

What's Happened to Three Texas Widows

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DALLAS — The assassination of John F. Kennedy brought unearned fame to as varied and incompatible a collection of human beings as were ever engulfed in a national tragedy.

Five years later, these figures from history's periphery remain in or near Dallas. And they, like everyone else, have found neither meaning nor moral nor ennoblement — though some of them have taken profit — from the terrible events of Nov. 22, 1963.

Pretty Marina Oswald, the 27-year-old widow of the assassin, has lost her image as the poor little Russian girl — mainly because she's gotten rich.

SUES FOR \$500,000

Pitying, well-wishers from all over the world have sent her more than \$70,000, and she has grossed at least \$60,000 more by sales of pictures, interviews, her husband's diary and the rifle with which he shot the President.

Currently, she is suing to make the government pay her \$500,000 for Oswald's clothes, books and other personal trivia. And she is writing a book which, if ever finished, should become an automatic world best-seller.

Still, Marina seems not to have found happiness. Her second marriage — to a bartender named Kenneth Jess Porter — has been stormy. On one occasion she took her husband to court, charging he had threatened to shoot her.

HUSBAND'S ATTACK

His defense was an attack: he did it, he said, because she left the children — Oswald's two girls and their own baby boy — and was drinking beer at a neighbor's house.

That quarrel was straightened out, but other rather public ones followed, principally over barmaids at the tavern she purchased for her husband.

The police no longer keep track of the callers at her \$25,000 three-bedroom house, but this hasn't made her relations with neighbors much easier.

"She doesn't mix much," says one who occasionally has coffee with Marina. "She acts like she doesn't trust anybody and I guess you'd say the feeling was mutual."

ASSASSIN'S MOTHER

In nearby Fort Worth, Marguerite Oswald, mother of the assassin, lives in circumstances considerably improved since her son's death.

Better dressed and housed, noticeably slimmer, she recently summoned a press conference to announce that what she always calls "the Kennedy-Oswald case" now belongs to President-elect Nixon and that she expects more progress than was forthcoming from his predecessor in proving her son's innocence.

Still a formidable saleswoman, Marguerite has auctioned off letters, clothes, school pictures and many other possessions of her son's, but always, she says, to finance her investigations. Some day she may sell the very tombstone of Lee's grave.

No happy endings seem in sight, either, for the third widow in the case, Marie Tippit, whose husband was the Dallas policeman shot to death while questioning Os-

wald. She, too, has become a wealthy woman since the tragedy.

Some \$700,000 was sent to her by sympathetic Americans, and it has been split among her three children and herself and invested in trust funds now worth more than \$1 million.

But the Tippit house remains as modest as ever, with the furniture as shabby as it was five years ago. She still goes to the same beauty shop, where she and her teen-aged daughter get their hair washed then go home to apply a Toni.

And the Dallas police, who rallied to her after the assassination, were miffed when she contributed only about \$4000 to the Police and Firemen's Fund.

Marie had one rather unpleasant meeting with still another widow in the case —

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Helen Markham who witnessed the shooting of Tippit, was first to his side and cradled the dying officer's head in her arms.

"She acted like she thought she was better than me," says Helen. "Guess that's what money does to some people."

Helen Markham is one key peripheral figure in the assassination who has not improved herself financially. Now married to a blind man who operates a concession

stand in a Dallas post office, she's still a lunchroom waitress, still struggling to bring up her five children, still without a phone or an auto.

Yet she has refused several chances to sell personal belongings — including the subpoena that ordered her to Washington.

"I've always made an honest living for my family and, God willing, that's the way it'll continue," she says. "I don't want no part of that kind of money."

Oswald was captured by police in a movie house. First to reach him was Patrolman N. M. McDonald, who was subsequently promoted to detective. His salary has increased from \$485 to \$812 per month, though otherwise he has gone unre-

warded — except for a free lifetime membership in the local Playboy Club.

But McDonald's fellow officers, who helped him wrestle Oswald into submission, still

resent the fact that he alone was singled out as the assassin's captor.

Ruth Paine, 36, the gentle Quaker lady who shared her house with Marina and the Oswald children at the time of the assassination, has not

seen them "in three or four years." "It became clear to me," she says "that she did not want to keep up the friendship."



MARINA OSWALD PORTER
She sues for \$500,000



HELEN MARKHAM
A peripheral figure
—Newsweek Service photos



N. M. McDONALD
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