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When Did Oswald order the Rifle?

by Raymond Gallagher

Shortly after the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle was found on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, agents of the FBI learned from retail outlets in Dallas that Crescent Firearms Inc. of New York City was the distributor of surplus 6.5 mm military rifles imported from Italy. During the evening of November 22, 1963, a review of the records of Crescent Firearms revealed that the firm had shipped an Italian carbine, serial number C 2766 to Klein's Sporting Goods of Chicago.

On July 23, 1964, an affidavit was executed and supplied to the Warren Commission verifying the sale of the weapon. In that affidavit, President Louis Feldsott of Crescent Firearms explains that, on November 22, 1963 the FBI contacted him and asked if his company had any records concerning the sale of an Italian-made 6.5 mm rifle with the serial number C 2766. Feldsott concluded the affidavit by informing the Commission that "further records involving the purchase, sale, and transportation of the weapon have been turned over to the FBI."

Also, Feldsott informed the Commission: "I was able to find a record of the sale of this rifle which indicated that the weapon had been sold to Klein's Sporting Goods Inc., Chicago, Illinois on June 18, 1962. I conveyed this information to the FBI during the evening of November 22, 1963." (WC Vol. 19 p. 205)

On June 18, 1962, the day that Crescent sold the 6.5 rifles to Klein's, Lee Harvey Oswald spent the day with Pauline Bates, a Fort Worth public stenographer. She was typing a manuscript from "scraps of paper" on which Lee had recorded his impressions of the Soviet Union. June 18, 1962 was only five days after the S.S. Maasdan landed at Hoboken, New Jersey with Oswald, his wife Marina and daughter June. That date was over five months before Klein's placed the order to Crescent for the shipment of rifles that eventually contained C 2766, the one found in the depository. On 11/22/63, William Waldman of Klein's told the Bureau that the 100 rifles that included C 2766 were ordered from Crescent on January 24, 1963 and received in Chicago on February 22, 1963. (Note the apparent discrepancy in Feldsott's and Waldman's sale and

order dates.) Lee ordered his rifle on March 12, 1963 and it was delivered to him, in Dallas, on March 25, 1963.

After all the testimony and evidence has been discussed and analyzed, there is really only one item of evidence that could conceivably be used to accuse Lee Oswald of killing President Kennedy, and that is the serial number on the rifle found in the depository. And even that charge could be challenged. Evidence from official records suggests that the sixth floor rifle was not the rifle delivered to Lee Oswald in March of 1963. And it is conceivable that the depository rifle was not the rifle that Oswald was seen holding in the famous "backyard" photos taken on Neely Street

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by Marina Oswald on March 31, 1963 despite the claims made by advocates of Oswald's guilt. The serial number on the rifle is the key to involving and framing Oswald in the crime. Knowing the serial number of the rifle he ordered from Klein's was all that was necessary to render him the accused assassin. Buying a second rifle and installing serial number C 2766 on its barrel is only one way of framing him.

Remember that Louis Feldsott of Crescent told the FBI that C 2766 was sold to Klein's on June 18, 1962, yet Waldman at Klein's did not order the rifles until January 24, 1963. To my knowledge, no one has explained this difference. But there is an even further discrepancy. Waldman testified that Klein's received Oswald's money order of \$21.45 on March 13, 1963 and it was deposited, along with other money orders and checks, into company accounts at the First National Bank of Chicago. Waldman testified to Commission attorney David Belin that the postmark date of the order leaving Dallas was March 12th. (WC Vol.

7 p. 366) Waldman further testified that the deposit was made on the 13th and it was part of a total deposit of \$13, 827.98. (Belin did not ask him to explain how, before the advent of computers, an order could be shipped 700 miles, received, processed and deposited in 24 hours.) But yet, the bank deposit slip, the extra copy provided by the bank at time of transfer, reads February 15, 1963, not March 13th. This is about one month before Oswald sent the coupon for the rifle by air mail to Chicago (see Waldman Exhibit No. 10, WC Vol. 21 p. 706.) Of course, if the February date is correct, then C 2766 could not be the correct serial number on the rifle in the so-called backyard photographs.

The rifle found on the sixth floor was not the model rifle that Oswald ordered in March of 1963 using a coupon from the February issue of *The American Rifleman* magazine (Warren Report p. 119). A copy of this ad did not appear in the Warren Commission. Instead, a copy of the November 1963 Klein's ad appears (Vol. 20 p. 174). But this ad, as pointed out by Sylvia Meagher, appeared in *Field and Stream* (Accessories After the Fact p. 48). Therefore, it has little or nothing to do with the Warren Commission's case against Oswald.

In the *Field and Stream* ad, Klein's offered a different rifle than was advertised in the February *American Rifleman*. Oswald was supposed to have ordered a version which is 36 inches long and weighed 5.5 lbs. Yet the rifle advertised in *American Rifleman* was 40 inches long and weighed 7 lbs. The Warren Commission's rifle was 40.2 inches long and, with sling and telescopic sight, weighed 8 lbs.

The FBI had contacted Harry Holmes, a post office official, on Friday night and asked him to trace a money order for \$21.95 that had been purchased on March 20, 1963. The FBI had been in contact with Klein's and had received the price and date from someone in Chicago. Since the information was not correct—Oswald's money order was for \$21.45 and he bought it on March 12th—Holmes sent his secretary to "purchase about half a dozen books on outdoor type magazines such as *Field and Stream*, with the thought that I might locate the gun to identify it..." (Vol. 7 p. 294).

When the secretary returned, Holmes found, on page 98 of the November issue of *Field and Stream*, a Klein's ad featuring a number of rifles. One of the weapons was the

Mannlicher-Carcano, priced, with a scope, at \$19.95. There was an additional charge of \$1.50 for shipping and handling. Holmes did some arithmetic and realized the true cost to be \$21.45 not \$21.95 as the FBI held. With this new information, Holmes began to search post office records for a \$21.45 money order. Holmes contacted Postal Inspector McGee of Chicago to recheck the information for accuracy. With this new information, the true money order was found providing the money order number and with it the time and date of purchase, the morning of March 12, 1963. The inspector then tore the ad from the *Field and Stream* magazine and circled the rifle in red and turned it over to the FBI and later, the Warren Commission. The Commission then displayed this (presumably) wrong ad in its evidentiary volumes. Oswald probably never saw this *Field and Stream* ad and its possible that he never saw the C 2766 numbered Mannlicher-Carcano.

To compound the doubts about this particular rifle, it was never established that the depository rifle was the weapon used to shoot at General Edwin Walker in April (attributed to Oswald by the Commission). Neither is there clear evidence that the rifle was taken to New Orleans. However, there is testimony that a rifle was returned to Dallas, at the end of September, in Ruth Paine's station wagon and placed on the floor of the Paine garage, where it may, or may not, have remained wrapped in a blanket until November 22, 1963. Marina Oswald testified that the rifle "was on board" when she left New Orleans with Ruth Paine. She also said that she had seen the rifle about three weeks before the assassination. But she also said that the rifle could have been taken at any time before the 22nd of November.

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AFFIDAVIT OF LOUIS FELDSOTT

The following affidavit was executed by Louis Feldsott on July 23, 1964.

PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION
ON THE ASSASSINATION OF
PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF NEW YORK

County of Rockland, ss:

I, Louis Feldsott, being duly sworn say:

1. I am the President of Crescent Firearms, Inc. 2 West 37th Street, New York 18, New York.

2. On November 22, 1963, the FBI contacted me and asked if Crescent Fire-arms, Inc., had any records concerning the sale of an Italian made 6.5 m/m rifle with the serial number C 2766.

3. I was able to find a record of the sale of this rifle which indicated that the weapon had been sold to Kleins' Sporting Goods, Inc., Chicago, Illinois on June 18, 1962. I conveyed this information to the FBI during the evening of November 22, 1963.

4. Further records involving the purchase, sale, and transportation of the weapon have been turned over to the FBI.

Signed the 23rd day of July 1964.

/s/ Louis Feldsott

LOUIS FELDSOTT

Deposited with
The First National Bank of Chicago
Upon the terms and conditions of the agreement printed on the back hereof and none other

EXTRA COPY

DATE 2 13 63

50 91144
KLEIN'S SPORTING GOODS, INC
4340 W MADISON ST
CHGO 24 ILL

	Checks on other Chicago Banks		Checks on Out of Town Banks		Checks on this Bank	
	104	67	9992	43	38	24
Total on this Bank					22	4
Total Out of Town Banks			9992	43		
Total other Chicago Banks	104	67				
CASH SEND BY REGISTERED MAIL					2	14
TOTAL DEPOSIT			13827	98		

Note the circled date. Also, the sum \$13,827.98 has been darkened to make the number clear.

The Rifle

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According to his wife Marina, Oswald had a rifle in New Orleans. In the late summer of 1963, she saw him "practice working the bolt" while sitting on the screened front porch of their Magazine Street apartment. But there is no reason to be assured that it was the rifle in question. It is possible that he bought another rifle from Klein's in New Orleans or could have

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been given one by the likes of David Ferrie. After moving to New Orleans, Oswald went to work for William Reily and his coffee company. Next door to the Reily Coffee Company was the Crescent City Garage. Here Oswald spent hours reading gun magazines and discussing guns with its manager Adrian Alba. After Oswald was arrested, coupons and ads cut from these magazines were found among his personal possessions. One of the coupons was from a Klein's Sporting Goods ad. The torn edges of the coupon matched the torn page in one of the Crescent garage's magazines. Apparently, he had obtained the ad with the intention of dealing with Klein's; it is even possible that he had already done so while working at Reily's. And in fact, there is some interesting testimony that appears in the Warren Commission relating to this point. A man named Eric Rogers testified before the Commission in July of 1964. He spoke to Wesley Liebel in New Orleans. (Liebel seems to

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have specialized in the New Orleans aspects of the investigation.) On page 461 of Volume 11, the following exchange takes place:

Liebel: Did you ever see Oswald sitting on the front porch?

Mr. Rogers: Oh, yes; with books, reading.

Liebel: Did he read a lot?

Mr. Rogers: Yes.

Liebel: Did you ever see any rifle or firearms of any type in his possession at that time?

Mr. Rogers: No; I never. We did see one time some—the mailman brought a big package in. I wouldn't say what it was, of course. I guess they checked that through the mail.

Liebel: When was that?

Mr. Rogers: It was in the summer, some time before he left, somewhere around that time.

What was in the package? Did Liebel ever find out? Did he try? Because of the serious evidentiary problems presented here in the tracing of rifle C 2766 can we really believe the Warren Commission when it tells us this is the rifle Oswald used to kill Kennedy? Because of this and other failed tests, the Warren Commission failed in its assignment and is responsible for much of the protestation, some of it commercial and bizarre, that has flooded the market since. ♦

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