

her an unsealed envelope with "Hasty" written across the front (the same misspelling of the agent's name as in his letter to the Soviet embassy). She remembered he looked "awfully fidgety" and "had a wild look in his eye." When Hosty returned from lunch, she gave him the envelope and said, "Some nut left this for you."⁸⁰ According to Hosty, inside was an undated note that read, "If you have anything you want to learn about me, come talk to me directly. If you don't cease bothering my wife, I will take appropriate action and report this to the proper authorities."⁸¹ Hosty said it was unsigned and concluded it was either from Oswald or from one other person whose case he was investigating, whose wife he had recently spoken to. Only after the assassination, when he confronted Oswald in jail, and Oswald, upon hearing Hosty's name, became very excited and started yelling, was it confirmed that the note was from Lee.^{82*}

The note has taken on added importance because after the assassination, Hosty admits the note was destroyed at the direction of the Dallas special agent-in-charge, J. Gordon Shanklin.⁸³ According to Hosty, Shanklin first demanded to know why he had a note from Oswald. Hosty explained his contacts with Ruth Paine and Marina. Then two days later, after Oswald had been killed by Jack Ruby, Hosty was again called into Shanklin's office. There, his chief produced the note and, according to Hosty, said, "Oswald is dead now. There can be no trial. Here—get rid of this." Hosty then destroyed the note. Although Shanklin, in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he never knew

*However, special agent Kenneth C. Howe claimed he saw the note, and while he agrees with Hosty about the general contents, he said it was signed by Oswald. The receptionist, Fenner, later claimed that she was able to see the note because it slipped out of the unsealed envelope before she gave it to Hosty. According to her, it was a much more explicit threat, "Let this be a warning. I will blow up the FBI and the Dallas Police Department if you don't stop bothering my wife. [signed] Lee Harvey Oswald" (Senate Hearings on FBI Oversight, Serial 2, Pt. 3, Oct. 21, 1975). But Hosty says the way the note was folded, it would have been impossible for Fenner to see, and if it had made an explicit threat, he would have followed up on it that same day. Instead, it was so general that he tossed it into his mail tray and forgot about it until he saw Oswald at the jail.

about the note until 1975, Hosty is more credible. Sixteen other employees in the office knew the Oswald note existed.⁸⁴ Some, such as agent Kenneth Howe, said they had even shown it to Shanklin. When Hosty retired in 1979, the FBI returned more than \$1,000 of the salary that had been withheld from him in 1964, when he was suspended for not having spotted earlier that Oswald was a potential threat and transferred to Kansas City from Dallas.⁸⁵

The destruction of Oswald's note was against FBI regulations and is one of the Bureau's worst breaches of trust in the case. It allowed skeptics to question the FBI's overall role and relationship to him. To compound the problem, the FBI hid the existence of the note from the Warren Commission. Despite extensive testimony before the Commission, Hosty never mentioned it, claiming later that he had never been asked. The information only leaked out in 1975. But the note is not evidence of a conspiracy or cover-up. It is evidence, at least in this instance, of the FBI's negligence and impropriety. Bill Alexander, the assistant district attorney who drew up the murder indictments against Oswald and later prosecuted Jack Ruby, told the author, "I worked with those fellows at the FBI over many years. What they were doing with the Hosty situation is covering their asses. By Sunday, when Oswald was killed, Hoover was already convinced that Oswald was guilty. People like Shanklin were running for cover to make sure no one could point a finger and say, 'You failed to spot Oswald as a threat.' They were afraid the note would be seen as something they were derelict in following up on. And Oswald was dead, so they figured, 'What the hell, we don't need it anymore,' and they destroyed it. It was a pretty stupid thing to do."⁸⁶ In the same way that Hoover censured seventeen agents for the preassassination investigation of Oswald to insulate himself from any responsibility, Shanklin thought he could protect himself by disposing of the evidence of his office's contact with Oswald.*

*Oliver Stone, in his film *JFK*, implies the Oswald note may have been a warning to the FBI of the plot against the President. If this was just propagated by Hollywood, it could be dismissed as irrelevant. But it was also suggested by Jim Garrison, who wrote: "He [Oswald] may have even filed

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