

# Marina OSWALD talks

## After the assassination

By Jack Harrison Pollack

**M**ARINA OSWALD does not know for certain what impelled her husband to kill President Kennedy. "If I could see Lee in my dreams, I'd ask him why," she says. Marina believes that her husband decided to shoot the president impulsively only a day or two before the assassination. "I think he wanted to get attention for himself. Maybe he wanted to be somebody important by killing somebody important. He was — what do you say? — loser. He was not satisfied with all his plain jobs. Always, he was being fired from them. He felt nobody wanted him. But he wanted a place in history by any way — good or bad. He had no idea what's right, of what's wrong, though. He was always angry at other people because his own failures."

Other factors seem to have contributed to her husband's mental deterioration, his widow is now convinced. Oswald believed that he was in danger of immediate arrest and punishment for his Fair Play for Cuba Committee activities the year before in New Orleans. In fact, FBI agent James Hosty questioned the frightened Marina about her husband and his whereabouts less than a month before the assassination. Hosty also advised Marina that if the Russians tried to turn her into a Soviet agent, to tell him and he would protect her. But when Marina informed her husband about Hosty's visit, he was enraged. Oswald rushed to the Dallas FBI office and left an angry letter (a source of future embarrassment to the FBI when it disappeared), demanding that agents stay away from his wife. Oswald equated the FBI with the Soviet secret police.

Two violent old movies which Oswald had watched on television shortly before the Kennedy murder might also have contributed to his decision to kill the president, his wife says.

One, called "Suddenly," which came out in 1954, was about an unsuccessful attempt to kill a president of the United States by an emotionally disturbed ex-serviceman (portrayed by Frank Sinatra) who himself gets killed. The other film, "We Were Strangers,"



Marina and Lee Harvey Oswald soon after their arrival from the Soviet Union, and Marina today

released in 1949, starred John Garfield. It depicted another abortive attempt by revolutionists to assassinate the dictatorial Cuban President, Gerardo Machado, and his cabinet in 1933.

Some lawyers on the Warren Commission suggested that Oswald had killed the president because of his sexual frustration and a determination to prove his masculinity. When I mentioned this to his widow, she grimaced but said nothing.

Ironically, the national tragedy might have been averted if a telephone call had been completed. On Oct. 15, 1963, the day before Oswald began his temporary \$1.25 per hour job at the book depository, the Texas Employment Commission had tried unsuccessfully to reach him by telephone at his rooming house. A placement agent there had wanted to offer him a permanent position as a baggage handler for Trans-Texas Airways at Love Field in Dallas, which paid about \$100 a month more.

On Monday, Nov. 25, Marina intensely watched President Kennedy's funeral from the motel room in which the Secret Service had secluded her and her children. An agent turned off the set. Stubbornly Marina switched it back on. She remained riveted to the screen until she left for her 24-year-old husband's funeral the same afternoon. When the coffin was opened for a final farewell in the chapel, Marina leaned over but did not kiss him.

Like the president he killed, Lee Harvey Oswald is buried in a place called Arlington. This Arlington is a suburb of Fort Worth, Tex. The Rose Hill Cemetery there was the only one near Dallas that would accept Oswald's body. A half-dozen ministers refused to officiate. The Dallas Lutheran minister who had promised to preside never appeared. A Fort Worth clergyman who came as a curious spectator agreed to conduct the quick graveside service. Marina attended



with her two young daughters. So did Marguerite Oswald, the slain man's publicity-minded mother; his brother, Robert, who had arranged the funeral; Secret Service and FBI agents, and newsmen, some of whom volunteered as pallbearers.

In February 1964, when Marina was in Washington to testify before the Warren Commission, she wanted to visit President Kennedy's grave and place flowers on it, but she decided not to because "I was afraid that people would say that I didn't belong there." A year later, however, she did go and saw the Eternal Flame. "It was so crowded that nobody even noticed me."

Although she generally is not recognized by strangers outside the Dallas area, people who do frequently ask, "Aren't you Marina Oswald?" Her reply is usually a frozen stare, particularly when the questioner's eyes make her feel like an outcast.

After the Kennedy and Oswald deaths, Marina and her two young daughters were held incommunicado. They were closely guarded by the Secret Service on the orders of President Lyndon Johnson and Attorney

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General Robert Kennedy as a precaution against any attempts on their lives. "Yes, I was afraid that somebody might shoot me," admits Oswald's widow.

By August 1964, she had been interrogated more than 15 times by governmental agencies. Marina liked the Secret Service agents, but considered most of the FBI agents hostile. Still, she now concedes that she should have been more truthful and more cooperative in answering their seemingly endless questions. "I wanted to punish them for not being so nice."

Oswald's widow, a Soviet citizen, feared that she might be imprisoned or deported for not having helped to prevent the president's murder. This implied threat long hung over her head. Some Americans warned that she might try to flee the United States. But just as her husband was driven to kill, Marina Prusakova Oswald, the Russian peasant, was driven to survive. She was distressed that the Soviet Embassy in Washington offered neither sympathy nor help, but totally ignored her during this agonizing period. It simply pretended she did not exist, probably for political reasons that Marina could not understand.

More sympathetic Americans suggested that the assassin's widow change her name and move from the Dallas area, even Texas.

She refused to do so. "People are very friendly here, and like children," she reasoned. Some people even offered to provide her a "secluded" home and to adopt her children. "I wasn't proud of my name or my situation," she says. "But my children and I were not guilty like Lee. I could never give them up. They were my only reason for living. I decided to tell them the good as well as the bad things about their father when they were older. I figured it would be easier with girls. Boys try to make heroes out of their fathers."

She, June and Rachel received Social Security. To her amazement, she received \$70,000 in donations the first year after the assassination. She is still touched by the memory of the Sunday school class that baked a cake and sold it for \$3, which they sent to Marina to buy Christmas toys for her children.

One Kennedy-hater sent her a dollar "for the service your husband did for his country." "I sent it back with an angry letter."

#### **TOMORROW: Recovery.**

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