

Marguerite Oswald at 70: 'Warren Commission wrong'

By MIKE COCHRAN

FORT WORTH (AP) — Alone and without fanfare, Marguerite Oswald turned 70 last month, saying, "With all I've been through, just being 70 is enough."

"Who needs a birthday cake?"

As defiant as ever, the silver-haired, self-styled "mother of history" remains unwavering in defense of her son, Lee, named by the Warren Commission as the lone assassin of President John F. Kennedy.

"The Warren Commission was wrong," she snapped.

Sharing a frosty beer with a visitor in her modest, immaculate brick home, she launched at once into the most recent area of indignation, a published contention she is "now aging and in ill health."

Eyes flashing, she produced a copy of a letter mailed to news media, in which she declared:

"I'll admit to the aging; it's a natural process. But to say I'm in ill health is a gross error and I consider it an effort to discredit me ... "I don't feel my age, don't look it and have never been sick a day in my life. I'll bet the author can't say the same thing."

Indeed, time has taken no apparent toll on the stocky firebrand in the 14 years since the assassination and subsequent killing of her son by Jack Ruby in the basement of the Dallas County Jail.

"I've never seen a doctor, never taken an aspirin," she said. "I've fooled 'em all by living 14 years and remaining in good health."

Mrs. Oswald discussed her way of life reluctantly, preferring to attack authors and critics who have assailed her and her son.

"I've experienced and survived this trauma," she said. "I've lived it and I know it. What do the critics know? ... I may look stupid, but I know everything that's going on. Don't kid yourself about that."

She is an incessant reader, and her li-



—AP Photo

Marguerite Oswald ...

... 'I've fooled 'em all'

brary overflows with books on the assassination and the presidency, on Cuba and Russia, where Lee Harvey Oswald visited, and on New Orleans, where her son spent much of his youth.

"I'm very interested in everything going on in this case," Mrs. Oswald said. "I hope sometime to have an opportunity to change some of the things that have been said — an opportunity to write the truth."

"I don't really have to investigate anymore; it's just a matter of keeping on top of things as they come up. If a book comes out on the assassination, there's no putting it down — even if it takes all night and the next day."

She recently read Victor Lasky's "It Didn't Start with Watergate" and Bernard Fensterwald Jr.'s book on the assassination, "Coincidence or Conspiracy?" And she said

she is waiting with more than casual interest for the October release of "Marina and Lee," as told by Lee Oswald's widow, Marina, to Priscilla Johnson McMillan.

"I'm glad Marina's book is being published, but I wonder why they waited 14 years," she said.

Mrs. Oswald said she has spoken neither to Marina nor to another son, Robert Oswald, since November 1963. "I called them a couple of times, but they either wouldn't talk to me or hung up."

She said she doesn't know why, adding, "I don't really give a damn. I've always been pretty much on my own and I've accepted that."

Much more distressing, she indicated, is the continuing disinterest of publishers for a book by Marguerite Oswald.

"Robert had his book, and Marina's is coming out in October. He had a story to tell and Marina has a story to tell and I have a story to tell," she said.

"I can't understand why I don't have a book ... I think the publishers are under the impression I'm just a mother defending her son ... I'm going to defend Lee Harvey Oswald until the day I die, but I'm not going to take up for him. There's a difference."

"I don't want to appear I'm pushing for a book but, after all, I am the mother of the man accused of killing the President of the United States."

She lives, she said, on Social Security, occasional fees for interviews and the sale of unspecified "personal property."

Her days, she insisted, are "simply not long enough. I cook, clean house, keep the lawn, pay bills, shampoo my hair, and of course, read a lot and make notes."

"This is not an ordinary case and I'm not an ordinary person. But I eat well, I sleep well and I have a free mind. After 14 years of suppression and distortions, I'm proud to have survived."