

Oswald in New Orleans

satisfied. He alluded to this beep several times in the next hour and a half. We talked that long.

It was part confession, part shame mixed with self-pity and self-derogation, part fear, and all worry. This man had been in the Marine Corps with Oswald. From his personal experience, he did not believe a single word about the Oswald of this period that became public with the Report. He had agonized in silence for the three years between the issuance of the Report and our conversation because he knew things, he said, that had not been made public and were not in accord with what had been publicized—and he was certain what he knew was correct.

Following his military service, he had built a successful life, had a family and was worried about the possible consequences of being associated with any account not in consonance with the official Oswald "line." He feared he or his business might be hurt or that his family might suffer. By no means could I assure him that nothing would happen; I did encourage him to consider the importance to the country, to his family and himself, of any information he might possess.

But he would talk only in anonymity. I respect his desires and will not reveal the few unintended clues to his identity that slipped out. I have made and will make no effort to trace him.

Briefly, it is his story that Oswald was bright, not a hook of any kind, not a blabber or proselytizing Marxist, and really a quiet, serious guy. They knew each other socially and engaged in certain recreational activities together. He never heard Oswald say anything about Communism, for or against, in all this time.

More important is what he disclosed about Oswald's position in the Marine Corps. The unit in which both served, said my informant, was one of three similar ones of which one was always in Japan and the others in the United States. That function was classified.

Every man in the outfit carried security clearance. They had a security designation of which I had never heard. These were that kind of unusual military organizations.

Of all the men in the outfit, five had special "top" security approvals. The entire complement carried a minimum of "confidential" (the grade the official file records Oswald as having had). Above this there were "secret," "top secret," and a special one, "crypto." Of all the men, only five were "crypto."

One of these was Lee Harvey Oswald!
"Can you possibly be wrong?" I asked him.
He insisted not.

"Could your memory be playing tricks?"
No, he was positive. He went farther when I questioned him about "crypto," which he indicated was "black box" stuff. I took it to mean a connection with nuclear weapons.

If correct, this is more than in disagreement with the entire official story of Oswald, his relations with the government and the assassination. It is an assault on the integrity of many of the members of the staff of the Commission and of the investigative agencies. It raises questions about the transcripts of Oswald's official Marine Corps records. In every way he could, this man insisted he was not in error, that he knew.

And he went into more detail. Correctly stating that Oswald got a "hardship" discharge so he could care for an allegedly destitute mother (it was common knowledge among his mates that Oswald had said he planned to go to Switzerland for study instead), the mysterious caller specified that Oswald spent his last two or three weeks in the service "with CID." It is, obviously, not a requirement of a "hardship" discharge that the enlisted man stay with military intelligence.

Immediately my mind flashed back to my first book on this subject, *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report*, where I had exposed certain unorthodox

defense and his own (though he always managed not to show up for those electronic confrontations with me that he had earlier accepted), as a competent and experienced lawyer, should have latched onto and probed and prodded until he had obtained from Thornley all the witness knew. It is not at all out of step with his own and the Commission's record that Jenner did not. Need we wonder longer why this testimony alone was separated from the other evidence on Oswald's Marine Corps career?

Thus, what might have been a major revelation remains instead one of the major mysteries, officially hidden by the Commission but now, I think, smoked out. It is particularly pertinent in the developing New Orleans story.

There are many other things in the record that bear on this, some negatively. For example, no member of the staff ever pursued this strange inconsistency, Oswald the Marxist in a position of high security trust in the Marine Corps. It should have been a troubling legal hangnail to each and every one, and to the members of the Commission. Instead, the Commission used the least desirable method of gathering "testimony" and that on a selective basis only. *Ex parte* and incompetent depositions were taken from Thornley, Nelson Delgado (SH228-65), another former Oswald Marine Corps chum, and his former superior officer, Lt. John E. Donovan (SH289-303). From all the few others included in the record, there are but brief and insignificant affidavits.

With one exception, all reveal a Commission interest in whether Oswald was a homosexual. That exception is the man who arranged dates between Oswald and his sister.

Lieutenant Donovan, "the officer in command" of the crew in which Oswald served (SH290), when asked about whether the murdered accused assassin had been a homosexual:

Mr. Ely: I believe you mentioned earlier that he did not seem to you particularly interested in girls. Was this just because he was interested in other things or do you have any reason to believe that there was anything abnormal about his desires?

Mr. Donovan: I have no reason to suspect that he was homosexual, and in that squadron at that time one fellow was discharged from the service for being homosexual. He was in no way tied in with it that I know of. . . . (SH300)

Perhaps Donovan's most significant testimony tends to cast Oswald in a different role than the Report and indicates the magnitude of the breach of security and military trust he threatened at the Moscow Embassy when going through the motions if not the actuality of defection:

Mr. Donovan: I recall that he got a hardship discharge. We offered to get him a flight—that is a hop from El Toro to some place in Texas, his home. He refused. We considered that normal in that if you take a hop you sacrifice your transportation pay. We offered to take him to a bus or train station. He refused. But that is not particularly unusual, either. I recall that he was gone for some period of time, and shortly before I got out of the Marine Corps, which was mid-December 1959, we received word that he had showed up in Moscow. This necessitated a bit of change of aircraft call signs, codes, radio frequencies, radar frequencies. He had access to the location of all bases in the west coast area, all radio frequencies for all squadrons, all tactical call signs, and the relative strength of all squadrons, number and type of aircraft in a squadron, who was the commanding officer, the authentication code of a squadding and editing the ADIZ, which stands for Air Defense Identification Zone. He knew the range of our radar. He knew the range of our radio. And he knew the range of the surrounding units' radio and radar. . . .

Mr. Ely: You recall that various codes were changed. Now, at what level were these changed: Was this an action of your specific unit, or a fully widespread action?

Mr. Donovan: Well, I did not witness the changing in any other squadrons, but it would have to be, because the code is obviously between two or more units. Therefore, the other units had to change it. These codes are a grid, and two lines correspond. . . . There are some things which he knew on which he received instruction that there is no way of changing, such as the MFS 16 height-finder radar gear. That had recently been integrated into the Marine Corps system. It had a height-finding range far in excess of our previous equipment, and it has certain limitations. He had been schooled on those limitations. It cannot operate above a given altitude in setting—in other words, you cannot place the thing above a given terrain height. He had also been schooled on a piece of machinery called a TPX-1, which is used to transfer radio—radar and radio signals over a great distance. Radar is very susceptible