

Grim family history

Kennedy assassination still haunts Oswald's brother

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Robert Oswald feels for the families of Timothy McVeigh and John Hinckley because he knows what it's like to have an infamous relative.

In a rare interview with the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Oswald said he believes his kid brother, Lee Harvey Oswald, acted alone in killing President Kennedy, but he still doesn't know why.

After declining interviews for 20 years or so, the 63-year-old Oswald said he decided to talk now partly to help other families that might be trying to cope with wrongs done by their relatives. The interview was published earlier this month.

"My heart just ached when I saw the father and mother of John Hinckley," he said, referring to Ronald Reagan's would-be assassin in 1981. "And you think of what the families of people like Tim McVeigh go through." McVeigh was convicted and sentenced to death for the Oklahoma City bombing.

Oswald and his family now live in Wichita Falls, Texas, where they have tried to survive without stigma. Oswald said he doesn't talk to his

grandchildren about the assassination or their great-uncle.

Oswald remembers sleeping next to his brother in a New Orleans orphanage, where his mother placed them after their father died.

He also recalls standing before Lee's open casket in a Fort Worth cemetery, mumbling a prayer and kissing his brother's cheek. It was just two days after the Kennedy assassination that Jack Ruby shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald.

After leaving the Marines in 1959, Lee told Robert he was thinking of going to Cuba to emulate Ernest Hemingway. Instead, just a week later, he impulsively headed for the Soviet Union, where he defected.

He came back in 1962, with a new Russian wife, Marina. That fall, a year to the day before Kennedy's assassination, Robert, Lee and their stepbrother, John, gathered at Robert's home in Texas for their first meeting in nine years.

It was their last family gathering. In March 1963, Robert, by then living in Arkansas, received a letter from Lee with a Dallas



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post office box as a return address. Six months later, Robert wrote Lee seeking another reunion, but never received an answer.

Robert was working in his office on Nov. 22, 1963, when word came of the assassination. He thought he heard the name Oswald. Then he heard Lee Harvey Oswald's name clearly.

"Something must have shown in my face," he recalls, "because this receptionist took a look at me and started crying."

"That's my kid brother," Robert Oswald said to no one in particular.