

Bar Head Will Represent Oswald in Warren Inquiry

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25—The Warren commission appointed an "independent lawyer" today to protect the interests of President Kennedy's accused assassin, Lee H.



Associated Press

TO REPRESENT OSWALD: Walter E. Craig of Phoenix, Ariz., who was retained by Warren Commission to guard Lee H. Oswald's interests.

Oswald. Walter E. Craig of Phoenix, Ariz., the president of the American Bar Association, was selected for the job. He will not work for the commission but will be given access to all its materials.

The commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, explained the appointment at some length in a statement. The reason indicated was that Oswald had been killed and would never be able to defend himself at a trial.

But the statement said the commission was not, by this action, casting doubt on Oswald's guilt. It said that two months of investigation had "not caused the commission to doubt the reasonableness of the action of the authorities in charging Oswald."

Will Press for Facts

Mr. Craig, the commission said, will have the job of "examining every facet of the case pointing toward the involvement of Lee H. Oswald, in his absence, and in fairness to his family advise the commission in that regard."

The statement, perhaps reflecting some recent criticism of the commission's performance, said the panel would leave "no stone unturned in faithfully reporting all the facts surrounding the assassination."

The decision to appoint a special lawyer for Oswald's interests represents a change of view on the commission's part. The panel had rejected proposals to have an outside counsel represent Oswald, saying that this was not an adversary proceeding but a neutral fact-finding effort.

The belated nature of the appointment may come in for some criticism. Several witnesses whom an independent lawyer might have wanted to cross-examine have already testified, including Oswald's widow, Marina.

The choice of Mr. Craig was also questioned by some in-

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formed observers here today. He was nominated by President Kennedy to be a Federal District judge in Arizona and was confirmed by the Senate last Sept. 25. But he has not yet taken the oath or assumed the bench. Carrying out this new assignment would obviously mean further delay in his becoming a judge.

Lane Pledges Cooperation

Former Assemblyman Mark Lane, who was designated by Oswald's mother as her son's unpaid defense counsel last month, said here yesterday that his "fullest cooperation" was available to Mr. Craig.

Mr. Lane said, however, that "the appointment of the president of the ultra-conservative American Bar Association may

raise more questions than it resolves" in the light of past commission statements.

For instance, he said, J. Lee Rankin, commission counsel, wrote him Jan. 23 that "the commission does not believe that it would be useful or desirable to permit an attorney representing Lee Harvey Oswald to have access to the investigatory materials within the possession of the commission or to participate in any hearings to be conducted by the commission."

Warren Bars Counsel

Later, Mr. Lane said, Chief Justice Warren personally told him "that Oswald was not on trial and that counsel would not be permitted to represent him."

Mr. Lane said he had obtained statements and documentary evidence "establishing the innocence of Lee H. Oswald." He questioned whether the commission would "begin its proceedings anew" and whether Mr. Craig would make an investigation of his own.

The New York lawyer said he still considered himself to be counsel for Oswald. He said he

had been discussing with professors at leading law schools a potential court action in Oswald's behalf on the ground he had been denied his rights by local law-enforcement authorities.

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Bar Head Clarifies Role

Special to The New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO, March 18 of the American Bar Association, said today that he was working with the Warren commission "to review their actions."

Mr. Craig, whom the commission designated Feb. 25 as an "independent lawyer" to work with it, but not for it, said he was not representing the interests of Lee H. Oswald, the alleged assassin of President Kennedy.

When he was named to the post, it was indicated that his job would be to protect the interests of Oswald. The commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, is investigating the assassination Nov. 22 in Dallas.

Mr. Craig was again today highly critical of Melvin M. Belli, the San Francisco lawyer who was chief defense counsel for Jack E. Ruby.

Mr. Craig called Mr. Belli's post-verdict statements "intemperate and abusive about the trial court and the entire Dallas community."

Addresses Bar Group

"The effect was to question the integrity of the court and the jury," he said.

Mr. Craig's remarks on the Warren commission were made at a press conference at the St. Francis Hotel before a luncheon speech to members of the San Francisco Bar Association. His comments on Mr. Belli were made in the speech.

At the press conference, he was pressed to define his assignment, which he said had been taken on the specific request of Chief Justice Warren.

Mr. Craig denied that he was representing Oswald. "We are representing the interest of the American people," he said.

He was asked why the Warren commission, which represented the same interest, needed the assistance of himself and his group.

"They wanted an independent agency to review their actions," he said. "We are that independent agency."

Mr. Craig said the review was designed to filter out any errors that might have cropped up in the commission's work.

When Mr. Craig was appointed, the Warren commission issued a statement saying he would have the job of "examining every facet of the case pointing toward the involvement of Lee H. Oswald, in his absence, and in fairness to his family advise the commission in that regard."

Mr. Craig said the A.B.A. had referred several complaints about Mr. Belli to its committee on grievances "for appropriate investigation and action." The most the committee could do, he said in answer to a question, would be to recommend that Mr. Belli be expelled from the Bar Association.

"May I thank this jury for a verdict that is a victory for bigotry."