

## Selective Memory About Oswald

Mr. Paul 9/3/94

I read with interest the Aug. 27 contribution to your paper ["More Unfounded Theories About Lee Harvey Oswald," Free for All] by former FBI special agent in charge (Dallas Division) Oliver Revell, written in response to our Outlook article of Aug. 7 ["The Fourth Tramp: Oswald's Lost Cellmate and the Gunrunners of Dallas"]. Despite a 33-year career in which he was "involved in the Kennedy assassination investigation since its inception," Revell evidently suffers from a selective grasp of the facts.

Revell suggests that John Elrod changed his story over time—that "miraculously, 30 years later he [Elrod] now can identify his mystery cellmate as being Lee Harvey Oswald"—and that Elrod never mentioned his cellmate's identity to the FBI in Memphis in August 1964. As our story noted, however, Elrod told members of his family from the day he was released from jail that he had been confined with Oswald, and when he showed up at the Memphis sheriff's office eight months later he was still talking about the accused presidential assassin (and Jack Ruby): He claimed to have information "on the murder of Lee Oswald[!]" as a sheriff's deputy wrote to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. Whether Elrod told the Memphis bureau agents who were immediately summoned to the sheriff's office that his Dallas cellmate was Oswald, or only that the cellmate knew of a motel room meeting with Ruby, must remain conjectural in view of the fact that the agents insisted in their report—repeatedly—that the cellmate

was "unknown." Their report itself is not definitive, however, because it also contained the information that Elrod had not been arrested at all in Dallas the day President Kennedy was murdered.

Revell said, "Had the La Fontaines examined public documents, they would have found that Oswald was never placed in the general jail population. Oswald was placed in cell number F-2, one of three maximum security cells, at approximately 12:20 a.m. on Nov. 23, 1963."

Oswald was indeed placed in cell F-2 but not only on Nov. 23. Telephone logs clearly show he was in F-2 on the day of the assassination, Nov. 22. The logs also show that another prisoner, Daniel Douglas, was in an adjacent cell on the same day. Elrod, moreover, was able to describe—correctly—this Oswald neighbor as a "kid from Tennessee who had stolen a car in Memphis." All of this information was included in our article; all of it was ignored by Revell's response.

Revell clings to the fallacy that John Elrod was placed in a "cell 10," although three decades ago the FBI insisted Elrod was not in any cell in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. There is no "cell 10" in the Dallas jail, regardless of what the Memphis bureau report claims Elrod said. Elrod was arrested as a suspect in the assassination of President Kennedy after police received reports of a man with a gun near the spot where Elrod was found. Douglas was arrested as a suspect in the murder of Officer J. D. Tippit

According to Dallas Police Sgt. James Chandler, cellblock F (where Oswald, Elrod and Douglas were placed) was reserved for "the most serious felons." Thus the three suspects in the murders of President Kennedy and Officer Tippit were all assigned to the same cramped three-cell block F in accordance with police procedure.

Revell professes alarm at a question posed in our story: "Is it possible that Lee Oswald was the informant who tipped off the FBI about the gun deal of Nov. 18, 1963?" Evidence suggests that Oswald had a special relationship with the FBI. Since former agent Revell has officially denied the existence of Dallas bureau reports on the arrests of Lawrence Miller and Donnell Whitter (despite the fact that FBI agent Joe Abernathy was present at the arrests and later became the prosecution's star witness), the identity of the bureau's informant on the arrests must, at the least, remain an open question.

Revell was accurate in claiming that when the long-lost arrest records of the three tramps "were discovered," his Dallas field office "found and interviewed two of the men and verified the death of the third." He failed only to mention that it was we who made the discovery of the records and that the bureau's seminal detective work consisted of reading our front-page story on the finds in the Houston Post of Feb. 9, 1992.

—Ray La Fontaine