

FRONTLINE

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11/16

WHO WAS LEE HARVEY OSWALD?
PBS airdate: Tuesday, November 16, 9 P.M., 180 minutes

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At the heart of the mystery of who killed John F. Kennedy lies the puzzle of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Was Oswald the emotionally disturbed lone gunman of the 1964 Warren Commission Report? Was he, as the House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded, only one of two gunmen that day in Dallas? Or was he an unwitting "patsy" for the real assassins, as Oswald himself claimed when he was arrested on November 22, 1963?

"Any effort to explain what happened in Dallas must explain Lee Oswald," says G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations. "And Lee Harvey Oswald is a mystery wrapped in an enigma hidden behind a riddle."

In the most comprehensive attempt on American television to penetrate that enigma, FRONTLINE presents "Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?" an investigative biography of the man at the center of the political crime of the century. The three-hour broadcast will air on Tuesday, November 16, at 9 P.M. (check local listings), marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Kennedy assassination.

A FRONTLINE investigative team of more than a dozen experienced reporters and expert consultants has spent more than a year reexamining Oswald's life and sifting through the psychological, political, and forensic evidence of his role in the assassination. Traveling to Japan, Russia, Europe, Mexico, Canada, and all across the U.S., the investigative team has uncovered new witnesses, documents, photographs, video and audio recordings of Lee Oswald, many of them never before made public.

"We were stunned by how much there was yet to be discovered about Lee Oswald thirty years after the assassination," says FRONTLINE senior producer Michael Sullivan. "The fall of the Soviet Union has allowed unprecedented access to former KGB officers and other witnesses and documents to learn the truth about Oswald's defection to the Soviet Union and the two and one half years he spent there. In the U.S., the recent release of much of the CIA file on Oswald is helping to answer the questions about his relationship to U.S. intelligence agencies. And everywhere we went, we discovered people who are only now willing to talk publicly about what they know about Oswald. We uncovered hundreds of photographs, documents, and other evidence that have lain unseen in attics across America."

The enduring mystery about what Oswald actually did on November 22, 1963, has been clouded even further by nearly thirty years of unending revelations about Oswald's confusing connections--to Fidel Castro's Cuba and to anti-Castro Cubans, to the KGB and to U.S. intelligence agencies, to the the FBI and to the Mafia.

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"What makes Oswald so puzzling is that by November 22, 1963, he had apparent links with virtually every group that had a strong motive to eliminate John Kennedy," says the program's senior producer, William Cran. "The big question is: were any of those groups controlling Oswald on the day of the assassination or was he simply in the grip of his own personal confusion--the eccentric mix of political passions and emotional instability that characterized his entire life?"

"Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?" follows Oswald's life story--from his troubled childhood to his mysterious service in the U.S. Marines, raising questions about his possible connection to U.S. military intelligence. The program investigates Oswald's activities up to the day of the assassination, including his dramatic defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 and his return to the U.S. in 1962, and examines the possibility that he might have been an American agent or a Soviet spy.

In New Orleans during the summer of 1963, just months before the assassination, Oswald publicly supported Fidel Castro and, at the same time, associated with men passionately committed to Castro's overthrow, men with connections to the CIA and to the Mafia. Which side of the Cuban question was Oswald really on?

And the mystery only deepened when Oswald appeared at the Cuban and Soviet embassies in Mexico City in September 1963. His contacts there included a KGB agent believed to be in charge of a Soviet assassinations program. And the CIA itself is still under suspicion of covering up all that it knows about Oswald's movements in Mexico.

Back in Dallas, in the weeks before the assassination, Oswald, deeply disappointed by his failure to get a visa to Cuba, lived in a boarding house under an alias, trying to avoid the FBI. He seemed alone again, but had he maintained ties with any of the sinister forces he had contacted in the past few months?

And when the gunfire rang out in Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963, did any of them really pull the trigger?

"There are many reasons the Kennedy assassination remains such a profound mystery," says Sullivan, "but perhaps the most important is that Lee Oswald is a true enigma. If we can understand him--both his connections and his psychology--we are much closer to the truth of who killed President Kennedy."

"Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald?" is produced in association with BBC-TV. The senior producer is William Cran. The producer is Ben Loeterman. The investigative team includes reporters Gus Russo and Scott Malone. The senior producer for FRONTLINE is Michael Sullivan.

FRONTLINE is produced by a consortium of public television stations:
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