

Dallas was the dateline for another brand of journalism last week - checkbook journalism. Everybody - from accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald's mother to the ticket seller at the movie theater where he was arrested - has had something to sell. Yet, mostly for reasons of taste, the giants of the bought by-line and the exclusive picture - Life, The Saturday Evening Post, McCall's and Paris-Match - managed to keep their pens in their pockets.

Then three weeks ago a Life photographer received an anonymous phone call, offering him exclusive shots of Oswald (including one of him holding a rifle). The photos apparently had been collected by police officials during the investigation, and the best guess was that some official source had passed them on to the seller. Life's lawyers decided against buying them on the ground that the documents actually belonged to Marina Oswald and that she could sue. The photographer then went to James Martin, an ex-motel manager and Marina Oswald's business adviser, seeking the originals. Martin had the photo of Oswald and the rifle and sold exclusive North American rights to Life for less than \$5,000.

Unfortunately for Life, at least two other packets of Oswald photos were subsequently being circulated (but not by Martin). Gene Roberts, an enterprising, 31-year-old reporter for The Detroit Free Press, decided to go after them and managed to buy some twenty photos (including the one Life had bought) for only \$200. The Free Press rushed the Oswald-with-rifle picture onto its front page early last week and then turned it over to the Associated Press - on the day that Life hit the stands with the same photo on its cover.

By the weekend, attorneys for Life and Marina Oswald were both talking about legal action against the Free Press, and Oswald's mother was thinking of suing Life on the astounding ground that the magazine's story was "inaccurate" and that the front-page photo may have been her son's head superimposed on somebody else's body. "The legs," she said, "do look very long."

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