's story remained unchallenged as late as August 1964.

J. Lee Rankin, the Warren Commission's chief counsel, finally wrote FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover on Aug. 28 asking the FBI to "determine who it was that Mrs. Odio saw in or about late September" 1963.

The FBI suddenly located Hall, who allegedly said he was one of the trio calling on Mrs. Odio two months before the assassination. He identified his companions as William Howard Seymour of Phoenix, Ariz., and Lawrence Howard of East Los Angeles, Calif.

The FBI said that Seymour, who slightly resembled Oswald, probably was the "Leon Oswald" at Mrs. Odio's apartment.

Two days later, however, Seymour and Howard denied to the FBI they had visited Mrs. Odio in September 1963. And, two days after their denial, Hall renounced his story to the FBI.

When the FBI showed Mrs. Odio photographs of Hall, Seymour and Howard, she failed to identify any of them.

**WITH ONLY** four days until the Warren Report went to press, the FBI was where it started on the Odio story. But the Warren Commission went with the FBI's first statement taken from Hall — which, allegedly, was false.

The commission said, "While the FBI had not yet completed its investigation into this matter at the time the report went to press, the commission has concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald was not at Mrs. Odio's apartment in September 1963."

Hosty said he still thinks Hall "probably was there" at Mrs. Odio's apartment. Hosty said Mrs. Odio "struck me as being a typical tropical, kind of flighty,

I don't think she knew who she was talking about, you know, all gringos look alike."

He said "hard physical evidence" indicated Oswald was on his way to Dallas from New Orleans to Mexico City at the time Mrs. Odio supposedly saw him in Dallas.

Hosty's denial that he knew of Hall before the assassination is challenged by the Dallas policeman, who arrested Hall three weeks after the Odio incident.

**Sgt. KENNETH** Heard recalled Hall "insisted" Heard contact Hosty when he stopped Hall's car on North Central Expressway near Mockingbird Lane. Heard said he refused to notify the FBI and took Hall and his companion — the same William Seymour of Hall's Odio statement — to jail after finding some unauthorized prescription drugs in the glove compartment.

Hall denied he asked for any FBI agent. He contacted the FBI, plus the CIA and Army intelligence sent representatives to interview him about his anti-Castro activities when they learned he was incarcerated. The FBI revealed it had pre-assassination knowledge of Hall's arrest in a report responding to the Warren Commission's request to find the visitors to Mrs. Odio's apartment.

Wallace Heitman, Dallas FBI agent in charge of Cuban affairs at the time, recently said, "I know the story of Hall; that he was here and he was arrested. And I don't know how I found out."

Heitman, now a Dallas lawyer, said he has "no recollection of interviewing" Hall in jail. "I am not going to say categorically I didn't, but I don't believe I did."

Hall's attorney, Bryson Mills, said Hall "doesn't recognize that name (Heitman) at all. Hosty is the name that he says he thinks was the FBI agent's name. Or, at least, the name that was given to him."

"He says he probably could identify him (the FBI agent) by a picture better than he could by recalling

his name," Mills said. "But he thinks that (Hosty) was the name given to him. And he says, prior to the time the FBI agent talked to him, he never asked for him, never heard of him, never met him. The guy just came down to talk to him."

"And Loran advises that he does remember for sure that when the FBI agent talked to him he told Loran, 'We've got nothing on you and as far as we're concerned you're free to go.' So in that regard Loran says the FBI agent may have had something to do with his release."

**INVESTIGATORS** for the House Assassinations Committee have questioned Hall, Hosty and Heard but not about Hosty's alleged involvement with Hall. Hosty and Mrs. Odio, however, are expected to be called to testify publicly by the committee within the next two weeks.

"The very fact that they didn't question me about it (in private session Aug. 25) must mean that they don't have any faith in it," Hosty said.

"Just kind of question these people who come forward after 15 years, trying to get into the act," Hosty said. "I certainly would have thought with all of the furor I was having with the police department back in 1962, he (Heard) would have brought that out — they wouldn't have set on that because they were trying to nail me to the cross back in 1963."

(Hours after the assassination Dallas police detective Jack Revill sent a memo to then-Police Chief Jesse Curry quoting Hosty as telling Revill the FBI knew Oswald was "capable" of killing Kennedy before he did. Curry publicly repeated Hosty's remarks, saying the FBI knew — but didn't inform Dallas police — that Oswald was working in a building on the presidential motorcade route. In the controversy that ensued FBI Director Hoover denied Hosty made the comments but later suspended him without pay 30 days and transferred him to the Kansas City FBI office.)