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Another JFK Slaying Riddle

Oswald, CIA Trails Crossed; Shadowy Figure Emerges

By Norman Kempster
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Senate investigators are trying to untangle a perplexing coincidence that links Lee Harvey Oswald with a long-time CIA agent who published a Latin American newsletter as a "cover" for his intelligence work.

The former agent, William George Gaudet, received a Mexican tourist permit with the serial number just preceding that of one issued to Oswald on Sept. 17, 1963, about two months before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

In a telephone interview this week, Gaudet, who is now living in retirement in Waveland, Miss., said he knew Oswald by sight at the time, although he cannot recall if Oswald

was with him in the Mexican consulate in New Orleans.

Asked if he was sent by the CIA to the consulate to keep track of Oswald, Gaudet responded, "I was not."

THE GAUDET matter is under study by Sen. Richard Schweiker, R-Pa., a member of a two-man subcommittee of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is investigating the relationship between the Warren Commission and the CIA and FBI.

The commission, headed by the late Chief Justice Earl Warren, concluded that Oswald, acting alone, murdered Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963. Oswald was killed by Jack Ruby two days later.

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Schweiker has said the assassination investigation should be reopened because of new evidence that has been discovered since the Warren Commission published its report. He said his own investigation has found curious "intelligence fingerprints" on the case.

The Gaudet matter seems to be one more of the puzzles that have added to the controversy that surrounds the Kennedy assassination. The Warren Commission was told that Oswald went to Mexico City in October 1963. While there he contacted the Cuban and Soviet embassies in an apparent effort to obtain permission to go to Cuba.

There is evidence that the CIA had Oswald under surveillance while he was in Mexico, although many of the details of his trip are still being disputed.

DESPITE GAUDET'S insistence that his trip to Mexico had nothing to do with Oswald's, the coincidence of numbers raises questions that the commission apparently did not ask.

Evidence supplied to the commission concerning Gaudet is confusing unless several widely separated reports are brought together. It is impossible to tell from the face of the documents whether the FBI, which served as the investigative arm of the commission, made the necessary connections.

Schweiker has complained that the FBI often submitted documents to the commission without helping the members determine the significance of the papers.

The commission apparently was informed that Gaudet had received the tourist card issued just before Oswald's. But the published report gives no indication that the information was given more than passing consideration. Working only from the originally published materials, it was impossible to learn of the coincidence in serial numbers.

GAUDET'S newsletter operation was headquartered in New Orleans. He said he frequently had seen Oswald distributing handbills of the "Fair Play for Cuba Committee," a pro-Castro group, outside of his office. Gaudet said he knew Oswald by name and by sight,

*See my 3/7/76
letter to Sen.
Richard
Schweiker*

although they had never met.

Gaudet also expressed some opinions about the Kennedy assassination that coincide with the views of some of the critics of the Warren Commission.

Despite Oswald's rhetorical support for Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, Gaudet said he believes Oswald actually was involved with a group of anti-Castro Cubans.

Gaudet was asked if he had formed an opinion about why Kennedy was killed.

"The only possible idea that I could have would be the anti-Castro Cubans (conspired to kill him) because of the fiasco at the Bay of Pigs," Gaudet responded. "If I was an anti-Castro Cuban, there is no question I would have been very bitter about what happened at the Bay of Pigs."

Gaudet said he had no way of knowing if Oswald had contacts with the CIA because "my work with the CIA did not involve anything within the United States."

THE REPORT included the full text of a letter from the Mexican government listing the names, addresses and as much other information as possible about the people who received cards numbered 824082, 824083, 824086 and 824087. Oswald received card numbered 824085. No mention was made of 824084.

An FBI report submitted to the commission but not made public until later said "no record of 824084 located."

But a recently declassified document lists Gaudet as the holder of card number 824084, something that Gaudet readily confirmed.

Another FBI report made public earlier said Gaudet received a tourist card on the same day as Oswald, but it made no mention of the similarity in serial numbers. That document said Gaudet "indicated that he has in the past been an employe of the CIA."

In a telephone interview, Gaudet was bitter about that FBI report, which he

said should never have been declassified. He said he only reluctantly told the FBI about his CIA background after the bureau had agreed to protect his cover.

"IF THE CIA needed me to do a job, now that my cover's been revealed, I couldn't be of any help to them, even if I wanted to," Gaudet said. "I'm useless to them. I couldn't go back to Central America."

At 67, Gaudet is unlikely to be called out of retirement. He now talks freely about an intelligence career that he said spanned 25 years beginning during World War II, when he served in a special Latin American unit headed by now Vice President Nelson Rockefeller.

He said he joined the CIA shortly after the agency was created in 1947, and continued until 1969.

Throughout his career with the CIA, Gaudet lived a double life as a spy and as a journalist who specialized in Latin American affairs. He said he provided some information to the planners of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

Gaudet was publisher of Latin American Report, a newsletter that sold for \$15 a week to clients with an interest in the region. He also wrote free-lance dispatches for several U.S. publications, including the Miami Herald. His CIA connections apparently were not revealed to publications that purchased his articles.

GAUDET SAID the two biggest customers for the newsletter — purchasing more than 20 subscriptions each — were the CIA and the Soviet intelligence service, the KGB.

Although the CIA and the KGB each were paying more than \$15,000 annually for subscriptions, Gaudet denied that the money amounted to a subsidy of his efforts. He said both agencies bought the letter for the information it contained.

Other clients included the United Fruit Company,

Chase Manhattan Bank, First National City Bank of New York, Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey (now Exxon) and other businesses.

Gaudet declined to go into detail about his other financial arrangements with the CIA. But he said he spied for patriotic reasons and not for the money that he received.

During the years Gaudet said he was working for the CIA, the agency frequently provided journalistic cover jobs for its agents. CIA Director William E. Colby has said that since 1973 the agency has not employed as agents full-time staff members of major U.S. publications or broadcast networks. But he refused to rule out the use of employes of small specialized newsletters or of foreign publications.

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