

MARIE
TIPPIT
AND
MARINA
OSWALD

THE
"FORGOTTEN"
WIDOWS
OF THE
KENNEDY
TRAGEDY

by Leon A. Harris

PORTRAITS OF MARIE TIPPIT (ABOVE) AND
MARINA OSWALD (OPPOSITE) BY CEGLIC



A memorable portrait of two women caught up in the greatest tragedy of our time. What are their lives like today? How have they faced despair, loneliness, grief and gossip? How are they bringing up their children?

Since the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy on November 22, 1963, the world has watched his widow, Jacqueline, with sympathy and increasing admiration. With courage and taste, she has remade her life and the lives of her little children, Caroline and John.

Two other widows and two other sets of fatherless children emerged from the same Dallas tragedy. Mrs. Marina Oswald has two daughters, June and Rachel. Mrs. Marie Tippit, wife of J.D. Tippit, the Dallas policeman allegedly shot by Lee Harvey Oswald, is the mother of Charles Allen, Brenda Kay and Curtis Glenn. Like Mrs. Kennedy and her children, they too have had to adjust to tragedy.

Having myself been brought up in Dallas by a widowed mother, I was more than usually

interested when GOOD HOUSEKEEPING asked me to interview the two famous Dallas widows.

Marie Tippit, who is now 37, lives in a pink brick-veneer cottage in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas. It is one of many similar development houses on Glencairn Street, almost on the southern edge of the Dallas city limits. There are no alleys in this section, so that the garbage cans are set out in front of the houses. The wood trim on the Tippit house and the two-car garage need painting. The Tippits moved here from a smaller house two years before Officer Tippit was killed instantly by four pistol bullets—allegedly fired by Lee Oswald, forty-five minutes after he had presumably shot President Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally.

In the front yard are two small Arizona ash trees, a large gardenia bush, and a hedge of wax-leaf ligustrum, all planted by Officer Tippit. When I visited Mrs. Tippit recently—for one of the only three interviews she has given since her husband was killed—they and the lawn needed trimming.

Marie Tippit, a gray-eyed, five-foot-five-and-one-half-inch brunette, weighing one hundred and twenty-six pounds, met me at the door. She seated me on a badly worn chair in the beige-stucco living room while she went to the kitchen to get the fresh cookies and coffee she had prepared for our morning interview.

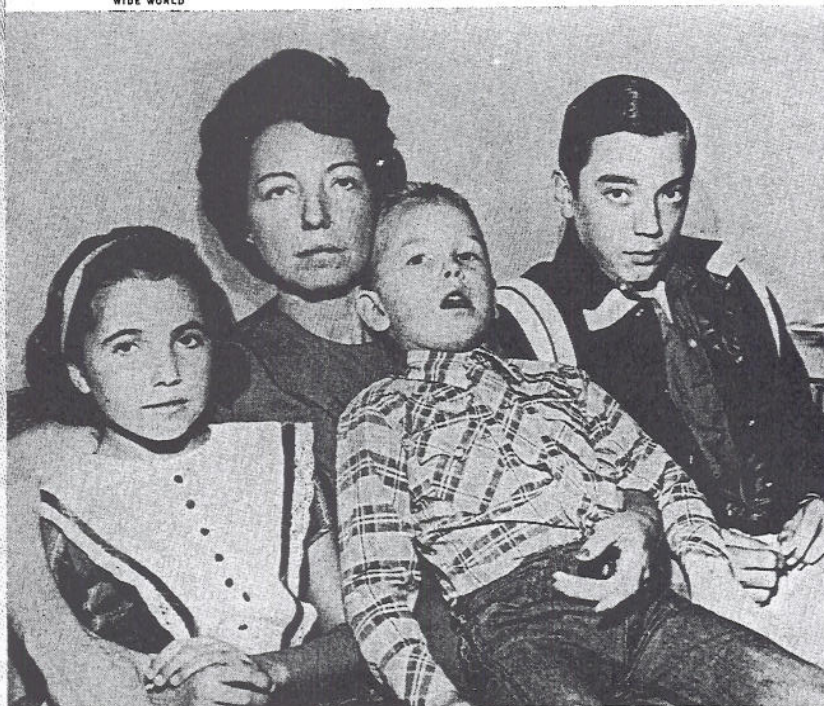
She was wearing a gray tweed skirt, a white, embroidered-eyelet, long-sleeved blouse, flat-heeled black shoes, no jewelry except for a steel wristwatch, and no makeup except pink lipstick. The couch on which she sat was also badly worn, and

above it was a lighted oil portrait of Officer Tippit, painted by a local artist, Beverly Hill, from a snapshot. There were also two framed snapshots of him, next to well-tended pots of ivy, on the two lamp tables. In a corner of the room was a large RCA color television set, topped by an arrangement of blue plastic flowers. The room was clean and bright although the beige shantung draperies were drawn.

Not a beautiful woman, Marie Tippit is pretty when she smiles, which she did often as she described her youth. Born on October 25, 1928, in Clarksville, Texas, a town of fewer than 4,000 on the Oklahoma border, she was the second of four children. Her father was a farmer, and Marie Tippit still has the easy accent and casual grammar of her background.

J.D. Tippit ("J.D." was his full given name, and does not stand for anything) was her sweetheart at Clarksville's Fulbright High School, and they both attended the Congregational Methodist Church. "I was saved when I was sixteen years old," Mrs. Tippit said matter-of-factly, as she refilled my coffee cup. Four years younger than J.D., Marie was graduated from high school, but J.D. became a paratrooper and saw active service in Germany during World War II. On his return they became engaged and were married the day after Christmas, 1946. At first they tried ranching, but, when their cattle died, they moved to Dallas.

The Tippits had three children. Charles (usually called by his middle name, Allen) was born on New Year's Day of 1950, Brenda on June 5, 1953, and Curtis on December 10, 1958. J.D. Tippit worked



"When you lose your husband," says Mrs. Tippit, "you lose part of yourself. . . . The kids must learn to earn their own way in the world and must grow up like J.D. was still here."

on the Dallas police force for the last eleven years of his life, moonlighting at Austin's Barbecue and the Stevens Park movie theater to supplement his \$490 monthly salary.

According to many of her friends, Marie was almost totally dependent on her husband, who made all of the family's decisions. "It's been made to appear I didn't have good sense enough to do the ironing if J.D. didn't tell me," said Marie Tippit, offering more cookies, still warm from the oven. "That's not true. I stayed where I think it's a mother's place to stay, at home, to take care of her family. I take pride in that. I worked three years, before I had my children, at Sears Roebuck. After that J.D. didn't want me to."

Mrs. Tippit also expressed resentment against the press. In her view, much that has been printed about her and her children is untrue and hurtful, a combination of invention and rumor, sometimes elicited from neighbors, sometimes made up.

"They say I didn't tell Curtis his daddy was dead, but that he had gone on a long journey and that he would be back and that I would have to tell the child before he went back to school and that someone else told him. Now that's completely untrue. For a child almost five years old, Curtis had an amazing understanding. I carried him to the funeral home—I explained to him and he went to the funeral and he really understood more than we usually give children credit for. I never had any problem of 'When will Daddy be back?' He just seemed to understand. That upset me that that was printed when it was so untrue. I'm not that stupid and I'm not dishonest with my children. And the story that J.D. limped. He never limped."

She is particularly bitter about stories written by reporters who have never seen her or her children. Marie Tippit has protected herself from reporters with the help of the Dallas Police Department. The police are officially forbidden to discuss her and her family, as they are forbidden to discuss how a prisoner of the importance of Lee Harvey Oswald could have been murdered in the basement of the Dallas jail. Mrs. Tippit's phone number is unlisted and does not even appear on the phone in her house.

After J.D. Tippit's death, a flood of letters and gifts from all over the world came, some addressed merely to "Mrs. Tippit, Dallas," or "The Policeman's Widow." Most of these were delivered by the post office to the Dallas Police Department, which for months after the assassination assigned nine officers to open the letters and packages and count

the money enclosed in many of them. Walter H. Annenberg, publisher of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, paid off the \$12,217.04 balance on the Tippit mortgage. Abraham Zapruder, the Dallas dress manufacturer who took the movies of President Kennedy as he was shot, gave \$25,000 of what he was paid by Time-Life to Mrs. Tippit. In all, there were over 50,000 letters and over \$650,000 in contributions to the Tippit family. The money was ruled to be tax free by the Internal Revenue Service, and over half of it Marie Tippit put in trust for her children in one of the largest

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Today, Marina Oswald looks years younger than she did on November 22, 1963. She seems a mixture of needing help and not wanting it.



MARIE TIPPIT AND MARINA OSWALD

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Dallas banks. Four well-known Dallas businessmen formed a committee to advise Mrs. Tippit, free of charge, on investing her fortune, and one of Dallas's most prominent law firms represents her, also at no fee.

Mrs. Tippit is particularly concerned that her sudden riches not spoil the children. "The kids must grow up just like they would of if J.D. were still here, and learn to earn their own way in the world like their daddy did. J.D. started them planning what to do with their allowances, and I've continued that. I believe children should be taught to save some of their money, to give some to God, and to buy things wisely. Then they ought to have some just to go buy a piece of bubble gum if they want it. But if they're given too much money and not made to spend it wisely, they never learn the value of money."

Asked what allowance the children got, Marie Tippit replied, "I'm not going to say what their allowances are because that would embarrass them. Allen's was just increased because he's older and has greater needs. I try to keep them about what other kids their age are getting. Their daddy worked real hard for those kids and he had a good sense of values and he wanted them to develop some."

Although her sudden fortune has saved Marie Tippit from having to live on the \$245-per-month pension she receives from the police department and she doesn't have the financial worries which usually face young widows with children, she believes the money has been a mixed blessing, for both herself and her children. It has made her the object of crank mail, criticizing her, soliciting donations, offering marriage, and chastising her for living on "blood money," which she ought to give to charity. She is not infrequently accused of being stingy. One of her former neighbors says, "My God, can you imagine that woman with three-quarters-of-a-million dollars and she still lives in that tiny house with all the reminders of her tragedy? Every time she takes them kids to or from town they gotta go by Laurel Land, where Officer Tippit is buried. Why, the stuffing's coming out of her furniture and she's too tight to buy new!"

Her friends defend her reluctance to move or to buy new furniture, with the argument that she was so dependent on her husband that she is now unable to make even minor decisions without him.

Such criticism makes Marie Tippit sit up even straighter on the sofa in question. "It's not because I don't have sense enough to make up my mind what I want to buy or what I want to do," she says. "It's just that it's so painful to be doing things alone that I ought to be doing with J.D. And I'm not going to do anything because other folks think it's right. I'm not going to be rushed. And I'd say to any widow not to do

anything in a hurry, not to do anything except what you think is right for you and your family.

"You have to make the decision as to what is right, and not what somebody else thinks is right for you—they're not standing in your shoes—they don't know how painful it is. They really don't. . . ." Mrs. Tippit's eyes reddened and she twisted her fingers. "What is best for my children is all that's going to influence me. They're all I've got—as long as they're alive, they're part of J.D. And I love them. And as much as he loved them, and hard as he worked for them and with his levelheaded thinking and real good decision-making.

"Sure, I relied on him. I think most good wives do and should rely on their husbands. Didn't Mrs. Connally [wife of Texas Governor John Connally, wounded by one of the bullets which struck President Kennedy] say she'd of been lost without him? People that love each other really have to rely on each other. And even though it's gotten back to me that somebody said I ought to be ashamed of my shabby divan, there's times that you can only face one shock at a time.

"I just don't understand why, and I don't think God intended for me to. But He certainly had a purpose for my life, and with His help I intend to live close enough to Him that whatever He wants me to do, that's what I'll do.

"I have spent some money since J.D. died. I bought the new color TV and a new car."

It was reported that Mrs. Tippit bought her 1964 Galaxie only because she felt that, when the old car drove up, her children expected their father to get out. "Now, that's just not true," Mrs. Tippit protested. "I gave up that Falcon because it stayed tore up most of the time. J.D. knew how to keep it up and I didn't. J.D. and I had lots of plans when he was killed. He was going to make the garage into a den. You know, people laugh when you talk about 'your better half' and God's saying, 'You become as one,' but it's true. When you lose your husband, you lose part of yourself. I know that maybe Allen and Curtis ought to have separate rooms and maybe Brenda ought to have a piano, but I'm going to take my time."

Changing the subject from the problems of decision-making and money, which she obviously found difficult to discuss, Marie Tippit took me into her dining room. There she pointed out a framed color lithograph of Jesus, given her by the employees of a plastics company where she had had Officer Tippit's police diploma and their wedding license laminated. The only other decoration in the room was a kind of mobile, thumbtacked to the Sheetrock

ceiling. Marie Tippit explained that it was a collection of a thousand white paper cranes, suspended on strings, sent to her by the senior class of a school in northern Japan. "They made them after school, and the meaning is that to send you a thousand paper cranes is to wish you a million years of happiness on earth and in heaven."

She is also particularly proud of a letter she received from Jacqueline Kennedy, but refused to discuss its contents. "It meant much to me and it was real personal. I wrote her, and I'd very much appreciate her not publishing what I wrote because it was strictly for her. You know, we don't do these sort of things for any sort of recognition and don't want anybody to say we did so-and-so. It has to be from the heart and private or it's not worth anything."

Mrs. Tippit then showed me a framed color photograph of the Kennedy family. Under the picture was inscribed:

For Mrs. J. D. Tippit—with my deepest sympathy—and the knowledge that you and I now share another bond—reminding our children all their lives what brave men their fathers were—

With all my wishes for your happiness

Jacqueline Kennedy

"I think for a woman in her position and at her moment of grief to take the time to do this is real wonderful," Marie Tippit said. Asked if she would permit the picture, showing the two Kennedy children and their parents on the porch of their house at Hyannis Port, to be reproduced, she said, "Oh, no. This is an unpublished picture, just for her friends and family. I wouldn't of showed it to you now, but a reporter from a New York paper saw it and though he promised me not to, he quoted what she'd written under the picture and quoted it wrong. I sent Mrs. Kennedy a picture of my family and I wouldn't want her letting it be reproduced."

When we returned to the living room, I asked why she wore no wedding ring. Marie Tippit said that her original wedding band had become so worn that she was afraid she would lose it. A week before he was killed, J.D. had taken her to a discount jeweler, selected a new ring for her, and put it in lay-away. "After he died the employees paid it out and sent it to me."

After her husband's murder, Mrs. Tippit had said, "There'll never be another man for me." Reminded of this, she said, "The future will have to take care of itself. We're very foolish when we say we'll never marry again or we will marry again. We'll just have to wait until the time comes and then make the decision." She says that she has no fear of being married for her money.

Marie Tippit is reluctant to talk about her social activities. "I don't have time for much. I do visit my friends and my folks, and I visit the church sometimes on Wednesday evening. I occasionally go to the show if it's good for the kids. I'm in charge of organization for the

Dentist: A person who bores people to extraction.

—Edith Ogutsch

PTA at Curtis's and Brenda's grade school." (She asked that the names of the children's schools and their bed-times not be mentioned lest they be embarrassed. Nothing, in fact, seems to worry Marie Tippit so much as the effect of publicity on her children.)

Twelve-year-old Brenda, who has brown hair and gray eyes like her mother, is in the seventh grade. "She keeps things to herself—when she cries, she cries alone. She was terribly hurt by an article saying she was too young to know what was going on when her daddy was killed." Brenda's room has pink walls, a pink bedspread, a furry stuffed pink kitten sent by an unknown sympathizer, and pink dotted-Swiss curtains made by her mother. (Mrs. Tippit also makes her sons' shirts.)

Seven-year-old Curtis is in the first grade, and his first report card says he's doing fine. His main interest is his bicycle. He lives in the same room as his older brother. It is decorated with a fine framed collection of Indian arrowheads, the gift of a cousin, and an eight-point set of deer horns, which serves as a cowboy hat rack. The circumstances of his father's death have not prevented Curtis from playing cops and robbers with other boys on the block. Right now he finds that more to his liking than considering whether he will use one of the scholarships to Texas A. & M. University offered to him and his brother.

Gray-eyed, brown-haired Allen, at sixteen, weighs 165 pounds and is five feet, eleven inches tall. "He favors his daddy and he walks like him. It's been particularly hard for him. He was especially close to J.D., who took a real interest in his problems and what he wanted."

Asked with whom Allen now discusses problems that he may not want to talk to his mother about, she said he was especially close to two police officers who were friends of J.D.

"I believe the kids should have jobs to do. Each one has to keep their own rooms clean. Brenda helps me in the kitchen and washes dishes. They take turns cleaning the bathroom. They haven't done a good job today, but I overslept, and I know the front yard is bad, but the mower is broke and Allen will have to catch up on it during the holidays next week." Asked whether, since the tragedy, she has been reluctant to discipline the children, Mrs. Tippit replied, "Not at all. I try to do the same as when J.D. was with us and I'm not afraid to punish the kids with a spanking, or by making them sit in a chair, or taking a privilege away or whatever is needed."

Mrs. Tippit is hurt by the cruelty shown her children by other children, which mainly takes the form of teasing them about their riches. I suggested that all children are cruel at times and inclined to tease one another, and asked whether some of her children's sensitivity on this subject might not really be a reflection of Mrs. Tippit's own.

"My kids, especially Brenda, feel more

deeply about teasing than most children and are easier to hurt. When my kids are reminded of this murder, it's not like other kids. It's not just something they saw on television—it's something where their heart's concerned. It's the reason that they have the money that hurts them. That's why I hate publicity for them or for me. I've had people to recognize me and to walk around me and look at me like I was a freak of some sort and that really hurts, or say, 'Well, feature meeting a celebrity.'"

Marie Tippit's calm, low voice becomes a bit higher, and her slow Texas drawl quickens, when she speaks of the crank mail she receives because of her rise to celebrity. Much of it is envious; some, frankly obscene. "A Methodist preacher friend of mine, when I showed him one of these hate letters, told me, 'Now when you get a letter like this, go into your bedroom and pray for them, because they need help.'"

Mrs. Tippit speaks as naturally about her relationship to God as about wearing a size twelve dress or size seven and one-half shoes or watching *The Dean Martin Show* or *The Beverly Hillbillies* with the children on television. Every Sunday she and the children go to the Beckley Hills Baptist Church, where the children also attend Sunday school. "For a while, I was confused. I could understand how people felt who thought they couldn't face life. Then just a few days before Christmas, about a month after J.D. was killed, I was vacuuming the floor at two in the morning because I couldn't sleep, and God spoke to me the words in John, 'In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' Then I had real peace of mind for the first time and could rest."

In Dallas, Mrs. Tippit has been criticized for not sharing her fortune with the policemen's and firemen's fund. When I asked her about this, Mrs. Tippit said, "I give ten percent of my income to my church. I don't believe I should say what individual help I give people, but I'll say I also give ten percent of my time to the Lord, visiting for the church, and I try to be a Christian friend. I guess I know as well as anyone how, when we're in trouble, we need a Christian friend."

"And if I have any advice worth anything for other widows, it is to depend on God and don't overdo. Everyone tells you to 'keep busy.' Well, we all have sense enough to know we ought to keep busy. But you have to remember not to overdo—not to get exhausted, because when you're exhausted you can't handle your emotional problems. Well—

Resort hotels are often surrounded by tropical plants—mostly outstretched palms.

—Anna Herbert

meaning friends find more jobs for you than you can do, but you mustn't get overtired. It's important to know when to say, 'No.'"

I asked whether she had been able to forgive Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged murderer of her husband, and what her feelings were about Marina Oswald and her children and the shadow which will be forever over them. "I don't think about them," Mrs. Tippit said. "If I hated Oswald, it wouldn't bring my J.D. back. The thing I have to live with every day is that I don't have him. I just don't get past the fact that J.D. was doing his job when he was killed and that we have to live without him."

A few days after my interview with Mrs. Tippit, I invited Marina Oswald (now Mrs. Kenneth Jess Porter), her husband and some of their friends to dinner.

Sitting next to twenty-four-year-old Marina, at Dallas's chic Beefeater Restaurant, it was difficult to believe she was the same woman as that lost, waif-like creature seen on television and in the newspapers in the days following the assassination. Then, with her long uncoiffed hair pulled back straight, clutching her month-old baby, and led about by FBI and police officers, she looked frightened, bewildered and harassed, with the ageless expression of the miserable.

Now, two years later, she looked years younger. Dressed in a handsome, green silk brocade sheath with a matching full-length coat (ordered made to measure from Hong Kong for \$105), she seemed poised, pleasant, and very much at home. She ordered dinner with authority: escargots, rare prime roast beef, wild rice, fresh asparagus hollandaise, and a Green Goddess salad of Bibb lettuce with a fresh tarragon-and-sour-cream dressing. This woman, whose first husband had forbidden her to learn English, still spoke with a strong Russian accent and with more than a remnant of Slavic syntax, but her vocabulary and assurance reflected the eight-week intensive course in English she took at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the spring of 1965.

In the weeks following Lee Harvey Oswald's murder by Jack Ruby, Marina's metamorphosis began. It is perhaps not surprising that a young woman whose husband had forbidden her to wear makeup or to smoke should, in her friends' opinion, have gone a bit overboard at first.

The changes began almost immediately, in the home of Mrs. James H. Martin, the wife of the assistant manager of the motel where Marina Oswald was first kept hidden by the Secret Service and the FBI. When Marina moved into the Martins' home, her light-chestnut hair was cut for the first time by her sister-in-law, Vada Oswald, the wife of Robert Oswald, a Denton, Texas, brick salesman. Marina saved what she called her *koca* (the Russian word for braid) and uses it as a switch, dyeing it to match her changes of hair

color. Her first permanent was given her at home by Mrs. Martin, who says it took from eight in the evening to eleven because Marina was so excited and so curious about each step in the process.

In the following weeks, trips to beauty salons and stores led to new experiments with lipstick, nail polish, and especially with generous amounts of eye makeup, to accent the blue of Marina's blue-gray eyes. Her favorite perfumes, she discovered, were Avon's Topaze and Guerlain's Shalimar. Gifts of money, which were to total over sixty thousand dollars, were coming in from people all over the world who sympathized with the pathetic young widow, and Marina spent money for whatever she wanted without thought for tomorrow.

According to Mrs. Martin, Marina slept until eleven-thirty or twelve o'clock every morning. She breakfasted on bologna sandwiches and Campbell's

chicken-vegetable soup and then liked to go shopping.

Marina, according to Mrs. Martin, always knew exactly what she wanted and did not hesitate to buy whatever she saw that pleased her. At Tom Thumb's Grocery she leaned toward Russian foods, particularly caviar and smoked herring. Whatever clothing she saw in junior size five or seven, or shoes in size six, that appealed to her, she immediately bought for cash. She bought no clothing for the girls, since gift boxes of children's clothes both new and used came in daily.

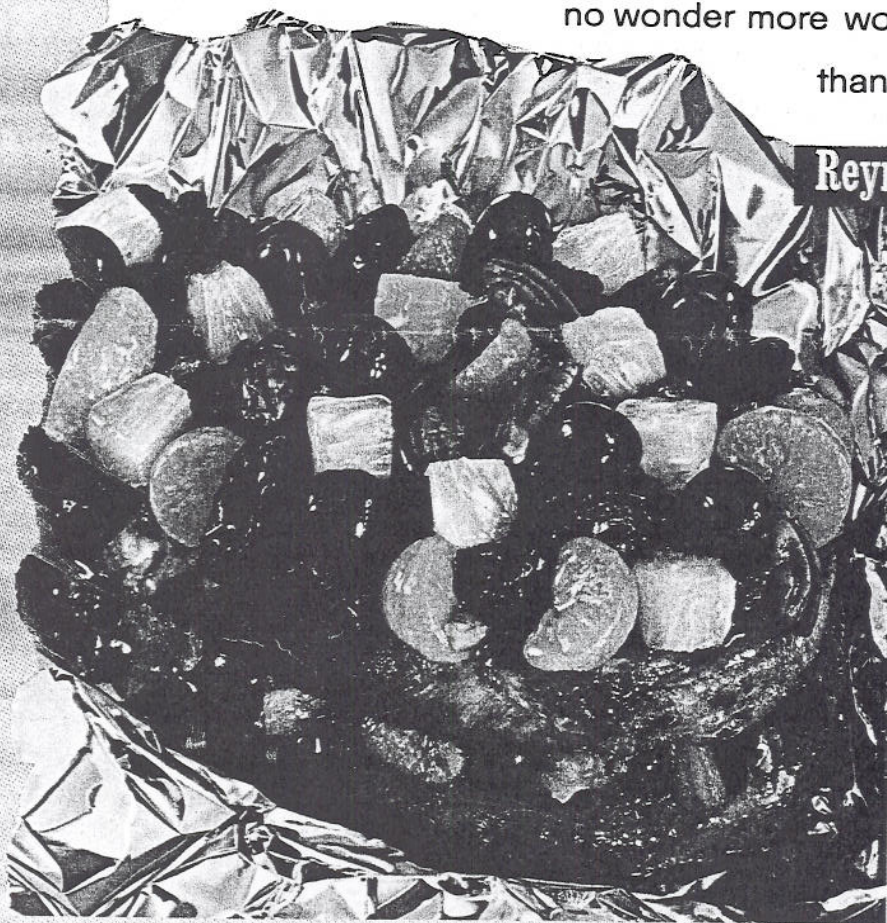
At dinner at the restaurant, her increasing confidence showed in the fact that she wore less makeup, no nail polish, no eye shadow, not even lipstick on her dark thin lips. Her tinted hair was a bit more red than usual and elaborately done. She wore no jewelry except for a white-and-yellow-gold wedding ring given her by Kenneth Porter, who wore its exact mate. "Isn't

it beautiful?" she asked me, showing me the ring. "Kenneth picked it. He has such good taste and he is so wonderful with the children. I have troubles sometimes during day with them to make them go outside to play. But when Kenneth comes home, they follow him out in yard like little dogs."

Kenneth Jess Porter was born twenty-seven years ago in the small west Texas town of Lamesa, the youngest of five brothers and four sisters. Slim, dark, bushy-browed, barely under six feet tall, he is usually silent and shy. But when he speaks of his visits to Rio de Janeiro, to Lima, and to Tokyo on the aircraft carrier *Wasp* during his four-year Navy enlistment, a smile wipes away his slightly sullen look and he is handsome.

When he describes, with obvious pleasure and pride, his job as a seven-day-a-week foreman in the division of Texas Instruments which polishes silicone wafers (used in making transistors

ham, ma'am?...cuddle it in Reynolds Wrap to bake in flavor. why, specifically, Reynolds Wrap? because Reynolds Wrap is **oven-tempered for flexible strength.** oven-tempered for a special resistance to tearing, a special kind of strength that stands up to high heat. re-usable, too. no wonder more women buy **Reynolds Wrap** than all other foils combined.



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HOLIDAY HAM SLICES TUTTI FRUTTI

2 inch-thick ham steaks	1 cup pineapple chunks
¼ cup pecan halves	1 cup mixed chopped fruit (light raisins, maraschino cherries, cooked prunes)
1 cup brown sugar	
1 cup drained crushed pineapple	
½ cup maraschino cherries	
Mandarin orange sections	
Heavy Duty Reynolds Wrap	

Combine crushed pineapple with mixed chopped fruits and half the brown sugar. Spread half this mixture over one ham steak and top with the other, sandwich-fashion.

Place ham steaks on large sheet of Heavy Duty Reynolds Wrap. Wrap loosely and place on shallow pan. Bake in 400° oven for 45 minutes.

Remove from oven and roll back foil. Spoon out fat. Top with remaining fruit mixture, pineapple chunks, pecans, orange sections, cherries, remaining brown sugar. Return to oven 20 minutes to glaze, basting occasionally with liquid in foil.

and other electronic parts), his low voice with its Lyndon Johnson drawl takes on a pleasing animation. Married briefly (twice) before, Porter visits his son by his second wife, Wanda, on Wednesday nights. On Thursday nights he bowls. Fishing and drag racing are his two other forms of recreation.

Since the assassination Marina has had three different houses. First, she rented a three-bedroom cottage at 629 Belt Line Road in suburban Richardson, just north of Dallas, then bought a slightly larger house in Richardson with a fenced-in backyard for the children at 1245 Donna Street. Her third house, at 6448 Dunston Lane in northeast Dallas, she bought from Russian-born Katya Ford, her closest friend since the assassination. According to Katya, who has recently left Dallas for Bethesda, Maryland, Marina bought the third house for its large backyard. She thought the country atmosphere would please Kenneth.

Katya too points out that Marina is quick to take whatever pleases her, be it a dress, a house or a husband. Whatever she sees and likes, she wants right away.

In many areas, however, Marina is not so sure of herself. She weighs just under one hundred pounds and is only slightly over five feet tall. She is very insecure about her figure, and refuses to wear shorts because she thinks she is too skinny. Her favorite attire at home consists of slacks and a blouse.

She is also afraid to learn to drive, although Kenneth is anxious to teach her. "I have too often nightmares that I am driving, driving, and cannot stop car. No, I don't want to drive. Kenneth, cigarette please." Her husband took a Belair from a beige leather cigarette case, put it in his mouth, lit it, and handed it to Marina. (Marina was rarely without a cigarette all evening, even while she was eating, and each one was lit for her in this manner by Kenneth.)

It was at the house of her Richardson neighbor, Bill Clark, at 1249 Donna Street, that Marina first met Porter, when he stopped by, on horseback, during a ride. He cut a dashing figure (since marrying Marina, he has sold his gray horse), and only three weeks later they were married. Trying to escape reporters, drag-racer Porter drove north as far as Durant, Oklahoma, where they took their blood tests, then back to Sherman, Texas, where they got a wedding license, always hotly followed by newsmen.

They finally lost their pursuers and were married in a ten-minute, double-ring ceremony at 6:45 p.m. on June 1, 1965, in Fate, Texas, a village in Rockwall County famous locally for quick, easy marriages. The rites were performed by Justice of the Peace Carl Leonard, Jr., who was out in back of his house plowing when they arrived, and married them in his work clothes.

Marina's progress from the bewildered widow of Oswald to the bride of Porter was hectic, and constantly attended by publicity. "We don't want more publicity," she said to me be-

fore dinner, sipping Kahlúa, a coffee liqueur which is her favorite drink both before and after dinner. Publicity for her nevertheless seems unavoidable. Indeed, she has had so much of it that she has been accused of practicing, consciously or unconsciously, what might be called the "Garbo gambit"—that is, while constantly protesting that she wants no publicity, of so conducting herself as to make publicity unavoidable.

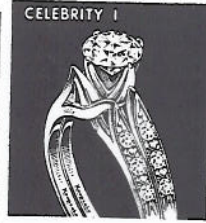
Much publicity has been and continues to be a result of her efforts to earn money. When her book, written for her by Priscilla Johnson, is published by Harper and Row, there will inevitably be more. Last year she sold title to the rifle which allegedly killed President Kennedy and the pistol which allegedly killed Officer J. D. Tippit to Denver oilman John J. King for \$45,000. (Of this sum she has received \$10,000, but it is unlikely that the weapons will be allowed to leave government hands, where they have been ever since the assassination.) At the time, there was international publicity and considerable criticism of her action. Marina resents these barbs, pointing out with pride that she refused a substantial offer from a sideshow operator whose two-headed calf had died and who wanted to exhibit Lee Harvey Oswald's body—and wanted her to travel with it. *incredible!*

More publicity came when, less than three months after her marriage to Porter, she called first the FBI and then the police after a (mis)understanding with her new husband. On August 18, 1965, Marina filed a complaint against Kenneth Porter in the court of Justice of the Peace W. E. Richburg, who issued a warrant for Porter's arrest. Marina alleged that Porter had struck her and threatened her with a pistol and that she was afraid that he might kill her or himself. Porter alleged that he had come home and found Marina's children alone, and that when he later criticized his wife she had become hysterical. He had taken the pistol, he said, only because he was afraid (she) might harm herself with it. Marina sought to have Porter required to file a peace bond—that is, put up money or property, to be forfeited if he should injure or threaten to injure her person or property.

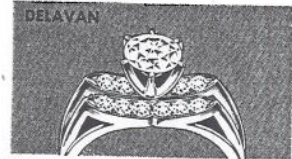
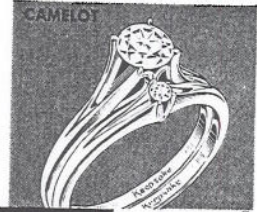
Porter was represented by Charles W. Tessmer, a Dallas criminal lawyer, who says of the affair, "I didn't serve as a lawyer, but as a marriage counselor. I got Kenneth and Marina together in Judge Richburg's chambers, and we told them to stop squabbling and bringing a bad name to Dallas and to go to work to make their marriage work." Marina dismissed her charges and the two have been living together ever since.

According to James Martin's testimony before the Warren Commission, Marina thinks "the American people are crazy for sending me money," and she expressed the same opinion to one of her Dallas hostesses. Despite such frankness and her difficulty in hiding her feelings, Marina Porter continues to

Their next fight will find her dead - accidentally! 163!



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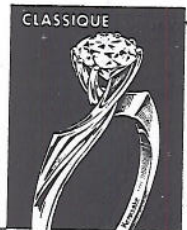
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have friends in Dallas. Some say they are attracted by her childlike need for attention and affection and her complex about people's not liking her.

She has refused proffered ballet lessons for her daughter June, for example, because she is afraid that June's presence (might be resented). She finds it almost impossible to say "No" to cosmetic salesmen who call at her house, often buying creams for which she has no use. Later she gives the creams to her neighbors. She prefers buying at little shops where she is known and told that things are bought especially with her in mind, rather than at big Dallas stores, where she might not get such comforting reassurance.

That Marina Oswald should be far more insecure than her seeming composure in public indicates is not surprising, given her background. Born on July 17, 1941, in Severo-Divinsk, Russia, Marina Nikolaevna Prusakova had, by her own account, a very unhappy childhood, especially after she found out that her stepfather was not her real father. At sixteen, she ran away from home, and many of her friends feel that her marriage to Lee Harvey Oswald was only her way of running away from Russia. After her arrival in America on June 13, 1962, at New York, she very soon experienced poverty, brutality, and an intimate association with tragedy. Inasmuch as she suddenly found herself the widow of the most infamous alleged murderer of the century, and she was Russian and unable to speak English in a country not overwhelming in its affection for Russians, it is remarkable that Marina is not beset by more emotional problems than she is. *what?*

Although she has not had money worries during her years of widowhood, she has had other difficulties.

As one of her numerous lawyers points out, "Everyone who got in touch with Marina started with the idea of helping a (waif) of doing a good deed. They were all sincere when they started. But then they saw that money was to be made, and the charitable impulse turned into something a little more mercenary. And after Marina had been burned a few times, she began to doubt people." Anyone who looks at Marina's face, so like Russian ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev's that they might be twins, and into the deep-set blue eyes over the prominent cheekbones, is aware of the suspicion and the hurt that are her constant companions.

One of the judges before whom she appeared says, "She's in love with the picture of George Washington," an east Texas euphemism meaning that Marina is greedy for dollar bills. If this is true, it is also true that on occasion she can be extraordinarily and spontaneously generous. When a neighbor spoke of a friend whose husband had "run off," Marina immediately gave her \$100 for the woman, whom she had never met. When she heard that ballerina Natasha Krassovska could not afford to buy the curtains she wanted for her new studio, Marina gave her friend Katya Ford the money to buy them for her.

Like Marie Tippit, Marina has been the object of much criticism. She has been criticized by some for not disappearing—going to a new town, taking a new name, and starting a new life. Even assuming that this were possible, her refusal to do so may possibly constitute an act of courage, and perhaps the first attempt to stop running away from problems. Sooner or later her children will have to face the fact that their father was an alleged assassin. Marina may well feel it is better for them to grow up facing this fact than to be shocked by it later, as she was shocked concerning her father. Certainly it would increase criticism of America in Europe if Oswald's widow were to disappear from view. *you bet it would!*

To criticize Marina Oswald Porter, now or ever, for not living a totally normal or typically American life is, of course, unjust. Not only will she and her family often be subject to interview and analysis by the world press, but most probably she will always be under surveillance by some government agency.

Somehow, within this glass house in which she is condemned always to live, Marina, her children and her husband will have to find some kind of accommodation.

Although Marina has had both of her children baptized at Dallas's St. Seraphim Eastern Orthodox Church, Father Dimitri Royster says she never attends herself. She said to the Warren Commission, "I believe in God, of course, but I do not go to church. . . ."

Most of Marina's friends, including both those who no longer choose to see her and those whom she herself has dropped, tend, even in criticizing her, to excuse her. For example, Ruth Paine, with whom Marina had been living for two months at the time of the assassination, tries to explain Marina's unfavorable comments on her before the Warren Commission and Marina's virtual rejection of her company since the assassination by saying, "Marina is a mixture of needing help and not wanting it. This often goes with resenting not so much the person giving the help, but resenting needing it."

The most commonly heard criticism of Marina is that she should have reported Lee Harvey Oswald's first alleged attempt at assassination (of Maj. Gen. Edwin Walker) to the authorities. Marina's position before the Warren Commission was that as a loyal wife she could not. "Why I did not tell about it [the Walker incident]? First because it was my husband. . . ." In regard to the murder of Officer Tippit, she said to the Commission, "After all, I couldn't accuse him [Oswald]—after all, he was my husband."

That Marina's commitment to unwavering wifely loyalty is now somewhat less firm was shown by her call to the police about her second husband. As some had criticized Marina for not reporting her husband, now others criticized her for reporting her second. For example, one member of the Russian community in Dallas says, "You know,

everybody has fight, but you don't call police. Dot's not nice—no, dot's not nice, so I didn't call her any more."

Perhaps her change of attitude merely indicates the increasing Americanization of Marina, from a long-suffering European wife who accepted abuse and beatings from her husband as part of her normal lot, to the more independent American species, for some of whose members the divorce court is only somewhat less accessible than the corner drugstore.

Even as they criticize her, Marina's friends hasten to list her good qualities: She is warmhearted and generous; responsible about returning what she borrows; and, considering her insecurity and lack of self-confidence, extraordinarily courageous in her efforts to face the world, improve herself, and make a new life for herself and her children.

When, some days after our dinner at the Beefeater, Kenneth Porter invited me to dinner at the Porters' home the following Monday, I did not realize, nor, I believe, did he, that the date would be November 22. Only when I saw the newspaper that Monday morning, containing an interview with Marina, did it strike me that it was the second anniversary of the tragedy.

When I arrived at the Porters', Marina met me at the door. Then, leaving me in the living room with Kenneth and the two children, who were dressed in identical red corduroy jumpers and white blouses, she went back to the kitchen. Both the little girls call Kenneth "Daddy." Chatting to each other in distinctly Texan accents, they were happily but unsuccessfully engaged in a hunt for a lost sock of Rachel's. When Marina returned from the kitchen with liqueur glasses of Cointreau for Kenneth and me, she told them to go to their room to watch television, and they immediately obeyed, without argument.

While Marina went back to preparing dinner, Kenneth showed me their large (I estimated it covers an acre) rolling backyard, which terraces down to a creek in which there is water all year, a rare circumstance in Texas. There are big bois d'arc and willow trees and half a dozen fruit trees, whose crop had been ruined by a spring hailstorm. Kenneth pointed out an aluminum shed he had built to house the riding mower he bought after having cut the lawn once with a push mower.

We had dinner in the kitchen at a Danish teakwood table of which Marina is very proud. The dinner was good—onion soup with sour cream; stew meat well-seasoned with garlic, carrots and spices; okra and tomatoes; mashed potatoes; already sweetened iced tea; and a seemingly endless series of loaves of fresh, hot, brown-and-serve bread. Desert was cherry gelatin with mandarin oranges, and was served straight from the refrigerator in metal dessert cups, well frosted.

Marina was a worried hostess, constantly asking whether the soup was too salty, the meat seasoned enough, the po-

tatoes too cold; apologizing that the meal was "not as fancy as at Beefeater," terribly anxious to please and to prove herself a good hostess. No amount of reassurance from Kenneth or me could end her concern, which was in such contrast to her composure at the restaurant.

At dinner we spoke of bass fishing, and of the various changes in furniture and decoration Marina had made since buying the house from Katya Ford. "When Linda (Katya's daughter) was here, she said 'Momma, I like the house so much better than when we lived here,'" Marina said with no little pride.

While Marina was clearing the table, I asked Kenneth whether I might question Marina after dinner, but he said she was not up to it. Since their reconciliation, Kenneth has been in charge. Marina cannot accept an invitation without his approval nor go out without his permission.

Sitting on the new, modern, olive-green couch in the living room with Kenneth, I admired the taste with which Marina had redecorated this comfortable \$25,000 house, from the Dalmatian-spotted throw pillows in the living room to the Spanish bedspread on their king-size bed. After serving coffee, she went through her large record collection, which also reflects her catholic taste, playing Allan Sherman's *Peter and the Commissar*; an album of Hank Williams', which is the only music Kenneth says he particularly cares for; and an Yves Montand album.

Her conversation ranged from her preference for Chekhov's short stories over his plays, to the many uses in Russia of peat moss (*torf* in Russian). She said she preferred *Harper's Bazaar* to *Vogue* and that she considered *Playboy* an excellent magazine for women as well as men, and that "a beautiful body is beautiful, not bad." She interrupted herself to point out favorite parts of records—Sherman's *Brahm's Lullaby Rock-and-Roll*, Hank Williams's *Your Cheat-in' Heart* and Montand's *Mathilda*.

Marina was dressed in a plain beige shirt and black stretch pants. Kenneth was in a short-sleeved shirt and slacks. The atmosphere was completely informal and relaxed, as opposed to the evening at the restaurant. Marina announced that she was trying to cut down her smoking from two packs of cigarettes a day, and did indeed smoke fewer than on the earlier evening. She expressed a need for more books to fill the two bookshelves flanking the couch, one of which holds only Russian classics (except for a paperback edition of Dr. Spock).

When I rose to leave at eleven I was taken to the garage to see the bronze-colored Chevrolet with a black landau top and wire wheels which they had just bought that day. Marina put a basket of clothes in the electric washer next to the car and suggested I tell my wife the name of the detergent which she had found to be best for her washer. As I drove away, the Porters stood together in the chilly November night air, she holding his arm.

Poor little girl

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