

Witnesses Say Oswald at Rifle Range

Special to The New York Times.

DALLAS, Dec. 9—Half a dozen persons recall seeing Lee H. Oswald practice marksmanship at a suburban rifle range before President Kennedy was assassinated, the operator of the range said today.

Floyd Davis, who opened the range in Grand Prairie six weeks ago, said he himself had not seen the accused assassin.

"But four people have told me personally that they saw him," he said "and two others told a friend of mine that they saw him."

They recalled the 24-year-old man's firing on the range on at least two occasions within three weeks of the President's visit to Dallas on Nov. 22.

Two of the customers, Malcolm Howard Price and Garland G. Slack, have said publicly they are sure they saw Oswald at Mr. Davis's sportsdrome gun range. "I'd know that face anywhere," said Mr. Slack. The names of the other witnesses have not been disclosed.

A significant point, according to observers here, is that most of the customers mentioned Oswald to Mr. Davis shortly after the assassination, that is before speculation started as to where, if anywhere, Oswald had practiced with a rifle.

Mr. Davis said Mr. Slack came to the rifle range on Nov. 24, the day Oswald was slain in the Dallas police station, and told the range operator that he remembered Oswald.

The operator said Mr. Slack and the other customers did not notify the Federal Bureau of Investigation until it became known that investigators were looking for sites where Oswald might have practiced.

Mr. Price said today that he, too, had recognized Oswald as a frequenter of the rifle range when, on Nov. 24, he witnessed the young man's death on his television set.

Looking Through Sight

Mr. Price recalled that Oswald visited the range first in early November, around the weekend of Nov. 9-10.

The 34-year-old machinist said he had looked through Oswald's telescopic sight and had been impressed with its clarity.

Mr. Price declined to answer further questions because, he said, the F.B.I. had asked him not to talk. The F.B.I. here denied this.

Mr. Slack said he saw Oswald at the range on Nov. 17, the Sunday before the assassination. He remembered the young man as an excellent marksman, but an irritating person.

Mr. Davis said the man believed to be Oswald angered other customers on Nov. 17 by his crossfire.

Oswald was believed to have occupied booth No. 8, a wooden frame cubicle with a counter and sandbag to support a shooter's arm. He was firing at target No. 8, 100 yards away across a grassy plain.

Shooters on both sides of Oswald, in booths 7 and 9, complained that someone was firing at their targets.

"I was running a turkey shoot nearby," Mr. Davis said, "and I didn't have time to come over and find out who was cross-firing; I just yelled over for them to stop."

"Mr. Slack was in booth No. 9 that day," he continued. "I remember that Mr. Slack was

complaining that someone was shooting into his target—and they were hitting the bullseye every time."

Mr. Davis said the customer in No. 7, who had not returned to the range, was a bearded man, well over 6 feet tall, weighed about 250 pounds, wore a red polo shirt and carried three rifles and an expensive scope for zeroing-in his weapons.

"I bet if he could be found he'd remember Oswald, too," Mr. Davis said, "because Oswald, or whoever it was, was shooting into his target, too."

The customers recalled that on the first visit the man resembling Oswald came alone in a battered automobile. On the second visit, they said, he came with another man.

Mrs. Michael R. Paine of Irving, in whose home Oswald's Russian-born wife lived for a time this fall, has said that Oswald apparently did not know how to drive a car.

She said that in late October or early November she tried to teach him how to drive her car in a parking lot, but that Oswald did not even learn to park it.

Mr. Davis said that after his customers had reported their recollections of Oswald to the F.B.I., two agents came to the range and picked up about 25 pounds of rifle shells.

Mr. Davis said he had sent other shells, fired about the time of the young man's visit, to a Dallas gunshop for reloading. He said he understood that the F.B.I. had obtained those shells, too.

A Second Public Range

The Sportsdrome range is about one and a half miles from Irving, where Oswald's family was staying at the time. Mr. Davis said the only other public range is in Carrollton, about 12 miles away.

He said more than 2,000 persons had fired at his range in the last month. Most of them were zeroing in their weapons in preparation for the deer season, which opened in Texas last month.

Meanwhile, authorities had nothing to say about their theory that it was Oswald who fired into the Dallas home of former Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker last April 10.

Federal investigators have said privately that they believe Oswald was the sniper. The bullet missed Mr. Walker by little more than an inch.

It was understood that Oswald's wife, Marina, had informed authorities that her husband had told her of his taking part in the shooting.

The Dallas Morning News said this week that the police doubted a version of the shooting given them by a 15-year-old neighbor of Mr. Walker. This version is the only one made public so far.

Tells of Seeing 2 Flee

The boy, Kirk Coleman, said he ran into Mr. Walker's backyard after the shooting and saw two men flee in two cars.

One of the men, he said, carried an object that looked like a rifle. The boy said the man, whom he described as resembling Oswald, thrust the object into the back seat of his car, a 1958 model, and drove away. He said the first man, driving a 1950 car left a moment before.

A check of Mr. Walker's other neighbors showed today that none had witnessed the shooting or the snipers' depart-

ture. One neighbor said she had been watching television that night, had heard what might have been a rifle shot, but had thought nothing of it.

In another development, the police recalled that a man bearing a pro-Castro placard was chased from a Dallas street corner last April.

The Dallas Times Herald said today that the police had been tipped off by a newspaperman that a man "was standing on a main St., corner, wearing a placard including the phrase 'Viva Fidel,' passing out literature."

The newspaper said that a policeman was sent to the corner, and that the demonstrator then fled.

This jibes with a letter, undated but written about that time, from Oswald to the National Fair Play for Cuba headquarters in New York. The letter apparently the first of six Oswald sent the pro-Castro organization during the summer, said:

"Since I am unemployed I stood yesterday for the first time in my life, with a placard around my neck, passing out fair play for Cuba pamphlets, etc. I was cursed as well as praised by some. My home-made placard said 'Hands Off Cuba, Viva Fidel.'"