

Hiding is over for Marina

By LYNN CALLISON

HEATH, Texas.

Many people in this small community east of Dallas may have passed her this week — at the gas station, grocery store, or nearby shopping mall — and never given her a second glance.

And for that, Marina Oswald is grateful. Her name is Mrs. Kenneth Porter and it has been 14 years since her face was on the front page of newspapers all over the world.

After years of notoriety as the widow of Lee Harvey Oswald, Marina Nikolaevna Prussakova Oswald Porter, 36, has used time, distance, and a new name to make herself indistinguishable from thousands of other suburban housewives.

Occasionally a stranger still notices her Russian accent, studies her sharp features, and there is a flicker of recognition. But the inevitable question, "Aren't you Ma-



Lee Harvey Oswald

rina Oswald?" is met with such icy stares and curt denials that the queries usually go no farther.

Marina, her husband Kenneth Jess Porter, her two daughters by Oswald and son by Porter, have carefully faded into obscurity in the rural tranquility of this Rockwall County community, 30 miles east of Dallas.

But there is a growing awareness among residents here that their reclusive neighbor is on the verge of becoming a celebrity again. For the first time since the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald, Marina has finally agreed to tell her story in "Marina and Lee," a book by Priscilla McMillan Johnson to be released by Harper & Row in October.

There was a time when, with the aid of interpreters, the youthful Marina Oswald basked in the attention of the media. For several years during the late 1960s it was an obvious game of mutual exploitation. Substantial sums of money were the only tickets to an interview with Marina. And for a fee, she routinely repeated her belief that her husband had shot President Kennedy and that Oswald had acted alone.

"I think he wanted to get into the newspaper so that he would be known," she told the Warren Commission in 1964. "It didn't matter to him who he killed. He just wanted to become recognized. He played the big shot so much I'm sure he believed it himself."

These who knew Marina in the 1960s

estimate she received between \$200,000 and \$300,000 in donations from the sympathetic American public, interview fees, and the sale of Oswald possessions. She and her mother-in-law Marguerite Oswald were branded "a post-assassination sideshow in themselves." At one point Marina even agreed to play herself in a planned but never produced film, "Countdown in Dallas."

But by 1970 Marina Oswald had quietly dropped out of sight. Today there are no more interviews with Oswald's widow. Period.

Her retreat from the public began in 1965, when she and Kenneth Porter ducked reporters and photographers to be married by a justice of the peace in Rockwall County.

In Dallas they tried to live a private life. Marina claimed Kenneth lost his job as a foreman with Texas Instruments over the publicity their marriage attracted. With her new wealth she bought him a rundown tavern. But they failed to make a go of it and returned here to Rockwall County several years later. They've been here since with their son Mark, who is now 11, and Marina and Oswald's daughters June Lee, 15, and Rachel, 13.

The Porters bought a 17-acre farm on an isolated road. Their modest yellow-brick ranch house sits well back from the road, looking out onto a peaceful lake and miles of open fields.

"No Trespassing signs are posted at the entrance, and Rockwall County Sheriff Harry Knight and his deputies feel a special commitment to protect the Porters' privacy. Neighbors for miles around all know Marina's identity and they leave her alone.

Pointed her out

"When she first moved here with Kenneth a couple of years back, I used to point her out to people in my store and tell them who she was," Walter Cullen said. "I finally stopped because nobody seemed to care."

Several years ago, at the 10th anniversary of the Kennedy assassination, photographers showed up and snapped pictures of the three children boarding school buses. School and other local officials reacted angrily and tightened security everywhere. Today it is virtually impossible for a stranger to enter any Rockwall



Marina Oswald Porter, widow of Lee Harvey Oswald, is giving up the reclusive life.

schools without identification and clearance. Reporters are asked to leave.

"We never avoided the subject of the assassination in any of our classes just because Marina's children were here," one teacher says. In fact several teachers were surprised when one of Marina's children openly announced "my father killed the President" during classes.

Despite the reports of the money that once came Marina's way, her lifestyle today shows little evidence of wealth. Porter drives a 1960 pickup truck and she occasionally sets out in their white 1968 station wagon. Their home is pleasantly but plainly furnished, and the Porters do not farm their 17 acres, leaving the land fallow.

Their marriage has been stormy. On July 18, 1974, Porter filed for a divorce which was granted four months later by Judge Thomas Crofts. In an unusual decision Judge Crofts granted Kenneth Porter the bulk of the settlement. He was awarded custody of his son Mark, possession of the acreage, the house, the pickup truck and station wagon, unnamed stocks and his personal property. Marina retained custody of her two daughters but was awarded only the household furniture and her personal belongings and a promise from Porter to pay \$25 a month for Rachel's orthodontist bill.

Although there are no records in Rock-

wall County that they remarried, neighbors say they are now back together.

For several years Marina was employed as a saleswoman at Titcher's Department Store. Although she never lost her Russian accent or a slight shyness about meeting people, Marina's employers described her as a good saleswoman and were very protective in shielding her from publicity.

In the old days Marina used to refuse to smile for photographers because of a cracked tooth. She became angry when one camera caught her in a full smile, broken teeth and all. She told one of her business advisers that she feared the American people wouldn't send her money if they saw her teeth and thought she was ugly.

Soon after her husband's death she had extensive dental work, learned to use makeup, cut her hair and curled it, and began to dress stylishly. She enjoyed dancing and going to clubs in Dallas. She had many dates.

Marina was quoted on several occasions as saying the American people were "crazy and gullible" for sending her so much money. She gradually feuded with or fell away from most of the attorneys and close friends she initially depended on following her husband's death, including Oswald's older brother Robert.

She received hundreds of marriage proposals by mail, but after an introduction to Kenneth Porter, who rode into a neighbor's backyard on horseback, Marina curtailed her fast-paced lifestyle. She learned to fish and enjoy the outdoors with the twice-divorced Porter.

Marital feud

But three months after their marriage, Marina was in Dallas Justice of the Peace Bill Richburg's office seeking a peace bond against her husband for allegedly threatening her with a gun. Porter claimed he returned from work and found Marina's two daughters at home alone while his wife was at a neighbor's house partying.

Richburg admonished the Porters to quit attracting bad publicity to themselves and Dallas and sent them both home without the peace bond.

Since that day the Porters' lives have taken on the flavor of clean country living. Now, the same month Marina's book is scheduled to debut, ABC-TV plans to release a two-night, prime-time movie about what the trial of Lee Harvey Oswald might have been like. The two events seem calculated to put the Rockwall County housewife at the top of this fall's media celebrity list — a place Marina insisted she never wanted to be again.



Marina Oswald Porter with second husband, Kenneth in a 1968 photo, taken in New York City during a grand jury hearing on the assassination of President Kennedy.