

Brother considered

By EARL GOLZ

Robert Oswald considered exhuming the body in his brother's grave two days after burial, but not because he doubted it was his brother.

Robert, who will return to a state court in Fort Worth Monday for a hearing to stop British author Michael Eddowes from exhuming the body, contemplated exhumation in 1963 to cremate the remains.

Two days after burial in Rose Hill Burial Park in Fort Worth, Robert said, he was approached by Mason Lankford, the Tarrant County fire marshal assigned by the Secret Service to help guard the Oswald family during the week after the assassination.

Lankford suggested the body be exhumed and cremated because "some people . . . were bringing pressure to have the body moved from the Fort Worth area," Robert said in his book *Lee* in 1967.

Robert decided against it, but exhumation was discussed secretly by the Warren Commission and federal investigators for months after the assassination.

Suddenly, after about four months, the talk stopped. Supposedly, nothing was done to the grave.

However, Lee Harvey Oswald's wife, Marina, startled the court Friday when she testified, "I strongly believe in the possibility of a body not being there."

The Russian-born woman has given Eddowes her consent for an exhumation and a second autopsy, but her reasons for wanting the exhumation are not the same as the 76-year-old Englishman's motivation.

Marina, now Mrs. Kenneth Porter of Rockwall, stopped short of saying she absolutely believes the body in the grave is that of Lee Harvey Oswald, who defected to the Soviet Union in 1959. But she said she is certain the person buried in 1963 was the man she married about two years earlier in Russia.

Eddowes contends the man she married was a Soviet secret agent posing as Oswald the defector. The couple came to America in 1962. Her husband was accused of assassinating President John F. Kennedy in Dallas in 1963. Two days after the assassination, Dallas nightclub operator Jack Ruby shot and killed the assassin, who was identified as Lee Harvey Oswald.

The suspect was 2 inches shorter than Oswald was when he was measured in the Marines in 1959, and a mastoidectomy scar behind Oswald's left ear went undetected in the 1963 autopsy, Eddowes contends.

Robert Oswald testified Friday he is certain the

exhumation

body in the grave is that of his younger brother. He sued Eddowes and the cemetery to prevent an exhumation, asserting the author is seeking financial gain only.

The brother said that in 1963, Lankford left three cremation forms for him to sign, but they never were signed and he never told Marina.

Robert said he briefly "considered the possibility" of having Lee's body cremated to protect it from "the ghouls who might try to break into his grave," but decided against it so as "not to allow bigots to frighten us into surrendering Lee's final resting place."

Lankford said he could not recall who asked him to suggest cremation or who gave him the forms for the Oswald brother to sign. He speculated it may have been the undertaker, Paul J. Groody, or the Secret Service.

Groody said he did not remember doing it and didn't think he would have after taking extra effort to preserve the body before burial.

Oswald's mother, Marguerite, requested exhumation in 1967 to try to determine whether scars on one of her son's arms existed. She did not learn about them until after the body was buried.

Oswald had scars on his left arm, supposedly from an accident in the Marines when a .22-caliber automatic he was handling discharged and a bullet lodged in his upper arm.

Marguerite said she wanted the exhumation because she thought it strange that her son shot himself and was hospitalized without the family being notified. She didn't carry out the exhumation, she said, "because I never did have any money."

Marguerite repeatedly told authorities in the year after the assassination of her suspicion that her son was "an agent" of American intelligence sent to the Soviet Union posing as a defector.

Another attempt to persuade Robert Oswald and Marina to permit cremation of the body was discussed by U.S. Justice Department officials two weeks after burial.

Barefoot Sanders, then U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas and now a federal judge, urged Deputy U.S. Atty. Gen. Nicholas Katzenbach in a letter "to ascertain once and for all that the

(Warren) Commission has no interest in having these (Oswald) remains preserved." If it does not, Sanders wrote, he would "see what I can do, as indirectly as possible, to have the Fort Worth police encourage widow Oswald and brother Oswald to have these remains cremated."

Sanders' letter stated "the basis of our concern" is that "desecration of the grave is a real possibility."

The next month, on Jan. 21, 1964, the Warren Commission met in executive session and discussed exhuming the body and either cremating it or moving it to a secret location in a mausoleum. Again, vandalism of the gravesite seemed to be the concern.

U.S. Rep. Hale Boggs of Louisiana, a member of the commission, stated during the meeting that he didn't "care if you move that body 20 feet over to somewhere else, somebody is going to say that is not the body and you are going to have to have somebody go down there and pull it out of that mausoleum and have X-rays made and prove it is his body."

Boggs said he would prefer having a guard posted at the gravesite 24 hours a day and the commission chairman, Chief Justice Earl Warren, agreed.

During the same executive session, commission member John J. McCloy said he heard *Life* magazine was preparing an article that included an interview with Marina Oswald "and they were throwing in this note she was now saying, giving evidence she was going to put evidence in this thing that he was a Soviet agent."

Georgia Sen. Richard Russell, a committee member, responded, "That will blow the lid if she testifies to that (Oswald was a Soviet agent)."

Such an article never was published in *Life*.

In February 1964, the Central Intelligence Agency sent FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover a message stating Marina Oswald had recalled seeing a scar on Oswald's left wrist, but her statements were considered "not adequate and that independent corroborative evidence on this point (the scar supposedly was inflicted in a suicide attempt shortly after Oswald defected to Russia) should be obtained if it is possible to do so."

A Warren Commission memo in March 1964 said Hoover was reluctant to exhume the body to comply with the CIA's request.

The CIA, the Hoover memo stated, was trying to determine whether the suicide attempt actually oc-

curred because if it was "a fabrication, the time supposedly spent by Oswald in recovering from the suicide (attempt) in a Moscow hospital could have been spent by him in Russian secret police custody being coached, brainwashed, etc., for his appearance at the American embassy."

The Hoover memo said "this whole aspect of Oswald's life and especially our attempt to authenticate it are highly secret at this point."