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Jean Stafford

N.Y. Review of A MOTHER IN HISTORY *books*

When a gifted writer meets an unusual subject, almost anything can happen. As Miss Stafford explains at the start, "I had come to Texas to see Mrs. Oswald because she is, as she was frequently to tell me, 'a mother in history.'" The result is a memorable encounter recorded in memorable prose. Readers of this extraordinary book will not soon forget it.

Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald, met Miss Stafford on three consecutive days in her Fort Worth home. On the first day she "plunged straightaway into her memoirs"; on the second, she addressed a tape recorder, in Miss Stafford's presence, with her customary spate of words; on the third, Mother's Day, she completed the interview by taking Miss Stafford to visit her son's grave. From her many statements to the author—some startling, others contradictory, a few deeply shocking, and all of them revealing—a self-portrait of Mrs. Oswald emerges. In these pages she has portrayed herself not only as "a mother in history," but as a mother that history will remember.

"While she remains peripheral to the immediate events of the Dallas killings," Miss Stafford writes, "she is inherent to the evolution of the reasons for them . . . We need to know the influences and accidents and loves and antipathies and idiosyncrasies that were the ingredients making up the final compound. I hoped that Mrs. Oswald would be able to tell me what these had been." In *A Mother in History*, due to Miss Stafford's incredible skill and insight in dealing with her subject, Mrs. Oswald tells everything that one should—or needs to—know.

"Fascinating to read, implacable in its inferences, and impeccable in its presentation."—*Virginia Kirkus Service*