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NIGHTMARE IN DALLAS: A REVIEW

by John Delane Williams

Nightmare in Dallas is the autobiographical story of the "Babushka Lady" written by Beverly Oliver, with Coke Buchanan [1]. As is typically true of firsthand accounts, no footnotes or references are encountered, even when their use would be required; for example, several JFK speeches are quoted at length without citation. The co-authorship of Coke Buchanan (who apparently had a large hand in the actual writing) is due at least in part to some serendipitous parallels in their liveswhile Oliver was in Dealey Plaza, the younger Buchanan was at Love Field, viewing the arrival of JFK. Three years later, they were both working at the same restaurant in Dallas, she as a singer and he as a waiter, though they only became aware of this mutuality in 1992, when Buchanan was writing an article regarding the JFK assassination.

Though they separate the book into six parts, the book can be seen as in two parts, the first part ending shortly after JFK's death, and the second part continuing on with Oliver's life. The first part intertwines the chronology of Oliver's and JFK's lives, with JFK's life recorded to a considerable degree by lengthy quotes from his speeches, one of which goes on for seven pages. The reason for the inclusion of Kennedy's speeches was to help re-establish the memory of Kennedy's presidency, in contradistinction to the more recent focusing on the negative aspects of Kennedy's personal life. [2]

At the age of 14, Beverly Oliver, who lived in Garland (a Northeast suburb of Dallas) had appeared in a variety of Western venues as a singer. She went to the Colony Club in Dallas (a strip tease club which was a near neighbor of Jack Ruby's Carousel Club) and was involved in two amateur strip-tease contests on a dare. Jack Ruby introduced himself to her on the street after the second contest. At 14, Oliver also found herself pregnant. She gave birth to a baby girl on February 22, 1962. The child was given up for adoption. In the summer of 1962, she got a job as a saloon singer at the family amusement park, Six Flags Over Texas. There, she met Larry Ronco, an Eastman Kodak representative who kept

John Delane Williams 522 Belmont Rd. Grand Forks, ND 58201-4906

testified to NO ONE associated with any of the official investigations! Although the HSCA did have Boring's and Grant's addresses, they were apparently not contacted (as borne out by the footnotes-or lack of themin the HSCA's Report and accompanying volumes). Roberts was interviewed by Manchester, and I strongly suspect that he was the source for the erroneous quote, attributed to Boring, that JFK had, fold the agents to get off the rear of the limousine in Florida on 11/18/63 (Boring denied that this was true AND that he was ever contacted by Manchester, and he is joined by notable colleagues Kinney, Godfrey, Lilly, Behn and many others as denouncing the whole mythology of JFK "desiring" to do away with the agents on/near the rear of the limousine, the motorcycles, the bubbletop, etc. [see "Boring is Interesting" and the 1995-1996 COPA videos for more on this issue] As noted in my previous work, it is this "JFKas-Scapegoat" theme, adopted by Roberts, Boring, Grant, and perhaps even Lawson, that, along with the impossible lack of PRS subjects for Dallas, greatly contributed, along with this breakdown of infrastructure, to what occurred on 11/22/63).

To summarize: while Dillon was "out of the loop" (and out of the country with Salinger et. al.), and while Chief Rowley and SAIC Behn were inactive in D.C., Boring was pulling the strings for Dallas via D.C., whereupon his deputies, Advance agent Grant and ATSAIC Emory Roberts, upstaged, commandeered, and, ultimately usurped the authority of "third-stringers" Roy Kellerman and Asst. Press Sec. Mac Kilduff (essentially a non-player), not to mention Roberts' fellow ATSAIC's Godfrey and Stout AND Grant's "hapless" partner, fellow advance agent Lawson. In addition, Youngblood took Knight's place in Dallas and AFTER Dallas, and Greer joined in his comrades Roberts and Boring in usurping Kellerman's authority.

This, I believe, is the key to what ultimately transpired on November 22, 1963—mixing in JFK's fraudulent security "desires" with a healthy dose of infrastructure breakdown spelled a deadly potion for the planting and implementation of security concerns—and agent behavior—in Dallas.

Maybe there's a REASON a healthy majority of the agents went for unauthorized drinks on the eve of the murder after all...

the park in film and plastered the park with pictures of the attractive Miss Oliver. When it was found out that she had performed at the Colony Club, she lost the Six Flags job. When the season ended, Ronco stayed in Dallas, continuing to see Oliver, eventually proposing to her, though his own marriage was not yet ended.

Oliver then went to work for the Colony Club as a singer between strip acts. She also began to cultivate a relationship with Jack Ruby at the nearby Carousel Club. Before 1962 was ended, she had accompanied Ruby on one of his many trips. She apparently added "class" to Ruby; there apparently was no sexuality in their arrangement.

1963 brought additional complexities to the life of young Miss Oliver. She accompanied Ruby to New Orleans (Oliver doesn't give a time, but Kantor [3] puts this in June, 1963) as Ruby was booking Jada (Janet Conforto) to dance in his club. Ronco returned from New York, not with divorce in hand, but rather with a not yet publicly available Yashika movie camera for Beverly. Ruby tried to talk Ronco out of the camera; the best he could get was that Ronco said he would get Ruby one "when he could get his hands on another one". Inferring from what was known later (Ronco had allegedly stolen a painting, p. 141), Ronco may have stolen the prototype camera (it was placed in general release in 1965 [4]) when he was employed by Eastman Kodak (this inference is the present writer's and not made by Oliver).

Oliver had seen David Ferrie around the Carousel Club so much that she thought he might be an assistant manager. She also saw Roscoe White at the Carousel Club; his presence there was not unusual, since his wife Geneva was employed at the Carousel as a hostess; Oliver knew Roscoe White only as Geneva's husband. Oliver was introduced to Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby; Jada was also present (again, Oliver does not give a date, but it would appear that this would have occurred between November 8 and November 12). A few days later, Oswald was thrown out of the Carousel by Ruby for disturbing a comedy routine. At about the same time, Ronco claimed that Ferrie offered him \$50,000 to kill Castro.

November 21-22, 1963

On the 21st, Oliver went to the Carousel Club; she intended to attend several parties with Ruby. She talked briefly with Jada. Oliver was wearing the green and white polka-dot silk dress purchased for her by Ruby.

Ruby took offense that, since Oliver was staying up all night and then, without changing, watching the JFK motorcade..."You mean you're going to wear the dress I bought you down to see that S.O.B.?" Around 9 P.M. Ruby and Oliver entered the Cubana Hotel. Oliver says that Larry Meyers was introduced to her (Meyers, a sporting goods salesman from Chicago has said that he met with Ruby at the Cabana on November 21; [5] no mention was made of Oliver.) Another of the mysterious people with them was a person referred to as "Donny Lance", whom Oliver danced with and who presumably was a "business" associate of Ruby's. (pp. 108-109) Ruby, Meyers and Oliver then went to Campisi's (The Egyptian Lounge) for steaks around 10 P.M. (Curiously, Ruby had reportedly gone to dinner that evening with Ralph Paul, a business associate and co-owner of the Carousel Club. [6] They (Ruby, Meyers and Oliver) returned to the Cabana Hotel where Oliver put on a dark wig and went to a party with an unnamed escort (a curious part of the Oliver-Buchanan writing is the dropping in of little mysteries) in Ft. Worth around 1 A.M. Perhaps, it was the second time they went to the Cabana Hotel that is described by Kantor, [7] which would explain why Oliver was not mentioned as being at the meeting. Ruby is also said to have gone to breakfast at 2:30 A.M. with Larry Crafard, a handy-man employee at the Carousel Club. One interpretation of this conflicting information is that an attempt to establish an alibi was being made for Ruby. [8]

From Ft. Worth, Oliver took a taxi back to Dallas. She reached her car in The Colony Club parking lot around 11:10 A.M. on the 22nd. There, she changed her shoes, got the camera and proceeded to look for a good vantage point to film the presidential motorcade. She chose a place near the curb on Elm Street next to a father and son (Charles Brehm and his son; Brehm was among the first witnesses to be interviewed; see [9]). As the motorcade came into view, Oliver began to film. She likely had a good recording of the Texas School Book Depository as JFK turned onto Elm. She continued filming even after JFK was hit. She stood motionless as many others began running toward the picket fence, where Oliver assumed the shots had emanated. She recognized Roscoe White (sans his gun) and felt he recognized her. Oliver then drove home, taking a sleeping pill and then going to sleep.

November 23-27

When Oliver awakened and heard Oswald had been

with shooting JFK from the Texas School Book Depository, it didn't make sense to her. JFK was shot from the front, not from behind. The person who was ccused of the assassination had only recently been ntroduced to her. On Sunday, she found out about the nurder of Oswald by Ruby by watching television. When Oliver was going back to the Colony Club to sing on Monday evening, she was met by two men, probably from the FBI (she later identified one of the men as Regis Kennedy, from the FBI in New Orleans). They took her undeveloped film, told her it would be returned in a few days and left. As she went into the club, two reporters asked her about Jack Ruby. She denied knowing him. Oliver remembers saying "If they could kill the President of the United States, they could kill a two-bit show girl like me and it wouldn't even make the back page of the newspaper" (p. 133). On Wednesday, Oliver went to the Carousel to find that Jada was gone, never again to be seen or heard of by Oliver.

Married to the Mob

The relationship with Larry Ronco was short-lived; Ronco changed after the assassination; his pursuit of Oliver became so over-bearing that she obtained a restraining order. Later, she heard that Ronco committed wicide, Oliver met a gambler named George McGann. They were married on July 31, 1966. The reception was hosted by Tony and Janie Janero. Shortly afterward, McGann admitted "wasting" Tony, who had gotten too far behind in paying his bills. McGann and Oliver took over the Janero nightclub, the Sky King. At a get-together of McGann's friends (including, she determined later, Charles Harrelson), the JFK assassination came up. When Oliver tried to enter the discussion, McGann forceably removed Oliver from the room, threatening to kill her if she ever talked about it again. The gambling and occasional killing continued until McGann's own death occurred under suspicious circumstances on September 29, 1970, following the death of their son George Massey (he was given an assumed name) who was less han three hours old. In the six chapters devoted to her life with George McGann, Oliver fails to discuss her insetting with her husband and Richard Nixon at the 1968 Republican National Convention, which is reported in interviews with Gary Shaw. [10] The only mention of the Nixon encounter in the present book is a mence (p. 197) wherein she describes her meetings rith Shaw.

Beverly Oliver's existence from 14 to 24 would seem

to be the stuff of Hollywood scripts but not the stuff of a real life. At a very young age, she was confronted by twists of fate that must have tried her very soul. At 17, she had given a child up for adoption, performed in a strip tease show, sung in a variety of venues, but most recently in strip clubs, made the acquaintance of what would become the Who's Who of the JFK assassination, witnessed that assassination from a few feet away, and recorded that assassination on camera. That is heady stuff which few of us would have the emotional stability to withstand, particularly at 17.

Life Goes On

Prior to George's death, Oliver became involved in fundamental Christian religion, adding her voice to the choir, and often attended revivals. At one such revival, she met Gary Shaw, and over time, gave him several interviews. She also met an evangelist, Charles Massagee; they were married a few weeks later. If her life had been on an emotional roller-coaster, at least she now had someone she could depend upon. If the life of the wife of an itererant Baptist evangelist can be normal, then it would appear that some degree of normalcy had finally come to her. That is not to say her life was easy; she developed lupus, and a second son, Trey, died when he was not yet three months old. A second daughter, Pebbles, was born. Pebbles also appeared to be ill; a suspected familial genetic disorder, primary hyperoxaluria, may have been involved. Oliver donated a kidney to her daughter, despite having lupus. As of July, 1997, Pebbles has had a total of four transplants, including a liver transplant; the concern for her daughter in the present seems more removed from Dealey Plaza than a mere 34 years. [11]

Shaw had Oliver look at a variety of pictures to see whom she might identify from the past. She identified pictures of Guy Banister, and New Orleans attorney Dean Andrews, who had earlier represented Oswald; all had shown up at the Carousel Club. Also identified was Jack Lawrence, (who was "Donny Lance", whom she had seen on several occasions at the Carousel and danced with at one time; while she doesn't explicitly say that Lawrence was Lance in the book, she does so in [12]). Jack Lawrence was reported to have been arrested on the afternoon of November 22, 1963; he was supposedly acting suspiciously directly after the assassination at the Downtown Lincoln Mercury dealership, two blocks from Dealey Plaza. He had borrowed one of the firm's cars the evening of November 21 for a "heavy" date. The

car Lawrence used was found behind the picket fence at the grassy knoll. [13] Lawrence denies all of these allegations. [14] Inkol, who considers himself to be "careful researcher," [15] had earlier concluded that "...Lawrence was part of the conspiracy that killed President Kennedy..." [16, p. 12] (Perhaps Inkol should have been more "careful"). Inkol made a considerable turnaround after interviewing Lawrence. It is difficult to assess Lawrence's activities regarding Dallas, 1963. On the one hand, he appears to come under two of Van Wynsberghe's [17] rules of thumb as to the usefulness of a source's information regarding the assassination: "The source defies corroboration", and "The source is trailed by nagging details." To be sure, Van Wynsberghe also questions the reliability of Oliver, claiming she demands faith in her story and citing additionally two of Oliver's writings as indicating this expectation of faith/belief [18,19]. Perhaps it is a matter of interpretation but I don't find Miss Oliver, either in her writing or in her interview with me, to demand that she be believed, but rather, that her story be seriously considered. It could also be pointed out that the inclusion or exclusion of Lawrence is not an essential component of her story. To be excluded is more important to Lawrence. Oliver says that "If it wasn't Lawrence she danced with on November 21, 1963, then it must have been his identical twin." [20] The possibility of Lawrence being "set-up" by someone should not lightly be dismissed. However, it is clear that Lawrence's reported memory of events clashes with a variety of other reports about his activities. Rose renders the reasoned comment that the last word on Lawrence is not Lawrence's perogative. [21]

Oliver may still be silent on some areas. There continue to be people that she still..."refused to acknowledge for fear of her life. There were people still alive who could kill her for breaking the code of silence about their activities." (p. 219) She also may be silent in personal areas that she sees as having no bearing on the assassination.

Oliver went public, first on the British television production, The Men Who Killed Kennedy, which was later shown on American cable television. [22] She also served as a consultant and had a brief part in the movie IFK. [23] An interesting aside is that Jack Ruby taught Beverly Oliver how to shoot a gun. (p. 242) In light of this, it could call into question Tex Brown's assertion that he taught Ruby and Oswald how to fire guns just prior to the assassination. [24] It is possible of course that both

Oliver and Brown are entirely truthful, but it would disbring up the question, "Why would Ruby go through the motions of learning how to fire a gun if he already know how?"—unless going through the motions served some secondary purpose.

Because of her own unanswered questions regarding her part in the assassination, Oliver decided to undergohypnosis. She was concerned that someone may have been programmed to shoot at JFK when they saw the woman in the green and white polka-dot dress; recall that Sirhan Sirhan had met with a woman in a polka-dir dress immediately before Sirhan fired at Robert Kenneds [25] She was also wanting to know why she had a very uneasy feeling about her last visit to Larry Ronco. apartment, when she saw something and then did not go in-but could not recall what she saw. The chapter on Oliver's hypnosis demonstrates a positive approach that is, in a thoughtful therapeutic environment) to hypnosis though readers who are skeptical of hypnosis might be far more willing to agree with followers [26] of Elizabeth Loftus [27] regarding the construction of "false memory syndrome." Under hypnosis, Oliver reconstructed events at Ronco's apartment. In the reconstruction, a man named Roberto Guzman, whom she had seen together with Ruby and Ferrie, was showing Ronco a gun. It was this episode that presumably caused her to break off relations with Ronco.

Larry Howard and Some Unusual Stories

Oliver met Larry Howard, the co-director of the II k Center in Dallas, who has been told some unusual stories about the assassination, and has undoubtedly developed a keen sense of skepticism. One such story was in regard to Jack Ruby. In 1980, a woman, not identified by Oliver, living in Atlanta, received a press clipping about Johnny Roselli with a typed note saying "Gene Dunbar" Jack Ruby, real name Jacob Rubenstein (and then signed in a secret code known to the woman's husband). The woman and her husband knew the killer of Oswald as Gene Dunbar. Dunbar and her husband worked undercover as information couriers for President Roosevelt from March 1933 to September 1945. (Kantor not only makes no mention of this in regard to Ruby, but also Ruby was drafted into the Army Air Force from mid 1943 to February 1946, serving at southern U.S. bases lp. 202]). The Atlanta couple made contact with the person who sent the clipping, Thomas Kennedy, of Chicago. who claimed to be Ruby. "Ruby" claimed that another man who was dying of cancer at the same time he was in the Dallas hospital switched identities after the man was dead (recall that Ruby died of cancer less than a month after the diagnosis [28, pp. 429-433]). "Ruby" was then flown to Mexico City by Ferrie where alterations were made surgically of his face. The new "Ruby" had blue eyes, not dark as were Ruby's. Also, there seemed to be credible witnesses to Ruby's death. Still, Kennedy had a remarkable knowledge of Ruby that was unlikely to have been known by someone else. Also, when Oliver asked Kennedy what was the only gift that he had wrapped for her, Kennedy wrote, "a green and white polka-dot dress."

Was Beverly Oliver Too Thin to be the Babushka Lady?

A nagging question is the issue of weight. The "Babushka Lady" is termed "stocky" by Posner [29, p. 260]. Others have questioned whether the "Babushka Lady" could possibly be the youthful Miss Oliver (including recently Whitmey [30]). Pictures of the "Babushka Lady" in Oliver's book (slipcase, 180, 181, 182) do indeed appear to be someone heavier than pictures of Beverly shown on page 177 (taken in 1963, probably a publicity photo) page 178 (taken at Six Flags, supposedly in 1963, but probably in 1962) and at her wedding in 1966. (p. 177) Two other pictures from 1963 (p. 178, with Larry Ronco and one taken in October by Ruby, p. 177) would indicate a person whose weight could fluctuate rather rapidly. Not including the Six Flags picture (probably from 1962), the three 1963 pictures show Oliver carrying more weight than earlier or later. Oliver says that she obtained a picture of the "Babushka Lady" and had blow-ups done of the feet; Oliver has a particular deformation involving the placement and small size of her little toe. [31] Perhaps Miss Oliver can be persuaded to share these pictures with the research community. Pictures of the stocky Babushka Lady, acknowledged by Oliver to be her, are undoubtedly what she says they are. This is not to say that persons in the research community shouldn't seek additional confirmation (or refutation) on this matter.

Why Did Oliver Write This Book?

Here, Oliver tells us why..."I have decided to write a book about my experience so that people who are interested will have a testimony with as much detail as possible, even if its significance seems trite. I want to record my story, get it behind me; then get on with my life." (p. 279) It would seem redundant to try to go beyond her statement.

Thanks to Beverly Oliver Massagee and Gary Shaw

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UPDATES: NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON PREVIOUS ARTICLES

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES.

In an article in the March 1997 issue, it was reported that a number of the New Orleans businessmen who formed a corporation called Truth and Consequences (T&C) to help fund the investigations of DA Jim Garrison, were leading members of the Information Council of the Americas (INCA), though INCA operatives were supposedly "suspects" in Garrison's investigation. Additional information is now available at the National Archives on two of the three leading linkages between T&C and INCA, Willard Robertson and Cecil Shilstone.

Robertson was the recipient of an interesting letter from Guy Banister in March of 1964, shortly before Banister's death and long before Robertson's T&C involvement. (HSCA #007271 [5 of 6]; Archives #180-10096-10010). Itseems that Robertson was close enough to Louisiana Governor McKeithen that Banister addressed to Robertson a proposal for Guy Banister Associates to do investigative work for the state. Although

Banister described some areas of investigative need at the end of his letter, the thrust of the letter is to suggest that Banister's work would displace such segregationist and anti-communist forces as those of the Joint Legislative Committee on Un-American Activities (for a news report of Banister's earlier testimony to that Committee, see the back cover of the issue of September 1994) and the Sovereignty Commission, Louisiana's version of the effort in several southern states (including Mississippi, whose massive Sovereignty Commission files are just now being opened to the public) to maintain racial segregation in the face of federal pressures to the contrary. This material just confirms Banister's proclivities in this direction, but suggests another dimension of the profile of the supporter-to-be of Jim Garrison, Willard Robertson.

The new material on Shilstone, in contrast, refers to his activities and connections after the formation of T&C, at the time of Martin Luther King's murder in 1968. A May 8 memorandum from the New Orleans office of the FBI (FBI #62-109060-6396; Archives #180-10023-10429 see back cover illustration, this issue) reports an appearance by Shilstone at that office two days earlier. Accompanied by his attorney, Charles L. Denechaud, Jr., Shilstone indicated his "past" association with the Garrison probe, and said the purpose of his visit was to deny a "rumor going around New Orleans that Shilstone is the New Orleans industrialist and 'political killer' referred to in the New Orleans newspapers a week or so ago in connection with the murder of Martin Luther King." JFK researchers will find it interesting that three of the "friends" who had contacted him about the rumor were Clem Sehrt, Louis Rousell and a "New Orleans physician whom he did not wish to identify." Sehrt had some "curious" connections, including his association with Marguerite Oswald, the possibility that he was the "Clem (or Clay) Bertrand" who called Dean Andrews about going to Dallas after the assassination to represent Oswald, and an allegation of some questionable dealings with Rousell (see the article by Peter Whitmey in the November 1994 issue); and the "New Orleans physician" may well have been INCA's famous founder, Dr. Alton Ochsner. It is of some interest as well that attorney Denechaud and Sehrt both had offices in the Pere Marquette building, the same structure made famous by the coincidence of involvements of Carlos Marcello, G. Wray Gill, David Ferrie and Jim Braden. The Pere Marquette appears once again in this memorandum, in