

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 1977

Copyright 1977, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Friend Of Lee Harvey Oswald Found Shot To Death In Florida

Compiled From News Services

PALM BEACH, Fla., March 30 — A man the House Assassinations Committee thought of as a crucial witness in its investigation of the killing of President John F. Kennedy was found dead yesterday of a shotgun wound. Police say they believe that he killed himself.

The man, George de Mohrenschildt of Dallas, was a friend of assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. A police spokesman said there was "no reason to suspect anything other than suicide" but that an autopsy would be performed.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Richard Willie said De Mohrenschildt was a guest at the ocean-front mansion in suburban Manalapan, Fla., of Mrs. Charles Tilton III.

Willie said De Mohrenschildt apparently placed the muzzle of a 20-gauge shotgun to his mouth and pulled the trigger. No suicide note was found.

The sheriff said only a maid and a chauffeur were at the home at time of the shooting, but they did not hear the shot. The body was discovered by De Mohrenschildt's daughter, who was staying there with him.

Willem Oltmans, a Dutch journalist interviewed by the assassinations panel earlier this month, said De Mohrenschildt had admitted having prior knowledge of the plan to kill Kennedy. "How do you think the media would react if I came out and said I feel responsible for Oswald's behavior?" Oltmans quoted De Mohrenschildt as saying.

De Mohrenschildt, born in Russia and trained as a geologist, was a teacher of French at Bishop College in Dallas.

De Mohrenschildt and his wife met Oswald and his Russian-born wife, Marina, in Dallas, in 1962. The Warren Commission reported that De Mohrenschildt was one of the few members of the

small Russian-speaking community in Dallas that Oswald liked.

De Mohrenschildt disappeared from Dallas after Oltman's report and was traced by Government investigators to Holland, where he talked with Oltman, then to Brussels and finally to Palm Beach.

However, the assassinations panel had not been able to get in touch with him. Police said that a staff investigator for the panel had telephoned yesterday afternoon to the home where De Mohrenschildt was staying but that he had been out. About an hour after he returned and learned of the call he was found dead, the police said.

A free-lance writer, Ed Epstein, interviewed De Mohrenschildt Monday night for a book about Oswald. Epstein

See SHOOTING, Page 6

said he was in the third day of a four-day interview.

Epstein said they had broken off the interview for lunch at 1 p.m. yesterday and were to meet again at 3 p.m. "He didn't show up and we made some phone calls and found out what happened," Epstein said. "Everything was very friendly. The rest — he killed himself — I don't know about that. There was no indication in the world."

De Mohrenschildt had told the Warren Commission that he had a close relationship with Oswald but had known nothing of his plans for killing Kennedy or his reasons for it.

Sources in West Palm Beach indicated early today that committee investigators were in Dallas, attempting to locate a photograph, documents and possibly a tape recording that may have been turned over to a lawyer there by De Mohrenschildt.

When he learned of De Mohrenschildt's death, Representative Richardson Preyer (Dem.), North Carolina, a member of the assassinations committee, said, "He was a crucial witness for us, based on new information he had."

The House assassinations committee will cease to exist at midnight tonight unless the House of Representatives votes to extend its life.