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BY ROGER S. PETERSON SINCE ITS CREATION IN 1992, THE ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD HAS RELEASED DOCUMENTS THAT SHED A DISTURBING LIGHT ON THE 1963 SHOOTING OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY.

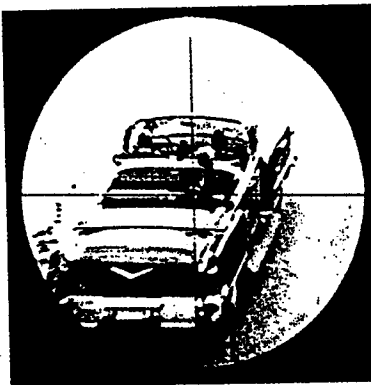
THE ASSASSINATION of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy on Friday, November 22, 1963 profoundly shocked the nation and dealt a severe blow to the relative prosperity and confidence of the era. Most who remember that afternoon can recall in detail where they were when they heard the news. Time seemed to stop. People became motionless, unable to function for hours. Church pews filled with dazed faithful seeking an answer for such madness.

Almost immediately, newly sworn-in President Lyndon Baines Johnson asked Chief Justice Earl Warren to head a commission of government officials to investigate the assassination. This board's findings, the so-called Warren Report, comprised 26 volumes and a summation. It was issued in September 1964, just as Johnson's presidential campaign was in full swing.

The commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, an ex-Marine who had briefly defected to the Soviet Union, fired all the shots that killed Kennedy and wounded Texas Governor John Connally, as they rode in an open car through Dallas. Oswald, the report said, had perched in the sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository and fired from behind the victims as their limousine passed below, heading toward a freeway exit. The members of the Warren Commission, finding no evidence of conspiracy, determined that Oswald had acted alone.

From the beginning, numerous studies questioned the commission's thoroughness and objectivity, until public pressure on the matter led to several congressional investigations, most notably

by the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA). Its 1979 report concluded that Kennedy was probably shot by Oswald, but in a conspiracy with



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unknown people, and that additional shots were likely fired from an area—"the grassy knoll"—in front of the limousine. HSCA chief counsel Robert Blakey went so far as to assert that organized crime, the Mafia, was involved.

Still baffled by contradictions in the various investigations, independent researchers conducted their own inquiries. Together, their findings have created a surreal mosaic of leads and deadends. Occasionally, individual tiles of the mosaic have touched, making an interesting pattern. Now, recent revelations have brought more tiles into contact, and the image emerging does not match government claims. New findings are challenging the basic conclusions of the Warren Report, and researchers insist the full picture will be clear only when all government agencies release still-classified files.

The JFK Records Act of 1992 created

the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB) with a mandate to identify and review federal, state, and private files on the shooting for release to the National Archives and Records Administration. Researchers have formed the Coalition on Political Assassinations (COPA), based in Washington, to undertake a peer-review of their work and to share data. Composed of physicians, lawyers, engineers, scientists, retired military officers, and historians, COPA researchers have provided many leads for ARRB investigators.

Forensic pathology is a medical specialty that investigates violent and suspicious deaths in order to isolate criminal evidence. In gunshot cases, the pathologist examines the victim's body to determine the location of entry and exit wounds. But not all pathologists are trained in forensic science, which includes the probing of wounds, the examination of tissue, and extensive photographing and x-raying of the body as the autopsy is in progress.

When President Kennedy was declared dead at Dallas's Parkland Hospital soon after the shooting, local authorities insisted that Texas law required an immediate autopsy before the body could be moved.

Since the 1964 release of the Warren Report—which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, positioned behind his target (as indicated by the reenactment of the event shown above, left) was the lone assassin of President John F. Kennedy—a considerable body of evidence has been revealed, which indicates that the president was shot from the front and that Oswald could not have acted alone.



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Recently released documents raise numerous questions about Oswald (shown above, left, in "mug shot" that followed his arrest on November 23, 1963, the day after the assassination), and about Clay Shaw (above, right), a prominent businessman tried by New Orleans' District Attorney Jim Garrison (left) on conspiracy charges in connection with the assassination.

Parkland Hospital medical team who had tried to save the president hours earlier in Dallas. They too had observed a large defect in the back of the skull.

Dallas neurosurgeon Dr. Clark Kemp, for example, told the Warren Commission that in closely examining Kennedy's skull, he had found "a large wound beginning in the right occiput extending into the parietal region . . . much of the skull appeared gone . . ." Elsewhere, Kemp claimed cerebral and cerebellar tissue was extruding from the wound; the cerebellum, located in the lower, back portion of the brain, has a distinctive pink color.

Kemp's colleague, Dr. Robert McClelland, stated that from his position at the head of the operating table he "could very closely examine the head wound, and I noted that the right posterior portion of the skull had been extremely blasted." The force of the shot, McClelland continued, "sprung open the bones," which permitted him to observe that "probably a third or so, at least, of the brain tissue, posterior cerebral tissue and some of the cerebellar tissue had been blasted out."

Dallas's Dr. Ronald Jones described what "appeared to be an exit wound in

Secret Service agents resisted. When words failed, the Parkland staff tried to grab the casket away from the agents, who met the challenge with drawn weapons. In the end, Texas law was ignored.

Late that same evening, after the president's body was flown back to Washington, D.C., a 26-member team at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland began an autopsy. Since neither of the two chief pathologists—Dr. James Humes and Dr. J. Thornton Boswell—was forensically trained nor experienced with gunshot wounds, the procedure was delayed until the arrival of a forensic pathologist, Dr. Pierre Finck. The assignment of pathologists without forensic experience was a curious omission, given that the corpse still leaking body fluids on the cold aluminum tray was

the late president of the United States.

The actual transcripts of the testimony given by Bethesda Naval Hospital autopsy personnel to the HSCA were released in 1993 under the JFK Records Act. They indicate that the Bethesda autopsy witnesses, in closed session, told the House committee that Kennedy had a massive wound in the back of the skull behind his right ear. Some who testified submitted diagrams to support their claims.

The summary of the witnesses' testimony issued by the HSCA in 1979, however, indicated that all 26 Bethesda observers cited a wound on the right side of Kennedy's head toward the front—not the back—of the skull. This strangely inaccurate account of the autopsy witnesses' testimony is particularly disturbing when compared to the comments of the

the posterior of the skull" and told researcher David Lifton "If you brought [President Kennedy] in here today, I'd still say he was shot from the front."

San Francisco physician Dr. Gary Aguilar reviewed all medical testimony from the Dallas and Bethesda witnesses and found striking agreement among 42 medical observers in both hospitals that the exit wound was in the back of Kennedy's skull. Aguilar states that the Bethesda witnesses provided "unambiguous verbal descriptions, as well as diagrams, of JFK's right-rear skull defect." Among those testifying were two Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and the mortician who prepared the skull for an open-casket viewing by filling it with plaster.

This point is important because an exit wound in the front of the skull supports the Warren Report's assertion that Oswald, shooting from behind, acted alone. However, evidence of a posterior exit wound implies a shot from the front, suggesting either that Oswald did not act alone, if at all, or that two lone assassins coincidentally chose the same time and place to own a chapter in history.

Curiously, none of the x-rays or photographs from the autopsy show the wound seen by the 42 medical observers. Warren Commission defenders see this as proof that the Dallas and Bethesda observers were mistaken about the location of the large head wound. Aguilar responds by suggesting that, if error is ran-

dom, it is unlikely that 42 people can all make the same error, especially when all were medically trained observers and had physical access to the body.

Aguilar found the answer to what is a basic question of any gunshot homicide—from which direction did the bullets enter the victim and where did they exit?—by surveying the comments and testimony given over the years by the Bethesda pathologists and their photographers regarding the x-rays and photographs taken during the autopsy.

Pathologists Humes, Boswell, and Finck each told the HSCA that they had not seen all the photographs that they had ordered taken. Specifically, Finck cited photos of the skull (internal and external aspects) and the chest cavity. The three have also testified they were not permitted to probe the wound in Kennedy's back, nor were they allowed to see his clothing—both essential elements in forensic analysis. In 1969, Dr. Finck testified that an unidentified Army general present at the autopsy ordered these omissions.

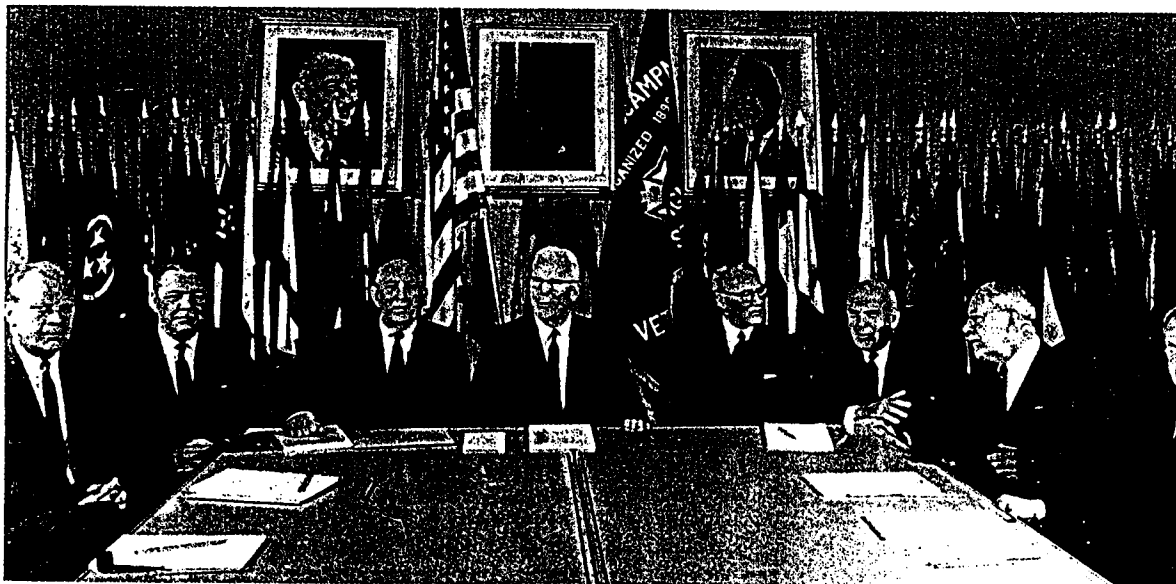
Over the years, statements by Humes and Boswell have contained many seemingly parenthetical references to the missing photographs and many careful references to the completeness of the autopsy. Why then, one may wonder, have they not been more aggressive in asking to see all the photographs they had taken, many of which presumably would end the discussion about exit wounds?

That question is answered by a recent-

ly released affidavit dated November 10, 1966, in which former Justice Department official Carl Belcher confirms that he had delivered to Bethesda a document entitled "Report of Inspection by Naval Medical Staff on November 1, 1966 at National Archives of x-rays and photographs of autopsy of President John F. Kennedy" that was read and signed by Humes, Boswell, and two other Naval officers. The x-rays and photographs described and listed in the inventory, they affirmed, included all those "taken by us during the autopsy, and we have no reason to believe that any other photographs or x-rays were made during the autopsy."

The statement they signed in 1966 directly contradicts what they have consistently sworn to ever since. Both autopsy photographers have also testified to the same missing photos. Why such contradiction? Dr. Aguilar, who has interviewed both Humes and Boswell, believes a basic human emotion—fear—has prevailed for decades. "These guys..." Aguilar told this author, "must have knowingly

Within days of the president's murder, President Johnson appointed a commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren to investigate. The members (shown below from left) included Representatives Gerald Ford and Hale Boggs, Senator Richard Russell, Justice Warren, Senator John S. Cooper, John J. McCloy, Allen Dulles, and J. Leo Rankin.



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

signed a false declaration." Aguilar also notes that the two men have avoided public questions by fellow physicians as recently as 1992. Considering all the contradictions surrounding this homicide and given that the autopsy witnesses were warned never to discuss the autopsy, it is entirely understandable if Humes and Boswell wished they had never been on duty that evening.

Nashville radiologist Dr. Randy Robertson asserts that it is clear from the x-rays and the placement of five specific skull pieces that Kennedy was hit twice, almost simultaneously—once from behind and then from the front. Speaking at the October 1995 COPA conference, Robertson went so far as to suggest that Bethesda's Dr. Finck and Dr. Humes lied in their Warren Commission testimony.

As tiles in Oswald's surreal mosaic are filled in, the image, instead of becoming clearer, gets more confusing. Oswald served in the Marines as a radar operator at the top secret U.S. reconnaissance base in Atsugi, Japan. After receiving a hardship discharge, he defected to the Soviet Union in the fall of 1959.

Oswald relinquished his passport and renounced his U.S. citizenship at the American embassy in Moscow, threatening to provide the Soviets with important radar information. Such a threat, by someone who had a top secret clearance and had worked with U-2 spy planes that flew over the Soviet Union, represented a serious breach of security. Yet, when Oswald asked to return to the U.S. in 1962, his past behavior did not stop the State Department from routinely granting permission and even paying for his transportation home.

New releases reveal that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) put Oswald on their "watch list" on November 9, 1959, nine days after his defection. Oswald then became a member of an exclusive club: three hundred Americans whose mail was illegally intercepted by the CIA. Oddly, however, the Agency did not open a "201" file (a personality profile) on Oswald until December 9, 1960—13 months after his treasonous threat.

Dr. John Newman, a University of

Maryland historian with twenty years in army intelligence, examined the continuing mystery in his 1995 book *Oswald and the CIA*. A no-nonsense researcher, Newman believes that the belated opening of a 201 file on Oswald was intentional and suggests Oswald's presence in the Soviet Union may have been part of some U.S. operation.

Apparently the FBI first learned of the

Office, watched Oswald from 1959 until his death four years later, according to Newman. He estimates that four thousand pages of released documents from the FBI alone indicate interest in Oswald by Bureau offices in Dallas, New Orleans, Newark, New York City, and Washington.

Documents dated 1960 and '63 outline Hoover's suspicion that someone was impersonating Oswald. In a memo dated

June 3, 1960 and released in 1992, Director Hoover informed the State Department that "there is a possibility that an imposter is using Oswald's birth certificate . . ." When the ARRB voted in July 1995 to release FBI cables from 1960 indicating that the agency wondered if Oswald were in Switzerland, not the Soviet Union, the FBI appealed to President Bill Clinton to override the ARRB decision on the grounds that they involved the Swiss government. Swiss authorities, however, agreed to the release, provided the name of a Swiss citizen was deleted. The cables were finally made public in December 1995.

Hoover was not the only one to posit the possibility of an Oswald imposter. Several researchers who have studied various Oswald photographs—including one of the body in the coffin exhumed from Oswald's grave—and his New Orleans and New York City school records suggest that there were two Oswalds.

The Warren Report described Oswald as a mercurial loner, but new evidence indicates that, for a "loner," Oswald had some interesting liaisons (see diagram, page 54). According to Newman, the evidence now is overwhelming that Oswald was in contact with CIA "assets" within the New Orleans anti-Castro community.

Following the assassination, New Orleans' District Attorney Jim Garrison began an investigation into Oswald's past in that city, which led to the March 1967 arrest of Clay Shaw, a prominent businessman, on charges of conspiracy in the murder of President Kennedy. Garrison's investigation found Shaw linked to a subterranean world of anti-Castro operations involving a bizarre pilot and paramilitarist named David Ferrie and a rabid John Birch Society member and ex-FBI agent named Guy Banister.

continued on page 54

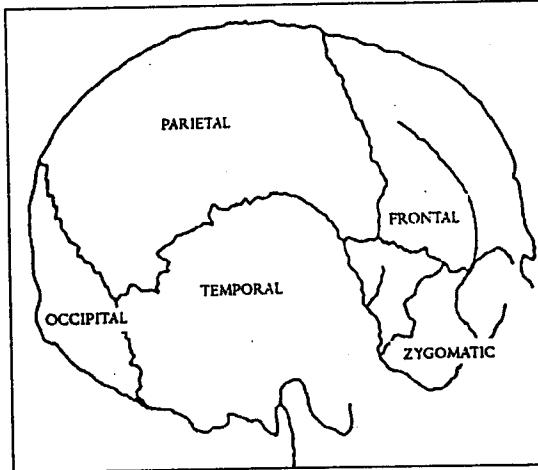


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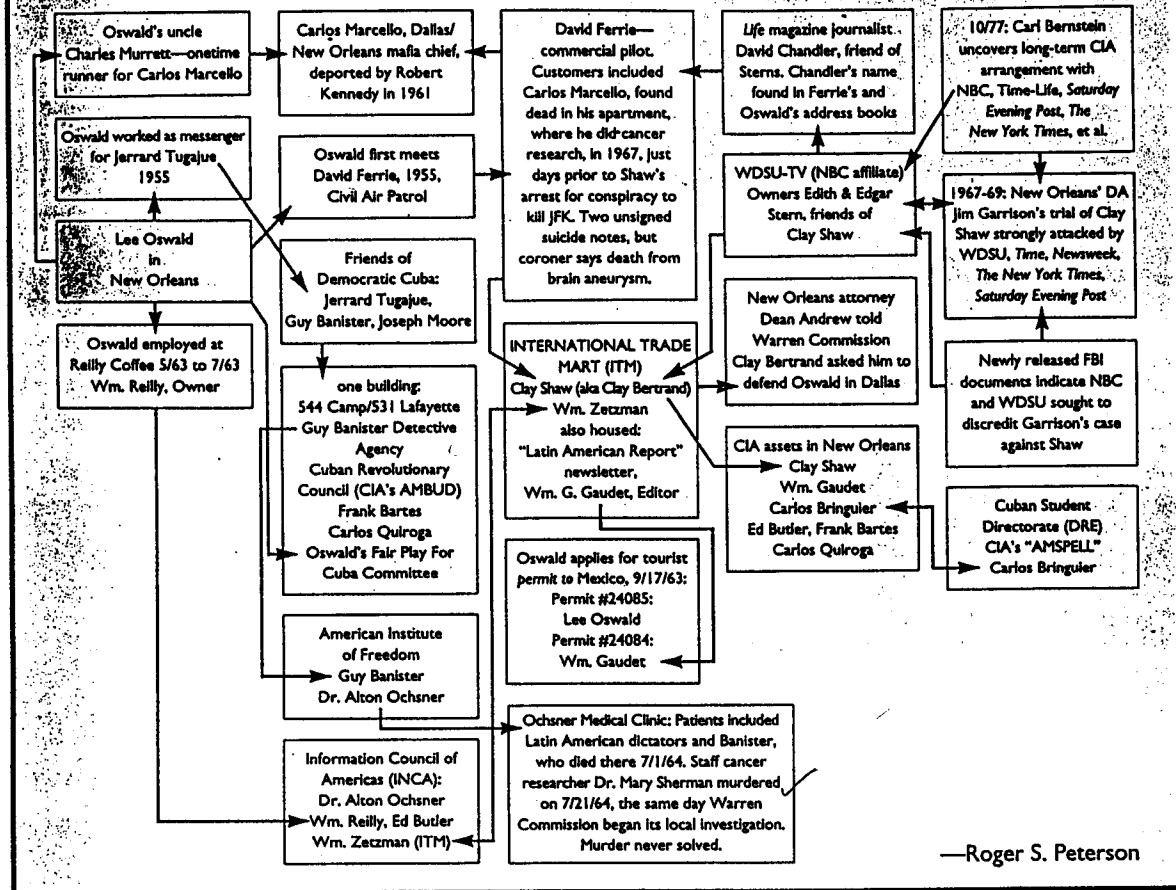
Medical personnel at both Parkland Hospital in Dallas and Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, who examined President Kennedy's body after the shooting, testified to massive destruction at the rear or occipital region of his skull, which extended forward to the parietal region. This kind of damage to the skull indicates an entry wound in the front of the president's head that could not have been inflicted by a gunman shooting from behind.

CIA's mail-opening project in a March 1961 briefing by the Agency's James Angleton. A March 10 memo explaining the "sensitive project" and the CIA's New York "laboratory" fueled FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's conflict with the CIA. At the bottom of the document, he scrawled "another inroad!"

Newman, who asserts that the CIA became operationally interested in Oswald in 1959, rummaged through countless boxes of Agency files. He discovered CIA routing slips indicating that the Oswald was the subject of active surveillance by eight separate departments. Newman suggests that Oswald—wittingly or unwittingly—eventually became operational within the CIA in some capacity.

Nearly thirty U.S. intelligence agencies, plus the State Department and the Post

A LONER'S LIAISONS—OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS



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continued from page 26

Newly released government files, plus the results of digging by researchers William Davy, Peter Veal, and Jim DiEugenio, indicate that Oswald was frequently seen with Shaw, Ferrie, and Banister. In 1995, Lou Ivon, an investigator for Garrison, told Davy that in February 1967 he had met with a frightened David Ferrie, who admitted doing contract work for the CIA and who knew Oswald and Shaw. Four days after he told Ivon that Shaw worked for the CIA and that he hated Kennedy, Ferrie was found dead. Two unsigned suicide notes were found next to the body, but the autopsy cited a ruptured brain aneurysm as the cause of death.

In 1994, DiEugenio interviewed a former Banister undercover worker, Dan Campbell, who stated that when Oswald walked into Banister's detective agency at

544 Camp Street in New Orleans during the summer of 1963, he was assigned an office.* The pro-Castro Fair Play For Cuba Committee literature distributed by Oswald also bore the same Camp Street address. For activists of such starkly different viewpoints to peacefully share its hallways, this small building on the corner of Camp and Lafayette Streets must have enjoyed high standards of tenant relations.

A document relating to Shaw was released by the CIA in 1992. Made public in "redacted"—blacked-out—form in the late 1970s, it contains an enumeration of Shaw's many dealings with the CIA's Domestic Contacts Service. Cited within the document is a 1967 CIA memo about an agency project called QKENCHANT and its requisite covert security requirements, stating "Shaw has #402897-A."

*The address of Banister's office has often been given as 531 Lafayette Street; a corner building, it had two entrances and thus two addresses.

Davy, noticing the present tense of the QKENCHANT/Shaw reference, showed it to former CIA officer Victor Marchetti in 1995. Marchetti guardedly admitted the document indicates active CIA involvement by Shaw at least until 1967, the year of his arrest. Marchetti suspected that Shaw was involved with the CIA's Clandestine Services Branch, where E. Howard Hunt—later of Watergate fame—worked at the time. Shortly after he interviewed Marchetti, Davy found a 1970 CIA document that specifically cites Hunt's involvement in QKENCHANT. Another CIA document, released in 1994, lists Shaw, his alias "Clay Bertrand," and his 1951 date of service. But at his trial, Shaw denied ever working for the CIA and ever using the Bertrand alias.

This new information shines a spotlight on the rationale Garrison used to bring conspiracy charges against Shaw in 1967. Shaw was acquitted after two years

of concerted media criticism of Garrison. A May 18, 1967 memo, for example, from the New Orleans' FBI office to Director Hoover stated that "A local FBI agent reported that Richard Townley, WDSU-TV, New Orleans, remarked to a special agent of the New Orleans office last evening that he had received instructions from NBC, New York, to prepare a one hour TV special on Jim Garrison with the instruction 'shoot him down'."

This apparent lack of media objectivity was partially explained by investigative journalist Carl Bernstein in an October 1977 article for *Rolling Stone* magazine. Bernstein discovered a long-standing cooperation between the CIA and many media organizations, involving resource sharing, secrecy agreements, and covert operations. Among the media involved, he said, were the three major television networks; *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines; *The New York Times*; and Associated Press and United Press International.

Less than ten years after Shaw's acquittal, the HSCA investigations found evidence linking Oswald, Shaw, Banister, and Ferrie. The committee concluded that JFK was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy. But the final 1979 HSCA report did not include a memo, released in 1992, by staff counsel Jonathon Blackmer, in which he declared: "We have reason to believe Shaw was heavily involved in the anti-Castro efforts in New Orleans in the 1960s and [was] possibly one of the high level planners or 'cut out' to the planners of the assassination."

Transcripts of a telephone conversation between Hoover and President Johnson on the day after the assassination outline the Director's suspicions that someone was impersonating Oswald in Mexico City. What's more, Hoover, who had both a tape recording and a photograph of the impersonator, told the president that they did not match the Oswald then jailed in Dallas.

CIA memos also describe two individuals. The Agency's Mexico City station cabled CIA headquarters on October 8, 1963 to the effect that someone named Lee Oswald, speaking poor Russian, had contacted the Soviet embassy there. The man photographed entering the embassy, according to the cable, was "35, athletic build, circa 6 feet, receding hairline, balding top," features that are not

descriptive of Oswald.

On October 10, CIA headquarters sent a memo to the State Department, the Navy, and the FBI regarding Oswald's contacts with the Soviets in Mexico City. In the communiqué, Oswald is described using the profile of the man provided by their Mexico City station, not of the Oswald who was well-known at CIA headquarters.

However, within two hours, the same CIA memo writer cabled the Agency's station in Mexico City that Oswald was 24 years old, 5'10" tall, weighed 165 pounds, and had light-brown, wavy hair and blue eyes. This cable used the name Lee Henry Oswald, the name the CIA cited when it first opened its 201 file on Oswald in 1960. It did not forthrightly tell the Mexico City station that the man they photographed was not the Oswald known at CIA headquarters.

Newman concludes that these two memos, written by the same person only hours apart, indicate a deliberate attempt by the CIA to mislead other agencies. The HSCA was also curious about the discrepancies, but could not resolve them. Regarding Oswald's Mexico City visit, Newman states: "Whether or not Oswald understood what was going on is less clear than the probability that something operational was happening in conjunction with his visit."

The second October 10, 1963 CIA memo also states: "Latest HDQS info was State Dept report dated May 1962 saying (redacted) had determined Oswald still US citizen and both he and his Soviet wife have exit permits and Dept State had given approval for their travel..." Still a U.S. citizen? Had not Oswald renounced his citizenship, threatened treason, sought Soviet citizenship, and married the daughter of a Soviet intelligence officer?

The reality is that Oswald had never lost his American citizenship. Although he had been in the Soviet Union for two weeks, Oswald waited until a Saturday to visit the U.S. embassy, which like most American embassies was closed on weekends and was staffed only by a duty officer. Only emergencies get weekend attention, with exceptions made at the duty officer's discretion. An American renouncing citizenship is not considered an emergency.

Oswald had slapped his passport on duty officer Richard Snyder's desk short-

ly after 11 A.M. on October 31, 1959. Snyder tried to discourage Oswald from taking that move and then informed him that the paperwork could not be completed that day. He suggested Oswald return in a few days.

It is important to note that renouncing one's U.S. citizenship is not merely a verbal act; it requires a Certificate of Loss of Nationality—a procedure established by the Expatriation Act of 1907—which must be approved by the State Department in Washington. Oswald never returned to activate that certificate. In 1993, Snyder told Newman that Oswald's loud verbal declarations seemed intended more for KGB listening devices planted in the embassy than for him.

Following the assassination, the CIA claimed that they did not know that Oswald had gone to the Cuban embassy in Mexico City. Yet, in a 1994 interview, former CIA director Richard Helms admitted to Newman that the Agency knew all along that Oswald had been there. A CIA memo released in 1992 and dated November 25, 1963—only days after Kennedy's and Oswald's deaths—twice notes that the agency had an "OI"—operational intelligence—interest in Oswald. Neither the Warren Commission nor the HSCA saw this memo.

According to Newman, there is no documentary evidence to suggest an agency-wide CIA plot to kill Kennedy. But he added that "we can finally say with some authority that the CIA was spawning a web of deception about Oswald weeks before the president's murder, a fact that may have directly contributed to the outcome in Dallas."

Oswald's activities remain unclear. Some suggest that he was involved in a covert operation that at the last moment dovetailed into the assassination, with evidence planted against him. One can only wonder—if Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy—why so many files are still classified. As ARRB chairman John Tunheim of Minnesota told COPA researchers in October, 1995: "The JFK Records Act has given the American public an extraordinary look inside their government. As we have told government agencies, secrecy has its ramifications." *

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