

Hidell—Fidel

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By Henry J. Taylor



NEW ORLEANS, Dec. 30 — William Manchester's book, "The Death of a President," like most of the coverage of the Dallas horror, deals with a martyrdom. But what about the culprit?

Millions think of Lee Harvey Oswald as a crackpot. But Police Chief Joseph I. Giarrusso stated: "Anybody who calls Lee Oswald a crackpot simply does not know the truth. Sometimes I think the public has been brainwashed about him."

Born of a New Orleans mother and father, Oswald used an alias here. It was A. J. Hidell. "He said he chose it to rhyme with Fidel," Thomas A. Dranke, director of the Police Intelligence Division, told me. This was the same alias Oswald ultimately used to purchase the assassination weapon.

He sailed from New Orleans for Russia on Sept. 20, 1959, aboard the Marion Lykes. Oswald, five-feet-nine-inches, 136 pounds, brown-eyed, brown-haired, ruddy and slender (the official New Orleans Police Department description under its Bureau of Identification Docket No. 112-723) took off for the USSR only 11 days after being released from active duty in his Marine Corps Air Control Squadron.

He was soon to write his brother, Robert, from Moscow: "In the event of war I would kill any American who put a uniform on in defense of the American government — any American."

Oswald stated to Travel Consultants, Inc., a travel bureau here, that he was leaving the country on a two-month pleasure trip. He presented U.S. passport No. 1733242, dated Sept. 10, a forged smallpox vaccination certificate signed Dr. A. J. Hidell, P. O. Box 30061, New Orleans, La., and paid the firm \$220.75 for his ticket. It read to Le Havre, France, and New Orleans immigration officers counted only four passengers aboard.

Oswald disembarked at Le Havre Oct. 8, left for England that

same day and reached London Oct. 9. He claimed to Southampton customs officials that he was en route to the Albert Schweitzer College of Churwalden, Switzerland, and carried a valid registration receipt from the college for \$25. But, within hours, Oswald flew to Helsinki, Finland.

The Russian consulate there gave him a visa (No. 403339) and he crossed the frontier at Vainikkala. Oswald arrived in Moscow Oct. 16, and immediately declared his defection to the USSR. He attempted to renounce his U.S. citizenship to American Embassy Second Secretary Richard E. Snyder on Oct. 21.

When Oswald returned to New Orleans with his Russian wife (April 24, 1963, seven months before the Dallas assassination), Police Chief Giarrusso credits New Orleans surgeon Alton Ochsner with being the first man to uncover Oswald's pro-communist activities. Dr. Ochsner, founder and head of the Ochsner Medical Clinic, where I went to see him, is a world-traveled consultant to the Surgeon General of the U.S. Air Force on the medical side of subversive matters.

An important and widely ignored point about Oswald is that nothing in his Marine medical record, after his childhood, finds him mentally unstable or otherwise psychologically unfit.

Dr. Ochsner's first-hand impressions of Oswald's ideological pitch proved completely valid and led to a statement by Oswald to Police Lt. Francis L. Martello that "I refuse to speak English in my family because I do not want them to become Americanized."

This put Cuban exile expert Carlos Bringuier and Edward S. Butler, executive vice president of New Orleans' Information Council of the Americas, on Oswald's trail even before Oswald picketed the U.S. carrier Wasp (June 16) at the Dumaine-st wharf.

These are the two men who confronted Oswald in his Aug. 21 radio debate over station WDSU, less than 100 days before the assassination. I found them utterly mystified and deeply concerned over the widespread whitewash of Oswald as a "crackpot."