

Oswald ID

card may be missing link

By RAY LAFONTAINE
AND MARY LAFONTAINE
SPECIAL TO THE HOUSTON POST

DALLAS — On the tense evening of Nov. 23, 1963, the 113th Army Intelligence Group at Fort Sam Houston transmitted a confidential priority message to the U.S. Strike Command at Florida's McDill Air Force Base.

The cable from San Antonio to McDill, which remained on Red Alert following that morning's assassination in Dallas of President John F. Kennedy, identified arrested suspect Lee Harvey Oswald as a "card carrying member of (the) Communist Party."

He was not, but 30 years ago today Oswald was carrying a card that suggests he may have been an employee of an organization much closer to home.

Found by Dallas police in Oswald's wallet — along with a photograph of his wife, Marina — was a U.S. Department of Defense "Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card," or more simply, a DD Form 1173.

It's a card officials today say Oswald should not have had.

But why he had it and what it might have meant is one of a lengthy list of unanswered questions surrounding Kennedy's death. Also in question is whether Oswald — as the Warren Com-

OSWALD: Postmark on ID card creates more speculation

From A-1

mission concluded — acted alone in shooting the president that clear, crisp day in Dallas, or was the part of any one of several conspiracies that have been offered up over the past three decades.

DD 1173 bears Oswald's photo, the circular seal of the U.S. Department of Defense, and what appears to be a postmark — dated Oct. 23, 1963, less than a month before the assassination.

Oswald was issued the identity card by the U.S. Marine Corps on Sept. 11, 1959, nine days after his request for a dependency discharge from the corps was approved. His stated reason for the request was to support his mother, Marguerite, then living in Fort Worth.

Five weeks after receiving the card issued at El Toro Naval Air Station, Santa Ana, Calif., Oswald crossed the French-Soviet border on his way to Moscow. Two weeks later, he announced his intention to defect to the Soviet Union.

Oswald's military record notes the identity card was issued "in accordance with paragraph 3D14.5 PRAM (Personnel Records and Accounting Manual)." However, this paragraph pertains only to the issuance of USMC member cards and does not apply to a DD 1173. The appropriate card for the discharged Oswald, as stipulated by the PRAM, would have been a ZMC (RES), reflecting his new status

as a civilian employee overseas needing a military ID.

But records do not show an entry to Oswald and civilian employment, she adds, "would have been annotated to his military book."

A similar finding was reached by Dennis Vetrock, reference librarian of the U.S. Army Military History Institute of Carlisle, Penn. He notes issuance of DD 1173 was regulated under Defense Department guidelines at the time Oswald received his card. These guidelines limited recipients of such cards largely to military dependents "and civilians who require military identification."

If such a card was issued in error, says Vetrock, "it wouldn't have been authorized, and immediately upon being called to official attention would have been changed or revoked."

There is no evidence Oswald's identity card was revoked, even after he defected, threatened to provide military secrets to the Russians and received an undesirable discharge from the Marine Corps in 1962. Oswald's card was not printed in the photographic evidence of the Warren Commission's report on Kennedy's assassination. But the head-on photograph of Oswald on DD 1173 is the same as two other Oswald photos featured in the report.

One is Warren Commission Exhibit 2892, identified by the FBI as "Photo taken in Minsk." (The "Minsk" photo has a white circular culout in the lower right hand corner corresponding to the overlapping postmark on the Defense Department card.)

The Minsk contradiction — Oswald's trip to Russia occurred after the issuance of the DOD identity card — was not evident to the commission, apparently because the card was not made available to its members by the FBI.

In December 1966, when the FBI finally released Oswald's Defense Department identity card to the National Archives, it arrived "nearly obliterated by FBI testing," according to architect Sue McDonough of the Civil Reference Branch. "The color, the image, the printing, everything is gone," she said. "You couldn't use it to show anything."

Challenging the architect's assertion, FBI spokesman Bill Carter of the Public Affairs Office in Washington asks, "How does she (McDonough) know it was tested by the FBI? Does she have a report?"

HOUSTON POST
22 NOV 92
P. A-1

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The Houston Post

Houston owned, Texas proud

SUNDAY, November 22, 1962

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would be brushing the weapon in the back yard of a home in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas.

"Who else but the FBI could have done it?" McDonough responds. She adds that there are no pictures of the card in its unobscured state at the archivist's office.

According to assassination writer David Lifton, there is no mention of DD 1173 in any FBI testing reports he has reviewed. These include non-published commission documents, FBI Dallas field office reports and FBI summary reports to the Warren Commission.

The same photo of Oswald on DD 1173 also appeared in the Warren Report (Cadiogan Exhibit 15) on a phony Selective Service classification card found in Oswald's possession with the name Alek James Hidel, the name he supposedly used to purchase the assassination rifle by mail order.

It was the 112th Army Intelligence Group at Fort Sain Houston that notified the FBI that he was carrying a fraudulent Selective Service card. How the military knew this has never been explained.

The Hidel card, with its photograph of Oswald, was one of two major links between Oswald and the assassination weapon. The other is a photograph — known by its commission designation of 137A — allegedly taken of Os-

wald brandishing the weapon in the back yard of a home in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas.

The 26-volume Warren Commission publication acknowledged the existence of the DOD identity card in only two places: Oswald's military record and the report of FBI agent Manning Clements, who listed the contents of Oswald's wallet on the night of Nov. 22, 1963, after the Army intelligence tip. Clements cited both the DOD identity card and the Hidel card.

Clements' report, however, did not reveal that the two cards had the same picture — or that the DOD identity card had a photo at all.

The Oct. 23, 1963, postmark on Oswald's DOD identity card is a further enigma. "If found, drop in any mailbox," the card's reverse side instructs. It then tells the Postmaster: "Return to Department of Defense, Washington 25, D.C."

Reached at Notre Dame University where he now teaches law, Robert Blakey, former general counsel to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, considered the possibility that the card was lost, dropped in a mailbox, postmarked and delivered to the Defense Department.

"In that case," says Blakey, "Defense would have had to have given it back to Oswald, interesting."

W. J. Labeler, an associate counsel to the Warren Commission, expresses similar surprise at the convolutions of Oswald's mysterious ID card.

"This is all new to me," he says. "Two things seem odd. The picture identified as Oswald in Minsk, and the postmark on the defense card. The postmark implies the Defense Department either mailed it back to him or gave it to him at some time."

If so, that would have happened less than a month before Kennedy's assassination. Was some conspiracy theorists suggest, Oswald working for the U.S. government at the time?

Renowned assassination researcher Paul Hoch of Berkeley, Calif., attempted to discover the significance of Oswald's DD Form 1173 as early as 1974.

Today, he says: "The HSCA (the House assassination committee) attempted to deal with the possibility that Oswald had been working with the U.S. government after he left the Marines. But as far as we know, it may didn't deal with this card. It may have been the missing element."

DATE OF BIRTH OF SUBJECT: 1906-10-19

NO. OF SERVICE: 1653230

CLASSIFICATION: 1173

APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

CLASSIFIED BY: JAMES J. [redacted]

DATE OF REVIEW: 11-19-62

BY: [redacted]

REASON FOR REVIEW: [redacted]

CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY: [redacted]

APPROVAL: [redacted]

N 4, 271, 617

7 Dec 1962

OSWALD, Joe H.

GRAD BROWN 91.1.1.45

1906-10-19

1653230

1173

1173

1173

Also found in Oswald's wallet is one [redacted] card, bearing the name [redacted].

Service classified [redacted] card, bearing the name [redacted].


James Hidel [redacted] the name law enforcement [redacted].

Oswald used to purchase the rifle they [redacted].

Ken Kennedy.

DD 1173

N 4,271,617



1. CARD NUMBER: N 4,271,617
 2. EXPIRATION DATE: Dec 1962
 3. SIGNATURE: *Lee Harvey Oswald*
 4. GRADE AND NAME: G. BROWN 714 145
 5. DATE OF BIRTH OF MEMBER: 18 Oct 39
 6. SERVICE & STATUS: CR/INACT 1653230
 7. AUTHORIZED PAYMENTS: ...

1. MEDICAL CARE: ...
 2. PLACE OF ISSUE: H&H. MCAS, EL TORO SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA
 3. SIGNATURE: *A. G. Ayers*
 4. TYPED GRADE AND NAME: A.G. AYERS JR., 1st Lt., USMC
 5. UNIFORMED SERVICES IDENTIFICATION AND PRIVILEGE CARD

FROM 'INVESTIGATION OF A HOMICIDE,' BY JUDY W. BONNER (1969)



Lee Harvey Oswald. Photo taken in Minsk. Commission Exhibit No. 2892

(CE 2892 = FBI ITEM 451-7)

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION Approval not required

ALEK JAMES HIDELL
 (First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Selective Service No. **42 224 99 7521** has been classified in Class **I** (Until 19...) by Local Board Appeal Board, by vote of President

(Date of mailing) 19... (Member or clerk of appeal board)

ALEK (Reduced size legend)

The law requires you, subject to heavy penalty for violation, to carry this notice, in addition to your Registration Certificate, on your person at all times—to exhibit it upon request to authorized officials—to surrender it to your commanding officer upon entering the armed forces.

The law requires you to notify your local board in writing (1) of every change in your address, physical condition, and occupational, marital, family, dependency, and military status, and (2) of any other fact which might change your classification.

FOR ADVICE, SEE YOUR GOVERNMENT APPEAL AGENT

(= CE 795)

To complete the face of the Hidell notice a picture of Lee Harvey Oswald was inserted into the space in the lower left-hand corner which had been created by reducing the size of the printed legend at the bottom.

(WR 572; CITE IS CE 795)

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(TORD)

DD 1173

N 4,271,617

Dec 1962

OSWALD, Lee H

Green Brown 71 145

18 Oct 59

CR/INACT 1653230

Lee H Oswald

11 Sep 59

H&S, MCAS, EL TORO SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

A.G. AYERS JR., 1st Lt., USMC

UNIFORMED SERVICES IDENTIFICATION AND PRIVILEGE CARD

FROM 'INVESTIGATION OF A HOMICIDE,' BY JUDY W. BONNER (1969)



Lee Harvey Oswald. Photo taken in Minsk. Commission Exhibit No. 2992

(CE 2892 = FBI ITEM 451-7)

SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

ALEK JAMES HIDELE

Selective Service No. **42 224 99 7521** has been classified in Class **1-F** (Until **19**) by Local Board Appeal Board, by vote of **19** to **19** (Member or clerk of local board)

(= CE 795)



To complete the face of the Hidell notice a picture of Lee Harvey Oswald was inserted into the space in the lower left-hand corner which had been created by reducing the size of the printed legend at the bottom.

(WR 572; CITE IS CE 795)

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 11 Sep 59 Rel fr ac du by reason of hardship
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 auth para 10273 MARCORH&M & MCO 1900.2B
 ID Card #010 N 4,271,617 issued this date
 expiration 8 Dec 62 in accd/w para 3014.5
 PR ...
A.G. AYERS JR., 1st Lt. U.S. CR

19 WCH 665 (FOLSOM DE I, OSWALD'S MARINE RECORD)

PLH 11/22/92