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Caught Between 2

★ De Mohrenschildts Knew Both Oswalds,

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George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt—perhaps the only persons in the world to have known the families of both John F. Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald—reflected this week on the strange twists fate can take.

"The coincidences are strange—almost unbelievable," mused De Mohrenschildt, who has just returned to Dallas for the first time since President Kennedy was assassinated here.

Among the coincidences:

• De Mohrenschildt was born in Russia in the same town where Oswald lived after leaving the United States.

• As a youth newly arrived in New York, De Mohrenschildt became acquainted with the parents of the little girl who would become John Kennedy's wife.

• And years later, in Dallas, the De Mohrenschildts were among a group of Russian-speaking American citizens who befriended Oswald and his Russian bride, Marina, in the days before Oswald was accused of assassinating the president.

The De Mohrenschildts—he is a geologist and petroleum engineer—were in Haiti when President Kennedy was killed. But their testimony was considered so significant they were flown to Washington to appear before the Warren Commission.

The Warren Commission devoted nearly 200 pages of its report to testimony by De Mohrenschildt and his fashion-designer wife.

During the Warren Commission hearings, the couple spent sev-

eral days in Washington detailing the relationship that evolved when, as members of a small Dallas-Fort Worth group of Russian-speaking American citizens, they befriended Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife, Marina.

Some of their evenings during the same visit were spent with Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss, mother of Jacqueline Kennedy.

"Mrs. Auchincloss was interested in the Oswalds and wanted to know all about them," said Mrs. De Mohrenschildt. "But she was opposed, as was Mrs. Kennedy, to an investigation. She felt that her son-in-law was dead and that a hearing could not bring him back, but could only prolong the intensity of grief for those who loved him.

"We argued a little about it. As an American citizen I felt that we must establish the blame and try to find the reason for the death of our president."

"The sad thing about it," added De Mohrenschildt, "is that there was no reason for it, and that is what the people in other countries cannot understand. It has been extremely harmful for our national image.

"In Haiti, Duvalier surrounds himself with a tough armed presidential bodyguard, the Tonton-Macoute (roughly translated to 'boogy-men') to protect himself from the enmity his dictatorship has created. But an assassination without reason — that's beyond comprehension."

Tragedies

Kennedys ★

Mrs. De Mohrenschildt has a simple explanation for it.

"If Oswald truly was the sniper, President Kennedy was killed because of a washing machine," she believes.

"Only the night before the assassination, Oswald had gone to Marina and asked her to make her home with him again in an apartment he promised to rent. She wouldn't agree unless he would equip the apartment with a washing machine. For a person as unstable as Oswald, this demand and the argument it caused would arouse bitterness and the wish to strike and hurt someone."

Both, however, find it hard to picture the Oswald they knew in the role in which history is casting him. Yet, De Mohrenschildt remembers when he was told that a suspect had been captured he asked if the name was Oswald.

"It was subconscious, a sort of flash that came probably from knowing that Oswald had a gun. Jeanne had seen it shortly before we left Dallas and when she told me I asked Oswald — as a jest which I now know wasn't funny at all — if he had taken a pot-shot at Gen. Edwin Walker with it. I laughed and so did he. Marina later testified that the incident made her think we knew of Oswald's attempt on Walker's life.

"Jeanne and I have wished so often that she had confided in us, had told us of her fears. Perhaps we could have done something to help to avert what was to happen — but who knows?"

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—Staff Photo

Mr. and Mrs. George de Mohrenschildt view picture of Kennedys made day of the assassination.