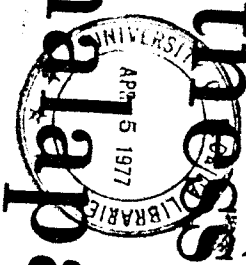


# The Palm Beach Post



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# Oswald Probe's Key Witness Commits Suicide in Manalapan

(Post staff writers, Dick Donovan, Mary Frakes, Bob Brink, Jody Karen Long and Rafe Klimger and Charles Osofin of the Cox Newspapers, Washington Bureau contributed to the reporting and writing of this story.)

**MANALAPAN** — A Dallas professor who befriended Lee Harvey Oswald and who recently was quoted as saying he had prior knowledge of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, yesterday shot himself to death here apparently after learning that he was going to be asked to testify before the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Richard Wille identified the dead man as 65-year-old George de Mohrenschildt, a French language teacher at Bishop College in Dallas. Wille said de Mohrenschildt apparently shot himself in the head in a second-floor drawing room in the historic ocean-front home of Mrs. Charles Tilton III at 1790 S. Ocean Blvd.

Rep. Richardson Preyer (D-N.C.), chairman of the Kennedy assassination subcommittee, said late last night that he will take to the House floor today to use the incident as further justification for continuing the committee's investigation.

"He was a crucial witness for us based on new information he had," Preyer said. "De Mohrenschildt was someone who was intimately involved with Oswald and he was a vital witness."

De Mohrenschildt, described as a "flamboyant, Russian-born soldier of fortune," had been a guest in the Tilton home for about a week. His body was found by his daughter, Alexandra, 33, who also was a guest in the house, police said.

According to Wille, de Mohrenschildt returned to the Tilton home at about 2:45 p.m. yesterday and learned that a staff investigator for the assassinations committee had been trying to reach him in regard to his testifying before the committee in Washington.

Wille said it appears that de Mohrenschildt became "extremely upset when he learned of the investigator's efforts to reach him."



Police said de Mohrenschildt left no suicide note and that a shotgun believed taken from a closet was found on the floor. An autopsy is scheduled for 9 a.m. today.

Wille identified the committee staff investigator as Gaston J. Fontana, who reportedly was in Miami when de Mohrenschildt shot himself.

The death sparked a flurry of after-hours activity in the West Palm Beach offices of State Atty. David Bidworth, who summoned Wille and several of his chief staff officers for conferences and witness interviews that lasted nearly to midnight.

Among the witnesses brought in for questioning was freelance writer Ed Epstein, who last night said de Mohrenschildt in conversation with a book Epstein is writing on Lee Harvey Oswald.



"I don't mean to be evasive," he said, "but ..."

# Suicide

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to talk about de Mohrenschildt's death to anybody."

Sheriff's Lt. Richard Sheets, who is heading the local investigation, sealed off access to the landmark Tilton house and ordered an armed guard to remain on the property throughout the night.

De Mohrenschildt, a geologist turned French teacher, disappeared from the college about three weeks ago. He was quoted by Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans as having made a "shocking confession," that de Mohrenschildt knew in advance what Oswald was going to do.

Oltmans said de Mohrenschildt made the revelation during an interview in February. Oltmans said he gave that information to the assassinations committee and following that, he and de Mohrenschildt then went to Europe where, according to Oltmans, de Mohrenschildt "disappeared."

The Post learned last night that de Mohrenschildt arrived in Palm Beach County on March 17 from Brussels.

Although de Mohrenschildt was due back at the college on March 21, officials there said he didn't report for his classes. A source close to the suicide investigation has told The Post that Washington officials believe de Mohrenschildt may have some "evidence" in his possession that could incriminate him in Oswald's activities. The source also said that Washington officials "have been looking everywhere" for de Mohrenschildt to bring him before the committee.

The source said Washington officials believe that "evidence" may be a photograph, possibly a tape, and a manuscript now in the possession of a Dallas attorney. The source said Washington officials last night were "scrambling around trying to get subpoenas" in an effort to get their hands on that material.

Another source said the committee was anxious to reach de



Staff Photo by Mike Diemer

## Epstein and a Friend Leave Courthouse

Mohrenschildt because it had received a tip that "de Mohrenschildt is ready to talk."

Oltmans is quoted as saying, "He asked me 'how do you think the media would react if I came out and said that I feel responsible for Oswald's behavior?'"

De Mohrenschildt and his wife Jeanne were questioned extensively by members of the Warren Commission during the original investigation of the Kennedy assassination. The "Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy," published in October 1964, contained the following references to the de Mohrenschildts:

"An extensive investigation has revealed that George de Mohrenschildt is a highly individualistic person of varied interests. He was born in the Russian Ukraine in 1911 and fled Russia with his parents in 1921 during the civil disorder following the revolution. He was in a Polish

cavalry military academy for 1 1/2 years. Later he studied in Antwerp and attended the University of Liege from which he received a doctor's degree in international commerce in 1928.

"Soon thereafter, he emigrated to the United States; he became a U.S. citizen in 1949. De Mohrenschildt eventually became interested in oil exploration and production; he entered the University of Texas in 1944 and received a master's degree in petroleum geology and petroleum engineering in 1945. He has since become active as a petroleum engineer throughout the world.

"In 1960, after the death of his son, he and his wife made an eight-month hike from the U.S.-Mexican border to Panama over primitive jungle trails.

"Jeanne de Mohrenschildt was born in Harbin, China, of White Russian parents. She left during the war with Japan, coming to New York where she became a successful

ladies' dress and sportswear designer. She married her present husband in 1959.

The de Mohrenschildts met Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife Marina in Dallas in 1962. The de Mohrenschildts were members of the Dallas-Fort Worth 'Russian-speaking community' of about 30 persons. De Mohrenschildt was apparently the only Russian-speaking person living in Dallas for whom Oswald had appreciable respect, and this seems to have been true even though de Mohrenschildt helped Marina Oswald leave her husband for a period in November 1962.

The Warren Commission considered testimony concerning an event that occurred shortly after Oswald shot at Gen. Edwin Walker in 1963. The de Mohrenschildts came to Oswald's apartment on April 13, 1963, apparently to bring an Easter gift to the Oswald child. Mrs. de Mohrenschildt testified that while Marina was showing her the apartment, she saw a rifle with a scope in a closet. Mrs. de Mohrenschildt then told her husband, in the presence of the Oswalds, that there was a rifle in the closet.

Mrs. de Mohrenschildt testified that "George, of course, with his sense of humor — Walker was shot at a few days ago, within that time. He said, 'Did you take a pot shot at Walker by any chance?' At that point, Mr. de Mohrenschildt testified, Oswald "sort of shriveled you see, when I asked this question, made a peculiar face (and

(rest is just quote from WK)