

Liz Smith

New light from Oswald widow

HISTORY IS the story of the world's crime," wrote Voltaire, one of my favorite historical figures.

It sure is, and next month Americans will get to think again about the murder of President Kennedy when Marina Oswald, widow of the alleged assassin, emerges from a 14-year-silence to help promote her biography "Marina and Lee." Harper & Row, rigidly supervising Marina, will publish the book by Priscilla McMillan Johnson, a former journalist who interviewed Oswald while he was in the Soviet Union trying to defect.

Some believe the book will make no startling revelations, but its publication still is avidly awaited, and Harper & Row has kept everything about it strictly under wraps (they thought, until now). Marina's editors and her agent, Perry Knowlton, won't allow Marina to discuss the book in any way without their permission for at least a year after its publication.

But this column can tell you the book will shed new light on Lee Harvey Oswald. It will reveal his intense, lifelong hatred of women and show us he suffered from dislexia, an impairment of the ability to read.

"BRUTALLY FRANK" are the words used by one insider to describe the "Marina and Lee" revelations about the physical batterings the ill-fated young couple gave to one another and the problems they had with their sex lives. (Marina evidently frequently denounced Lee to their friends as "no man!")

More than 300 pages of manuscript were deleted by Harper & Row editors and one wonders if they included Marina's view on the unpublished psychiatric testimony before the Warren Commission that in the cross-hairs of his telescope Oswald must have perceived his wife and mother.

The late George de Mohrenschildt, who committed suicide recently rather than face another JFK inquiry, once said to the Warren Commission that "the only person I ever heard Lee say he wanted to kill was his wife—and I don't blame him."

The book is said to reveal Marina Oswald's attempts not only at an extramarital affair but also at suicide. But the book's author, who has not seen Marina since the end of 1964, omits any mention of reports of how Marina rejected the woman friend with whom she had been living for nearly two months immediately after the assassination.

TODAY, MARINA lives with her second husband, Kenneth Jess Porter, on a 17-acre farm in a rural community about 30 miles east of Dallas. They behave like any other farm family and have a son, Mark, 11, and Marina's two girls by Oswald, June Lee, 15, and Rachel, 13.

Interviewers are sure to ask Marina—if they get the chance—whether she has changed her mind from the days when she testified three times before the Warren Commission that her husband had killed Kennedy, but that he must have been shooting at someone else. At that time she believed the assassination was accidental.

ONE THING FOR SURE that I know is in this book is the story of the last time Marina ever saw Lee Harvey alive. She visited him in jail on Saturday, Nov. 23, 1963. Life magazine already had taken Marina, Lee's mother, and the two children from Irving, Tex., to the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas. That day at 1 p.m. they went to the jail with Marina convinced that her husband was innocent. She thought he was under suspicion because of having been in the Soviet Union.

In the chapter titled "An End and a Beginning," Marina takes a look at her troubled



Marina Oswald was convinced of her husband's guilt after she and her mother-in-law left him in a Dallas jail Nov. 23, 1963.

husband, and her faith in his innocence is shaken. He was derisive about the presence of his mother. "Why did you bring that fool with you?" he asked through the glass partition. "I don't want to talk to her."

MARINA REPLIED, "She's your mother. Of course she came. Have they been beating you in prison?" Oswald assured his wife he had not been beaten.

When she asked if she could talk freely about anything, including the photographs of Lee dressed in black with his rifle and revolver (she had hidden the pictures in her shoe and wanted to ask what to do with them), Lee's answer was "Oh, of course. We can speak about absolutely anything at all." Marina felt Lee's tone was warning her to say nothing.

When she told him the police had asked her about the gun, he said, "Oh, that's nothing and you're not to worry if there's a trial. It's a mistake. I'm not guilty. There are people who will help me." He indicated they were in New York.

The book reports that Marina felt this was the old Lee bravado and he was frightened. She began to cry. He said, "Don't cry. There's nothing to worry about. Try not to think about it. Everything is going to be all right. And if they ask you anything, you have a right not to answer. You have a right to refuse." Then he spoke briefly with his mother and after that said goodbye to Marina.

OSWALD REMINDED Marina, as he had in the note he wrote to her before he tried to shoot Gen. Edwin Walker, that she had friends who would help her and said, "You mustn't worry about me. Kiss Junie and Rachel for me." He backed out of the room watching her with his eyes until the last second.

"Marina and Lee" states that "Marina was not certain that Lee was guilty. She saw his guilt in his eyes. Moreover, she knew that had he been innocent, he would have been screaming to high heaven for his 'rights,' claiming he had been mistreated and demanding to see officials at the very highest levels, just as he had always done before. For her, the fact that

he was so compliant, that he told her he was being treated 'all right,' was a sign that he was guilty."

AND IN CONCLUSION: This portion of the book ends with the young Soviet wife feeling that her husband was glad he had succeeded and at the same time sorry. His impulsive act could not be undone. And she felt he was carrying a burden of regret "heavier than he, or anyone, could bear."

She also felt Alka, as she called him (the Soviets thought "Lee" sounded too Chinese), was on the verge of tears, she saw supplication in his eyes. "He was pleading with her not to desert him. He was begging for her love, her support, and, above all, her silence. He knew that this was the end."

Marina leaves the jail feeling everyone is looking at her with hatred because of what Lee had done, "and that was one of the heaviest things to bear, her feeling that the world was against her."

Incidentally, JFK assassinologists have noted 27 similarities in the character of the accused "Son of Sam" and Lee Harvey Oswald—especially their hatred of women.

PETER O'TOOLE, making a movie in Canada, confirms to friends that he is indeed divorcing his longtime wife over her affair with a younger man.

More than 200,000 black members of the American Legion are up in arms, talking mass resignation because of the organization's support for improved relations with South Africa.

Many of the late Dr. Martin Luther King aides are upset over the treatment of his life in "King"—NBC-TV's forthcoming special. They believe the facts are distorted, and they don't understand why Coretta King didn't join in their protests. But evidently Mrs. King is happy with the show. She allowed herself to be portrayed, and her daughter, Yolande, is in the film. The airing is tentatively set for January but you may not see it until next February or March.