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Doctors identify

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body as Oswald

Experts say teeth, scar primary clues

By Earl Golz
Staff Writer of The News

After 18 years and enough paper work to fill several libraries, a team of forensic pathologists said they determined Sunday "beyond any doubt" the body buried in Lee Harvey Oswald's grave is that of Oswald.

The body was exhumed Sunday morning from Rose Hill Burial Park in Fort Worth at the request of Marina Oswald Porter, his former wife.

The body was transported under tight security to the Baylor University Medical Center basement

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morgue in Dallas for examination and identification by a team of four pathologists. The body was returned to Rose Hill and reburied about 4:30 p.m.

Dr. Linda Norton, who directed the medical team, said positive identification was made primarily through dental records and discovery of a scar behind one ear left from an operation when Oswald was 8 years old. The body was decomposed, but some tissue and remnants of clothing remained, she said.

"The mastoid scar was discovered and documented . . . We hope that puts the matter to rest, and the Porters can go about living a normal life," she said.

Dental X-rays taken when Oswald was in the

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Workers move the casket containing Lee Harvey Oswald's body from its grave in Rose Hill Burial Park, a hearse before the examination Sunday.

The Dallas Morning News: Phil Huber

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U.S. Marine Corps were retrieved from the Marine records center in St. Louis and compared to X-rays taken during the 5-hour exhumation Sunday, said Dr. Norton, chief associate medical examiner in Birmingham, Ala.

Dr. James A. Cottone, assistant professor of dentistry at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, said members of the medical team agreed about the identity of the body.

"There was no doubt," Cottone said. "The main thing we were concerned with was whether the dental records had been tampered with . . . We reached the conclusion that there was no tampering with the records. The condition of the body was almost on the nose with what we had expected, based on the time it had been in the ground."

Dr. Vincent DiMaio, the Bexar County medical examiner, said a crack in the foundation under the coffin allowed water to seep in, but the water did not affect the condition of the body.

"After 18 years, it is going to be pretty well deteriorated," DiMaio said.

The team's first clues about the identity were two rings, removed from Oswald's left little finger during the examination, that were identified by Mrs. Porter as the rings she placed on the body just before burial.

Dr. Norton said Mrs. Porter was relieved by the exhumation and thinks the examination answers questions she wanted answered.

"The man she believed was in that grave was in that grave," Dr. Norton said.

DiMaio said 15 people witnessed the examination, including the four team members, four doctors who assisted them, three lawyers and their various assistants and a court reporter. About 40 or 50 reporters gathered at the hospital to await the outcome.

"I was honored to be asked to participate," DiMaio said. "The actual identification was very simple. I was not surprised at all at the decomposition, and I thought the body was fairly well-preserved."

Michael Eddowes, the British lawyer and author who first sought the exhumation in 1975, said he was not disappointed that his theory that an impostor had been buried in Oswald's grave apparently had been disproved.

Eddowes, in his book *The Oswald Files*, theorized that the man who returned to this country in 1962 after defecting to Russia actually was a Soviet agent posing as Oswald.

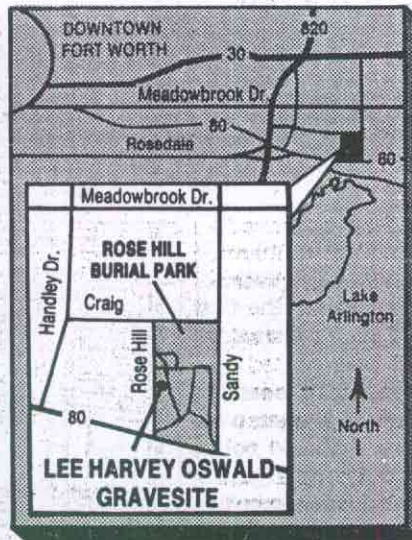
Mrs. Porter had disputed Eddowes' theory, but said she wanted to know if there was a body in the grave and if it was that of Oswald.

"I have accomplished my objective in obtaining the exhumation, and I am glad for those who have steadfastly maintained the contrary for whatever reason," Eddowes said in a prepared statement read in a news conference by John Collins, one of Eddowes' attorneys.

"It is my further hope that the facts we've learned today will lead to the answers to all unanswered ques-



Lee Harvey Oswald



The Dallas Morning News: Jan Brunson

tions surrounding the assassination of President John Kennedy," the statement said. "My main objective has been to discover the truth in this matter. It always will be in the future."

Collins said Eddowes will pay exhumation costs, estimated at \$10,000 to \$12,000.

Jerry Pittman, an attorney representing Mrs. Porter, said she "was pleased with the results of the autopsy."

The exhumation effort began about 7 a.m. Sunday as workers and a small crowd — estimated at fewer than 50 persons — assembled under a clear sky at Rose Hill Burial Park in Fort Worth.

Television and newspaper reporters, barred from the cemetery by security guards, attempted to film the event from nearby Rose Hill Road, which parallels the cemetery, and from helicopters that circled the area. Three blue-green funeral tents were hastily erected between the gravesite and the road — apparently to block photographers' view. Several pickups were parked beside the tents as two yellow backhoes scraped away the dying grass and brown soil that covered the concrete vault.

Mrs. Porter, who in seeking the exhumation had said she "wanted the truth to be dug out once and for all," sat with one of her daughters in their gray Datsun station wagon several feet from the grave.

Eddowes stood a short distance away.

Oswald's brother Robert, who until this week had been conducting a legal battle to block the exhumation, remained at his Wichita Falls home after agreeing to disinterment. He would not comment.

Craig Fowler, an attorney representing Robert Oswald, said the brother "at no time withdrew his opposition to the proceedings." He agreed to the exhumation because the litigation had cost him between \$13,000 and \$15,000 and was "causing a good deal of stress and strain and anguish to the present family," Fowler said.

The Oswald casket was unearthed shortly before 9 a.m., less than two hours after digging began.

"The casket was really deteriorated," Collins said. "There was a crack in the vault, and water had leaked in. The casket had just crumbled to a point you could see some of the skeletal remains through the top."

The remains were placed in a temporary container and transported by hearse to Baylor Medical Center, where the team of pathologists began their detailed examination.

Sources said the one major feature of the body that could be checked was the teeth. The findings would be compared to Oswald's Marine Corps dental records.

Paul J. Groody, the undertaker who hermetically sealed the casket in 1963 in a 2,700-pound steel reinforced concrete vault, would not comment after he saw what remained in the grave. "I'll have some-

thing to say, but not right now," he said.

Groody told *The Dallas Morning News* two years ago, "There would be nothing that could disturb" the body because "of the weight and the kind of a vault" in which the casket was placed. Groody also said in 1979 that he over-embalmed the body because "I knew good and well they may want to take a look at him again."

Hal Monk, another attorney for Eddowes, stood at the main entrance to the cemetery on Lancaster Avenue — about a quarter-mile from the gravesite — and watched the exhumation through binoculars. Monk said the disinterment was made possible after a temporary restraining order, issued Sept. 22 by State Dist. Judge James E. Wright, expired at midnight Saturday.

As the casket was removed, cemetery workers covered the grave with a green tarpaulin. The casket was placed in a black hearse and about five minutes later a procession of about 15 cars and the hearse — led by a security officer on a motorcycle — left the cemetery.

Dr. N.S. Peerwani, the Tarrant County medical examiner, said he learned of the exhumation Sunday after reporters called him.

Tarrant County Dist. Atty. Tim Curry could not be reached for comment. Chief Assistant Dist. Atty. Marvin Collins said the district attorney's office was not aware of the exhumation.

Among the reporters contributing to this story were Bill Deener, Karen Malkowski, Ed Timms, Robin Stringfellow and Ray Bell.