

# **Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK Study Guide**

**Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK by Gerald Posner**

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## Plot Summary

Case Closed by Mark Posner is a comprehensive study of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and an examination of the numerous conspiracy theories that have been propagated since that time on November 22, 1963. There have been numerous theories of conspiracy and the hypothesis has been forwarded that Lee Harvey Oswald was not the sole assassin. Some place him in the employ of the CIA, the KGB, the Cubans, or the Mafia. Posner debunks all of these theories and examines the numerous government documents that have become available and concludes that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy.

Posner provides an in-depth examination of Oswald's life and activities leading up to the assassination. He looks at his unhappy childhood and his mental instability. Oswald was a self-taught and self-proclaimed communist even though he was never a card-carrying member of the Community Party. After being discharged from the Marines, he followed his own well-formulated plan to defect to the Soviet Union, where he lived for three years. The Soviets classified him as mentally unstable and assigned him to menial labor in Minsk. In Minsk, he met and married his wife Marina Prusakova and had their first daughter, June. Disillusioned with the Soviet Union, he and his family returned to the United States.

Oswald was mentally unstable and lived in somewhat of a fantasy world. He created false identities and continually lied to people, from boarding house landladies to government officials. He always tried to make himself appear important. He was physically and mentally abusive to his wife, who refused to move back in with him the night before the assassination. He had a history of being fired from menial jobs, even though he tried to provide for his wife and family.

Posner also examines the activities of Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald on Sunday, November 25, as he was being transferred to the sheriff's jail. Posner looks at the inconsistencies in the testimony and the factors that contributed to the multitude of conspiracy theories. His original conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone has not changed in spite of the theories of Mark Lane, Jim Garrison, and others. He looks at many of the questions and theories and debunks them based on fact and science.

# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary and Analysis

Within an hour of the death of President Kennedy, police were tracking down the killers of the President and Officer J.D. Tippit. They received a tip about a suspect entering a movie theater. They arrested a man who carried identification in the name of Lee Harvey Oswald and Alek Hidell.

Oswald was born in New Orleans in 1938. Since his father died two months before his birth, he was raised by his mother Marguerite. He and his two brothers were placed in an orphanage until his mother remarried but the marriage ended in a bitter divorce. When his brothers entered military service, Lee and his mother moved to New York where Lee was remanded to Youth House for psychiatric evaluation for truancy. He was diagnosed as schizoid with passive-aggressive tendencies and placed on probation. In 1954, Marguerite fled with Lee to New Orleans since the court ordered him placed in a home for disturbed boys. In New Orleans, friends of the family describe him as abusive and disturbing. Lee became interested in Communism and joined the Marines at the age of seventeen.

In Chapter Two, Lee scored well as a sharpshooter with the M-1 rifle in the Marines. He was stationed at San Diego, Camp Pendleton, Jacksonville, Florida and then to Kessler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi. He was described as a loner. Oswald was sent to Atsugi, Japan in the marine Air Control Squadron One. He served in maneuvers in the Philippines and then was sent to Subic Bay in Indonesia. He was court martialed for having possession of an unauthorized gun with which he had accidentally shot himself. He began to think of defecting to Russia at this time. Back in Japan, he drank heavily and got into many fights and was eventually court martialed again and sentenced to confinement. On duty in Taiwan in 1958, he had a mental breakdown and returned to Japan. Back on duty at El Toro, California, he began to study Russian.

Oswald began his preparations to defect to the Soviet Union. He was supposed to be an inactive reserve member after leaving the Marines and could not leave the country without a good reason. He applied to and was accepted at a school in Switzerland and obtained a passport. He left for Europe on September 20, 1959.

As the footnotes indicate, there are different opinions of Oswald during his military years. Some people felt he was wined and dined by the Japanese communists. Others felt that he was recruited by the CIA.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary and Analysis

Yuri Nosenko had been a Soviet KGB officer who contacted the Americans two months after the Kennedy assassination. He said that the Russians considered Oswald to be a mental misfit and had little to do with him after he defected which would mean the Soviets had no part in the assassination. The big question is was Nosenko a bona fide defector or was he a KGB plant?

Nosenko was questioned by the CIA at a Geneva safe house by Pete Bagley who believed his information was genuine. However, another Soviet defector, Anatoliy Golitsyn, spoke of a high-ranking KGB mole code-named Sasha inside the CIA. He believed that Nosenko was sent to detract attention from Sasha. Nosenko finally defected in 1964. The FBI had information that Nosenko was a bona fide defector.

Nosenko was kept for a year in a safe house in the Washington DC area as his interrogators tried to get him to confess to being a KGB plant. Nosenko was held prisoner there and at Camp Peary. While this was going on, a variety of Soviet defectors attested to Nosenko's genuineness. The KGB was prepared to liquidate him if they found him. After three and a half years of confinement in a cell, the IA moved him to a farmhouse with a comfortable bedroom. By March, 1969, he was released from all security restrictions and employed by the CIA. He was given a new identity.

Nosenko says that Oswald's application for a Soviet visa was normal. Oswald reached Moscow on October 16, 1959, and was nineteen years of age at the time. He asked about defecting on his second day there. The Russians eventually denied his request for citizenship and he attempted suicide. Rather than create a spectacle, they let him stay and relocated him to Minsk. In Minsk, Lee married Marina and after three years they left for the United States. Nosenko recognized Oswald's name as soon as he heard of the assassination.

In Chapter Four, Oswald was monitored by the KGB continually. At first, he had celebrity status in Minsk as an American defector, but that faded after several months. Lee was assigned work as a sheet metal worker which he felt was below him and he began to become disillusioned with the Soviet Union. In February 1961, he contacted the United States Embassy about returning to the United States. Oswald married Marina Prusakova in April and they had a daughter, June. In June 1962, the Oswalds departed for Rotterdam on their journey to the United States.

Oswald was disillusioned with both the Soviet Union and the United States. Although still a professed communist, he considered the United States to be the lesser of the two evils.

# Chapter 5 and 6

## Chapter 5 and 6 Summary and Analysis

Lee and his family stayed at his brother, Robert's, Fort Worth home. He was interviewed by the FBI a few days after his arrival. Marguerite rented a Fort Worth apartment where she could live with Lee and his family. This arrangement lasted for one month. Lee secured employment and moved his family to their own rented home. His relationship with Marina had deteriorated and he became abusive. The Russian immigrant community liked Marina but did not like Lee. They included him for her benefit. Lee became friends with a man named George de Mohrenschildt.

In October, the Oswalds moved into the Dallas home of June Hall since they convinced Lee that he would have better employment prospects in Dallas. He obtained a job at Jaggars-Chiles-Stroval working with photography. While there, he began to forge documents in the name of Alek Hidell. In November, Marina and June moved into an Oak Cliff apartment with Lee. She and the baby left after a week. The Russian community told Marina that they would help her only if she left Lee. After a few weeks, she returned to Lee and the fighting and beatings resumed.

Chapter Six opens in January 1963. Lee's abuse of Marina intensified and he purchased a mail order Smith-Wesson .38 special revolver. The only friends they had were the de Muhrenschildts. Marina noticed Lee studying maps of Dallas and bus schedules at this time. Marina said she was pregnant again. Lee began to torment Marina by forcing her to write a letter to the Soviet Embassy saying she wanted to return to Russia. The Embassy sent the paperwork.

At this time, Oswald began his surveillance of General Edwin Walker. In March he ordered a Mannlicher-Carcano rifle from a Chicago mail order house. Oswald compiled an operations manual for his plans against Walker, while Marina became friends with Ruth Paine.

One day at their new residence, Lee asked Marina to take a picture of him with his revolver and rifle. He was dressed in black. He developed the photographs and gave her one for June to remember him by.

The FBI reopened its file on Oswald when they learned he subscribed to communist publication and was involved with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. They did not locate him until June.

Oswald was fired from his job. Several times he took his rifle out for target practice but Marina did not know where until the following week. On April 10, Lee went out. Marina found a note in his study with instructions of what to do if anything happened to him. When he returned, he told her he had shot at General Walker and not to ask any

questions. Walker was slightly injured. The next day, Lee talked to Marina about the incident.

Oswald went to New Orleans to look for a job on April 24. June and Marina moved in with Ruth.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

Lee stayed with his aunt in New Orleans while he looked for a job. Two weeks later, on May 9, he found a job at Reily Coffee Company. He rented an apartment and the next day, Ruth Paine drove Marina and June to New Orleans. By the end of the month, he had contacted the Fair Play for Cuba Committee about opening a New Orleans branch.

At this time, some people reported seeing Oswald meet with the FBI who would hand him large envelopes. Oswald used to hang around Alba's garage and spent much of his spare time distributing Cuba literature. He also obtained a passport at this time. He and Marina contacted the Russian Embassy about returning to Russia.

Oswald was fired from his job on July 19 and worked on his Cuba campaign. Some of his literature was stamped with the address of 544 Camp St. which Posner claims in the one place where the paths of organized crime, anti-Castro Cubans, the FBI, the CIA and Oswald could have crossed. Guy Banister, a former FBI agent with ties to Naval Intelligence, had an office there. He did work for the attorney of New Orleans crime boss Carlos Marcello and also with David Ferrie who worked with the anti-Castro Cuban groups. There is conflicting evidence as to whether or not Oswald was ever at this address. There is also some discussion of whether Ferrie was the squadron captain of Oswald's Civil Air Patrol unit in 1955. Records indicate that Ferrie was not in CAP at this time. Others claim to have seen Oswald with Ferrie in Clinton, Louisiana.

In Chapter Eight, Marina grew concerned that Lee was increasingly losing contact with reality. Oswald decided to try to infiltrate the anti-Castro movement. He got into a fight, was arrested, and spent a night in jail. Oswald hired two people from a line at the unemployment office to pass out pro-Cuban literature and received television coverage for his demonstration. Oswald appeared in a debate about the Cuban-American Problems in which some of his lies were uncovered. He was publicly humiliated in the radio program. After this, he began target practice with his rifle again. Lee told Marina that he wanted to go to Cuba and talked about hijacking a plane. Then he decided to go to Mexico City to obtain a visa for Cuba. Marina would stay with Ruth in Dallas until Lee sent for her.





# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary and Analysis

Lee left New Orleans for Houston on September 25, 1963. From Houston, he took another bus to Laredo and from there to Mexico City. He talked to other passengers on the bus. Other people claimed that Oswald was in Florida at this time which raised the possibility of an Oswald impostor. Others claimed to have seen him in Texas. One woman, Annie Odio, said Oswald and two other men visited her and talked about how Kennedy should have been killed after the Bay of Pigs.

In Mexico City, Oswald visited the Cuba embassy and completed the application for a visa. He is told that the visa could be granted immediately if he had a Soviet visa, so he went to the soviet Embassy where he was interviewed by two KGB agents, Kostikov and Nechiporenko. He told them his usual lies and fantasies trying to make himself appear to be important. The request was forwarded to Nosenko in New York and denied. The Cubans also denied him a visa. The Warren Commission findings indicate that Oswald did not socialize with anyone in Mexico.

Oswald left Mexico City by bus on October 1. He returned to Dallas on October 3.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary and Analysis

In Dallas, Oswald was too embarrassed to confront Marina and stayed at the YMCA at first. He finally contacted Marina who was happy that he was not in Cuba. Lee told her of his mistreatment by both the Soviets and Cubans and never again mentioned Cuba. Marina would stay with Ruth until Lee found employment.

Lee rented a room at a boarding house in Oak Cliff, a section of Dallas. On October 12, as he was leaving for his weekend with Marina, the landlady, Mary Bledsoe, told him not to come back. Lee was no longer promoting political activism and both Marina and Ruth felt that he had changed. Friends of Marina's found him a job at the Texas School Book Depository, where he began work on October 12.

Lee moved to another boarding house in Oak Cliff. He spent the weekend of October 18 at the Paines and Marina gave birth to their second daughter, Audrey. Two days after the birth, Lee began again to stalk General Walker. Michael Paine took Lee to an American Civil Liberties Union meeting. He wanted to show Lee that there were other ways of accomplishing things than his own way. The Paines noticed the change in Lee as he became more sullen.

At this time, FBI Agent James Hosty was assigned to the case since they had word that he had been to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City. He interviewed Ruth and Marina. Lee was upset when he heard about this.

On November 4 it was decided that the Trade Mart would be the site of the luncheon for the Kennedy visit. Hosty paid another visit to Ruth Paine which again angered Lee when he found out.

Ruth was teaching Lee how to drive during his weekend visits. During the November 9 weekend visit, she saw a letter that he had typed to the Soviet Embassy about his Mexico visit. Oswald was very withdrawn during his visit.

On November 15, the Dallas newspaper reported on the motorcade route for the Presidential visit. Lee did not visit Marina that weekend because Michael Paine was visiting. When Ruth tried to call Lee at the rooming house, they found he was using a fictitious name.

Lee went to Irving the night of November 21, driving with Buell Frazier, one of the Paine neighbors. He said he needed to pick up some curtain rods. He kept asking Marina to live with him and she refused. They noticed that Lee did not express any interest in the President's visit. The next morning, Marina found \$170 and Lee's wedding ring on the dresser.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary and Analysis

The Fraziers, neighbors of the Paines, say Lee carrying a long package that morning. He told Frazier that the package contained curtain rods. Oswald spent time looking out the window and other co-workers told him about the motorcade. When the workers went to lunch, Oswald remained on the sixth floor. There are discrepancies in the stories of the workers as to whether he was in the lunchroom or not, just as there were in the reports of men in the windows of the different floors. Many felt that there were two men in the sniper's nest.

President Kennedy and Texas Governor Connally were shot as the motorcade passed the Texas School Book Depository. The Presidential car then sped out of Dealey Plaza. There was a great deal of confusion in the Plaza. There were more than two hundred witnesses. Some reported hearing three shots, while others claimed they heard one, two, or even more than four shots. Almost half of the people present could not determine the directions that the shots came from. Some said they came from the Depository building while others claimed they came from the grassy knoll area. Oswald's three co-workers on the fifth floor, directly below the sniper's nest, testify that they heard three shots and the sound of the shells hitting the floor. Some news people were also sure that there were three shots.

Many eye witnesses saw the rifle in the sixth floor window of the building. Many of the people also changed their stories over time. Some claimed about a puff of smoke from the grassy knoll area. Posner points out that modern ammunition is smokeless and that the wind at the time would have immediately blown away any smoke. Many of the witnesses to the existence of multiple gunmen did not contact the authorities until years after the assassination. There were many credibility problems. There are also theories about the umbrella man and the babushka lady.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary and Analysis

Posner points out that Oswald had little time to prepare or plan. He did not know what to expect but it is clear that he wanted to escape. He was not on a suicide mission. Oswald immediately ran down the stairs after hiding the rifle. He ran into police officer Marrion Baker, who ran into the building. Since the manager identified Oswald as an employee, Baker continued running up the stairs. Oswald left the building via the front to go to his rooming house. He boarded the first bus that appeared. His old landlady, Mary Bledsoe was on the bus and recognized him. Because of traffic, he bought a transfer and got off.

Oswald rode in a taxi to several blocks from his rooming house. Housekeeper Earlene Roberts was there when he arrived. He grabbed a jacket to cover his revolver and quickly departed.

At Dealey Plaza, the Depository Building was sealed at 12:45. AT 1:12 pm, the expended shells were discovered by the sheriff. This is forty-five minutes after the shooting and tests proved they were from Oswald's rifle. The police lifted a hand print from a cardboard box that was identified as Oswald's, as well as others. They found the rifle a few minutes later and found Oswald's fingerprints on the bag he wrapped the rifle in. A head count indicated that all employees except Oswald were accounted for.

While walking in Oak Cliff, Oswald met police officer J.D. Tippit. Since Oswald fit the general description of the assassin, Tippit stopped him. Oswald shot and killed him. The shooting was witnessed by Helen Markham. She latter picked him out of a line up. He was also identified by Virginia and Barbara Davis who saw him fleeing the scene, as did taxi driver William Scoggins. Others in the area also identified Oswald.

Oswald ducked into a shoe store and then left after the police cars passed on the street. The manager followed him to a theater. The police were called and Oswald was arrested. The police went to the Paine house and Marina showed them the blanket in the garage where she thought Lee's rifle was. When they found the rifle missing, Marina knew that Lee was involved in the shooting.

# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary and Analysis

The Presidential car races to Parkland Hospital. The doctors and nurses tell how they removed the President from the car and examined him. The electrocardiogram showed a dying heart rhythm. A tracheotomy tube was inserted through the exit wound. There was no way that the President could survive the massive head wound. He was given the Last Rites and pronounced dead. His wife Jackie was in the room most of the time.

The President's death was announced at 1:33 pm, after Johnson had departed from the hospital. At this time Governor Connally was being taken to surgery. When they moved a gurney, a bullet fell out. This was the bullet that connected Oswald's gun to the shootings.

Since the President died of a violent crime, Texas law required that there had to be an autopsy. The Secret Service removed the body from the hospital and all boarded Air Force One and Vice President Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as President. Some conspiracy theorists hypothesize that the coffin was switched and the body was altered to hide evidence of shots from the front. Posner says the records indicate that the body was never left alone.

Upon arrival at Andrews Air Force Base<sup>4</sup> at 5:58 pm, the body was taken to the Bethesda Naval Hospital, with Bobby and Jackie Kennedy accompanying it. The autopsy was performed by Drs. Humes and Boswe. Photographs were taken and the evidence was that the President was shot by two bullets from the rear. Critics claim that they autopsy was rushed and incomplete.

There were disputes over the wounds that continued for years.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary and Analysis

There were two controversial issues according to Posner. Could Oswald fire three shots in that amount of time and could one bullet hit Kennedy and cause Connally's injuries? Oswald needed 4.5 seconds to fire the three shots. The timing of the shots was compared with the Zapruder film.

The Warren Commission assumed that the first shot hit Kennedy in the neck and there were several points in the Zapruder film where the car was blocked from view. It concluded that it was possible for Oswald to fire all three shots. Some evidence indicates that the first shot missed. This was consistent with the notes of Secret Service agent Glen Bennett and with the Zapruder film. It was also consistent with Governor Connally's recollections. Only two bullets were found and a bullet mark was found on the curb where James Tague was standing. The Commission assumed that this was caused by the bullet that entered Kennedy's head. Posner believes that this is wrong and that the curb mark was caused by the first shot.

Posner also analyzed Governor Connally's reactions in conjunction with the Zapruder film. Connally said that he was not hit by the first shot even though his wife thought he was. Failure Analysis indicates that one bullet could have caused the wounds to both men. It was also found that the bullet found on the gurney could be this bullet.

# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary and Analysis

The questioning of Oswald began around 2:30 pm on the day of the assassination. It was led by homicide captain Will Fritz. There were no transcripts nor recordings available. There were twenty-five different interrogators from the different government branches. Their first priority was to determine if Oswald had accomplices. At first his friends and relatives were under suspicion and questioned. Oswald was cocky and enjoyed the publicity. This led Marina to believe at the time that he was guilty. He lied about the rifle, the Hidell alias, Mexico City, and other things. He denied killing the President.

The police charged Oswald in the killing of Tippit. On Saturday, he was arraigned on the charge of killing the President. The chief decided to allow Oswald to have a press conference. It only lasted a few minutes. JCK Ruby, a Dallas nightclub owner, was in the room. Ruby was an attention seeker who hung around police headquarters and newspaper offices.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary and Analysis

Jack Ruby was in Dallas on November 21. He had meetings with various people. He arrived at his Carousel Club around 3 pm. Due to his sister's illness, he was also running the Vegas Club so he was at both places during the evening. He had dinner with a friend at the Egyptian Club, which was owned by a member of the Dallas underworld. He met with different people during the evening and closed both clubs by 2:30 am, then went for dinner.

The next morning he went to the newspaper office to place his ads and to visit people that he knew. He was with Sales agent Don Campbell from 12 - 12:30 m. He was at the newspaper office at the time of the shooting. Ruby was at the newspaper office until 1:30 when he went to his Carousel Club. Washington journalist Seth Kantor, who knew Ruby, says he met him at Parkland Hospital but Ruby said he was mistaken. Ruby arrived at his club at 1:45 pm, which didn't give him time to go to the hospital. But phone records show that Ruby did have the time to go to Parkland. Ruby was known to appear wherever the action was.

Friends said that Ruby was very upset by Kennedy's death and called a lot of people just to talk. He went to his sister's, bought some food at the Ritz Delicatessen, stopped by the Carousel to close it and then returned to his sister's. Jack told her he was closing the clubs for three days and canceled his advertisements. His sister Eva says that Jack was very upset over Kennedy's death.

On his way to temple services, Jack stopped at police headquarters. He later testified that he was not there but many people saw him. After temple services, he picked up sandwiches and returned to police headquarters. Ruby was present at Oswald's press conference that night. He gave out some passes to his Carousel Club. Ruby brought sandwiches to the staff at KLIF radio station and stayed there until 2:43 am. On the way to the newspaper office, he stopped to talk to Harvey Olsen and Kay Coleman. Ruby arrived at the newspaper office around 4 am and then home by 4:30 a where he awakened his roommate George Senator. They and Larry Crafard went and took pictures of a billboard that said 'Impeach Earl Warren.' They went to a coffee shop at 5:30 am where Ruby was very upset about an anti-Kennedy newspaper ad signed by someone named Weissman. Ruby went to bed at 6 am and at 2 pm was at Sol's Turf Bar. He went into a tirade about the Weissman ad and the Warren billboard that proposed impeachment there.

Ruby drove around talking to various people and learned of the plans to transfer Oswald. He told KLIF that he would try to obtain information for them. He toured Dealey Plaza and then went to police headquarters and later denies he was there. After leaving there, he visited his club and then his sister. He visited the Pogo club and then went home and was asleep by 1:30 am.





On Sunday, Ruby awakened between 9 to 9:30 am. George Senator said that he was mumbling incoherently. He read the paper and left the apartment around 11 am. He noticed a crowd at the police station. Ruby parked his car, leaving his dog in the car. He sent money to an employee via Western Union and then walked over to police headquarters. He walked into the garage as Oswald was being transferred and quickly shot and killed Oswald.

Ruby was immediately arrested. When asked why, he said he did not want Mrs. Kennedy to go through the ordeal of a trial. Despite hiring attorney Melvin Belli, he was found guilty of premeditated murder. Ruby denied that he was part of any conspiracy to silence Oswald until he died on January 3, 1967.

# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary and Analysis

Oswald's murder resulted in the unfolding of many conspiracy theories. According to a Gallop Poll, only 29 percent of the population felt that Oswald acted alone. On Monday, November 25, Texas announced that it would hold a public court of inquiry. There were calls for Congressional investigation. On November 29, President Johnson issued an order establishing a fact finding panel which became known as the Warren Commission. In addition to Earl Warren, who chaired the Commission, the other members were Senators John Sherman, Cooper and Richard Russell, Congressmen Hale Boggs and Gerald Ford, and John McCloy and Allen Dulles.

The Commission divided its task into five areas that included the basic facts of the assassination; the identity of the assassin; the background and motives of the assassin; possible conspiracies; and the death of Oswald. There were five hundred and fifty-two witnesses. The first witness was Marina Oswald. The investigation was enormous yet many critics charged that they only interviewed witnesses who supported their views of Oswald being the lone assassin. The Commission released its eight hundred and eighty-eight page report on September 24, 1964.

The Commission did its work over the course of ten months and there were many people that they did not interview and areas that they did not investigate. These omissions were the source of future questions and conspiracy theories. Neither the FBI or CIA wanted their activities looked into or made public. The Commission could also not examine the autopsy photos because the Kennedy family refused to release them. At the time of the Commission, the technology did not exist to prove the single bullet theory. This however was proven later. The Commission also concluded that there was no conspiracy.

Many early critics focused on the contradictions in the report and on the unanswered questions. They believed that there was a cover up by the FBI and the CIA. Many books were published on the different aspects of the assassination, subsequent investigation, and the different conspiracies. All of the questions and controversy led to a 1970 House reinvestigation. It also resulted in the passage of the Freedom of Information act which allows people to obtain government documents.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary and Analysis

Jim Garrison was a colorful New Orleans character. He conducted numerous investigations that resulted in no convictions but generated a lot of publicity. Garrison was a popular political figure in Louisiana and 1965 was an election year. He investigated mafia influence in New Orleans and concluded that Carlos Marcello was a respectable businessman and that there was no underworld in New Orleans. Garrison then began an investigation into the Kennedy assassination.

Garrison was interested in the activities of David Ferrie, an eccentric adventurer. He drew attention to Ferrie's travel with two friends to a Houston ice skating rink on November 22, 1963. Garrison felt that the Winterland Ice Skating rink was a message center for the conspiracy. The other aspect that stimulated Garrison's interest was attorney Dean Andrews saying he recognized Oswald who used to come to his office with a group of gay kids. He said a man called Clay Bertrand asked him if he would represent Oswald the day after the assassination. Andrews reneged on this story on and off.

Garrison concluded that Clay Bertrand must be Clay Shaw, who was a prominent New Orleans civic figure. Among other things he was a homosexual and this was the link to David Ferrie. Ferrie's association with the now deceased Guy Banister led to the anti-Castro Cubans. In February, Ferrie was found dead, Garrison claimed it was suicide but the coroner attributed the death to a ruptured blood vessel in his skull.

Garrison arrested Clay Shaw on March 1, 1967 claiming he was part of a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. The important witness was Perry Raymond Russo who submitted to a sodium pentothal interrogation at Garrison's request. The doctor hired by Garrison, Dr. Esmond Fatter, suggested the idea of a conspiracy involving Clay Shaw and Lee Harvey Oswald. This was given in the documents that Garrison gave to The Saturday Event Post reporter Him Phalen. A judge ruled that Clay Shaw should be held for trial.

NBC began to expose Garrison's investigation tactics, which included bribery and intimidation. Garrison gained national notoriety. Many of his aides quit and he filed perjury charges against those who would not testify in the way he wanted them to. Garrison wanted a conviction on Shaw no matter what. Many people described Garrison as paranoid and mentally unstable.

Shaw was acquitted on March 1, 1968. Two years later, Garrison arrested Shaw for perjury which resulted in another two year legal fight. A federal injunction was finally obtained on June 1, 1971 to keep Garrison from prosecuting Shaw. Garrison was not reelected and Shaw died of cancer in 1974.

# Chapter 19 and Afterword

## Chapter 19 and Afterword Summary and Analysis

Garrison's investigation was described as an abuse of the legal system. As a result, conspiracy theories began to diminish. Books on the various conspiracies were not selling well and public interest waned until the middle of the 1970s. In 1975, the CIA's numerous attempts to kill Fidel Castro became known. There were calls for new Congressional investigations into the deaths of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as the attempted assassination of George Wallace. Congress authorized a new investigation.

Their reports did not disagree with those of the Warren Commission and then based on an acoustics study of the open mike, concluded that a fourth shot was fired from the grassy knoll area which indicated a conspiracy. They began to look at the involvement of organized crime and Jimmy Hoffa, Santo Trafficante and Carlos Marcello. The House Select Committee investigated and concluded that none of the three was involved. The FBI had many of the mobsters under electronic surveillance and there was never any discussion of killing the President.

The conspiracy theories and buffs however have taken on a life of their own. Time distorted memories and there were many falsehoods as researchers lowered their standards of investigation as well. In fact, conspiracy theories have become an industry from which many people earn their livings.

In the Afterword, Posner says that more government documents have been released since he wrote the book but they do not change his conclusions that Oswald was the lone assassin and that there was no conspiracy.



# Characters

## Lee Harvey Oswald

Lee Harvey Oswald was born on October 18, 1939 in New Orleans, Louisiana. His father died two months before his birth and he was raised by his mother, Marguerite. He has a brother Robert and a half-brother, John Pic. The older brothers were placed in an orphanage and Lee joined them at the age of three, in 1942. They remained there until 1944. Lee was enrolled in Benbrook Common Elementary School when he was six. Due to frequent moves, he attended numerous elementary schools. He became withdrawn after his mother's bitter divorce in 1948. When his brothers entered military service, Lee and Marguerite moved to New York City in August 1952. In 1953, he was sent to the Youth House for psychiatric evaluation for three weeks. Released on probation, his problems continued and he was ordered to a residential treatment home for disturbed boys when he was fourteen. However, Oswald and his mother fled to New Orleans. He became interested in communism in his teens and dropped out of high school. Rejected by the Marine Corps, he worked at various clerical and messenger jobs. Lee joined the Marines in 1956, even though he was a Communist. When he was discharged from the Marines, he left for Europe and went to Russia. He tried to commit suicide when his request for citizenship was denied and they eventually allowed him to stay. He lived in Minsk for three years and married Marina in April 1961, had a daughter June born in 1962, and moved his family to the United States in June, 1962. Oswald tried to assassinate General Edwin Walker in April 1963. He lived in New Orleans until September 24, 1963 and was involved with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He traveled to Mexico City to obtain a visa for Cuba but was denied. On November 22, 1963, he killed Officer J.D. Tippit and was suspected in the assassination of President Kennedy. On November 24, Sunday, he is killed by Jack Ruby as he is being transferred to the sheriff's jail.

## Marina Prusakova Oswald

Marina Prusakova Oswald was a nineteen-year-old pharmacology student when she met Lee Harvey Oswald at a dance in Minsk. She had been born out of wedlock and never knew her father. She had lived in Leningrad with her mother and stepfather until she was fifteen when her mother died. She then moved to Minsk where she lived with her aunt and uncle. Her uncle was with the MVD, or police, according to Nosenko. Marina married Lee on April 30, 1961, a little more than a month after first meeting him. Some people say she married him to obtain a passport to the United States. Marina became pregnant in June. After applying for entry to the United States, Marina was pressured by her fellow workers and other people in Minsk to change her mind. Their daughter June was born in January, 1962. Marina and June accompanied Lee to the United States in June 1962. In Fort Worth, Lee became abusive of Marina. The Russian émigré community only put up with Lee because they liked Marina. They brought food, clothing, and other items to help Marina, which angered Lee. Marina and June moved



into the Dallas home of June Hall while Lee found employment. When she moved in with Lee, it lasted only one week and the Russian community said they would help her only if she left Lee. Marina and June stayed with various people in the Russian community until she again moved in with Lee. When he went to New Orleans, she moved in with Ruth Pain until she joined him. She stayed with Ruth again while Lee travel to Mexico. Her second daughter, Audrey, was born in October 1963. She was living with Ruth at the time of the assassination.

## **Jack Ruby**

Jack Ruby was born on March 25, 1911 in Chicago. He was the fifth of eight children in an Orthodox Jewish family. His parents separated when he was ten years old. He began working as a hustler at an early age. His mother placed him in psychiatric care at the age of eleven because she could not control him. He was placed in foster care the following year for eighteen months. Ruby moved to California in 1933 but returned to Chicago in 1937 and began to work as a union organizer. He, his brother and two friends began the Spartan Novelty Company in 1941. When that failed, he worked as a salesman. In World War II, he served in the Army Air Force. Returning to Chicago in 1946, he worked as a salesman in his brother's company and then moved to Dallas in 1947 to help her manage her nightclub. He became a nightclub owner. Jack was always in debt and craved attention by hanging out at police headquarters and newspaper offices. He was very upset by the Kennedy assassination and fatally shot Lee Harvey Oswald. Ruby was convicted of premeditated murder and denied being part of any conspiracy to silence Oswald. Ruby had cancer and died on January 3, 1967.

## **Jim Garrison**

Jim Garrison was a New Orleans district attorney who conducted an official investigation into the conspiracy aspects of the Kennedy assassination. Garrison's real name was Earling Carother Garrison, until he legally changed it to Jim. He was born in Iowa in 1921 and raised in New Orleans. He graduated from Tulane Law School in 1948 and then worked for the FBI in Seattle and Tacoma for two years. He returned to New Orleans and active duty with the National Guard but was discharged with a psychoneurosis which he claims was a misdiagnosis. Garrison worked for a private law firm before becoming assistant district attorney until 1958, when he returned to private practice. He became District Attorney in 1962. He failed to win a conviction of Clay Shaw for conspiracy to kill President Kennedy. Garrison died in 1992.

## **Marguerite Oswald**

Marguerite Oswald is the mother of Lee Harvey Oswald, brother Robert, and half-brother, John Pic. Her husband died two months before Lee's birth. She placed her three sons in the Bethlehem Children's Home until early 1944 when she took them out and moved to Dallas. She married Edwin Ekdahl in May 1945. They were divorced in



June 1948. She was domineering and controlling and the two older boys joined the military as soon as they could to get away from her. When living in the Bronx, rather than seeing Lee placed in an institution, she fled with him to Texas.

## **Yuriy Nosenko**

Yuriy Nosenko was a thirty-five year old KGB agent who approached the CIA about defecting to the United State two months after the Kennedy assassination. There were doubts about his authenticity and the CIA held him a prisoner for five years before giving him a job and security clearance. He provided information about Oswald's defection to Russia.

## **George de Mohrenschildt**

George de Mohrenschildt was a member of the Dallas Russian immigrant community. He was a member of the Russian nobility who held numerous university degrees. At fifty-one years of age, he was an oil geologist with business interests around the world. He was married to Jeanne and became a friend of the Oswalds.

## **Ruth Paine**

Ruth Paine is a thirty-one-year-old Dallas housewife who was studying Russian. She was separated from her husband Michael, a Bell Helicopter research engineer, and met the Oswalds at a dinner party. She became friends with Marina. When Lee went to New Orleans, in April 1963, Marina and June moved in with Ruth.

## **Earl Warren**

Earl Warren was the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and chosen as chairman of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy. He was seventy two years of age at the time.

## **Abraham Zapruder**

Abraham Zapruder was a Dallas dressmaker who was in the crowd in Dealey Square. He took 8 mm color film movies of the assassination that was one of the most crucial pieces of evidence in the case.



## Objects/Places

### Dallas

Dallas is a city in Texas where the assassination of President John Kennedy and Officer J.D. Tippett occurred.

### Bronx

Bronx is one of the Burroughs of New York City where Lee Harvey Oswald lived as a teenager.

### New Orleans

New Orleans is the city in Louisiana where Lee Harvey Oswald was born.

### Moscow

Moscow is the capital of the Soviet Union and the place where Oswald tried to commit suicide.

### Minsk

Minsk is an industrial city southwest of Moscow where Oswald was relocated to.

### Fort Worth

Fort Worth is a Texas city adjoining Dallas where the Oswalds lived after returning from the Soviet Union.

### Mexico City, Mexico

Mexico City, Mexico is where Oswald traveled to try to obtain a Cuban visa.

### Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States.



## **Las Vegas, Nevada**

Las Vegas, Nevada is the southwestern state where Jim Garrison gave an interview to the Saturday Evening Post.

## **Dealey Plaza**

Dealey Plaza is the place in Dallas where the Texas School Book Depository is located and where President Kennedy was killed.



# Themes

## Mental Instability

One of the dominant themes of the book is mental instability. Both Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby had a history of mental problems dating back to their childhood. Lee's mother fled New York to keep her son from being committed to a psychiatric institution. Jack's mother had him committed to one because she could not control him.

Lee lived in somewhat of a fantasy world in which he always lied trying to make himself appear to be important. When he defected to the Soviet Union, he was allowed to stay because he tried to commit suicide when he knew they were going to tell him to leave. Since they just had recently improved relations with the United States somewhat, they did not want to create an incident and assigned him to work in Minsk. They considered him to be mentally unstable and refused him a visa a few years later in Mexico City. Back in the United States, he was unable to hold steady employment to provide for his wife and family. He created false identities and used aliases and blamed the FBI for his employment problems. His wife rejected his appeal for her to live with him, contributing to his deteriorating mental condition.

Jack Ruby was also someone who tried to make himself appear more important than he really was. He was known to be a publicity seeker who was always where the action was. He was very distraught over the assassination of the President which led to his killing of Oswald.

## Conspiracy

Conspiracy or the attempt to provide conspiracy is another theme of the book. Conspiracy can be defined as the concerted action of two or more people to commit a criminal act. Many people had problems accepting Oswald as the lone assassin. The same with Ruby. A week after the assassination, a poll indicated that less than one-third of the population believed that Oswald acted alone. They believed that he was a part of something much bigger involving the Russians, Cubans, Mafia, or CIA. Many people also had problems believing that Ruby acted alone. They believed that he was sent to silence Oswald. The inadequacies and inconsistencies in the Warren Commission report fueled the conspiracy theories. Some believed there was a government cover-up. Over the years, the conspiracy theories grew in spite of the Warren Commission findings that Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin and acted alone. There were many books and movies based on different conspiracy theories. In 1969, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison gained national notoriety for trying Clay Shaw for conspiracy in the death of the President. Shaw was acquitted of the charges. The conspiracy theories take on a life of their own and became a thriving business for the people who propagated them. They made their living from the books and movies in addition to

receiving all kinds of publicity. Gerald Posner carefully examines these theories and disproves them.

## **Investigative Thoroughness**

Investigative thoroughness is another theme of the book. The investigative thoroughness of the Dallas police led to the arrest of Oswald within ninety minutes of the shooting. This was due to the diligence and alertness of citizens after the shooting of Officer J.D. Tippit. Since they had an eyewitness to the shooting, there was no problem in filing charges for the Tippit murder and they quickly linked him to the snipers nest on the sixth floor of the Depository Building. The police entered the building as Oswald was on his way out and they quickly learned that he was the one employee who was missing after the assassination.

Investigative thoroughness also refers to the technique used by author Gerald Posner who examines the various facts and scientific studies and uses them to solve the inconsistencies in the reports and to refute the various conspiracy theories on an item by item basis. He then uses the information to explain what is wrong with the various theories and what was overlooked by other people. Posner looks at studies performed years after the assassination using the latest technology and refutes the various conspiracy theories in this way. Years after this book was written, he examined the information that was released by the government and says that his conclusions are still the same. His investigative thoroughness results in a credible book.



# Style

## Perspective

The perspective of the book is that of the author, Gerald Posner. He carefully examines all of the facts pertaining to the lives of Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby and the Kennedy assassination. He also examines the evidence presented in the Warren Commission and other investigative reports as well as their investigative reports. He is thorough and meticulous in his approach to an examination of the facts and the refutation of the falsehoods. He carefully uses the information to solve the inconsistencies in testimony and to arrive at the facts. He uses this approach to wade through the numerous conspiracy theories and to explain why they aren't based on fact.

The author is well qualified to undertake this kind of study and to write this kind of book. He is a lawyer by training and well versed in investigative techniques. He also works as a investigative contributor to the Today Show and a panelist on the History Channel's History Center. In addition, he has written several other investigative and analytical books along the lines of Case Closed.

The author's reason for writing Case Closed was to ascertain whether Lee Harvey Oswald was the sole assassin or was there a conspiracy. His meticulous and thorough research and investigative technique lead him to conclude that there was only one lone assassin.

## Tone

The tone of the book is objective. It is obvious when reading the book that Posner is not a rank amateur assassination buff. He is a trained researcher who employs thorough and meticulous investigative techniques. Posner presents the lives of Oswald and Ruby and the problems that they experience. His research includes a detailed examination of their activities leading up to Oswald's killing of Kennedy and Ruby's killing of Oswald.

The author carefully digs out facts and uses the facts to explain the inconsistencies that appear in the eye and ear witness accounts of the different events. He explains how the various conspiracy theories came into being and use the facts and the reports of scientific studies to refute them. Posner's technique is completely objective, as any good research study should be. He does not interject his own views or opinions. He uses the facts to draw conclusions and does not try to read into them or stretch them as most of the conspiracy buffs do.

The reader has to appreciate the depth of Posner's research and investigative skills and analytic ability in Case Closed. He basically lets the facts speak for themselves and doesn't try to force any points or issues on the reader. The result is a highly credible study which the reader has to appreciate as such.

## Structure

Case Closed by Gerald Posner is a well-structured book that is highly readable. The body of the book is divided into nineteen chapters and each has a title. Each chapter covers a topic relevant to the subject matter of the book. There is an Afterword in which Posner examines the information that has become available in the ten years since he first published the book and explains why his conclusions have not changed.

There is a detailed Table of Contents with the chapter title and page numbers which also includes a few word description of the subject matter covered in the chapter. There are two in-depth appendices covering ballistics and the subject of the mysterious deaths. There is also a section on Acknowledgments and very detailed sections on Notes and a Bibliography. This allows the reader to check sources and to obtain information or facts on the areas he/she is interested in. There is also a detailed index which makes it easy for the reader to look up information.

The book also contains several pages of pictures. This is always good because it allows the reader to associate names with faces and allows the reader to see some of the documents that Posner refers to. In addition, there are numerous explanatory footnotes throughout the body of the book. These footnotes are 'must' reading for the reader. They provide a great deal of information that is crucial for the reader.

The overall structure of the book is appropriate for the style of the book. It results in quick and easy reading with all of the information within easy reach of the reader. The chosen structure works well for the book.

## Quotes

"Although the identity of the suspect remained in doubt for only a few more minutes at that Dallas police station, the search has continued for the answer to the broader question of who Lee Harvey Oswald was. Understand him is the key to finding out what happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963" (Chapter 1, pg. 5.)

"According to Nosenko, although Soviet intelligence kept Oswald under surveillance, it viewed him as mentally unfit, had not debriefed him, and had no relationship with him. If that was true, it meant the KGB and the Soviet Union were absolved of any complicity in JFK's murder. If it was false, Nosenko could be a phony defector, intended, among other things, to deflect the Warren Commission from focusing on evidence of the real Soviet role with Oswald" (Chapter 3, pg. 34-35.)

"Although Oswald still refused to say why he had defected to the USSR, he again promised to contact them if he heard from Soviet agents. Based upon his answers, together with information in reports from two confidential informants that Marina and Lee had nothing to do with the local Communist party, Fain recommended the case be closed" (Chapter 5, pg. 81.)

"If Oswald had an office, even briefly, at 544 Camp, it could be significant, for as Jim Marrs writes, 'It was at 544 Camp Street in an old, three-story office building that the paths of Lee Harvey Oswald, the FBI, the CIA, anti-Castro Cubans, and organized crime figures all crossed'" (Chapter 7, pg. 136.)

"Go back and have the First Department cable the embassy that we are not interested, but have them give him a diplomatic turnaway.' Of course, Oswald didn't know he was being turned away because he was nuts. We considered him nuts. It took us almost no time to say no to his request for a visa" (Chapter 9, pg. 184.)

"I invited him because I thought I needed to show this kid a group of people who are concerned about the same kind of problems, say the humanity of man to man, and trying to do something about it, in a way that was typically American, through free speech and political action" (Chapter 10, pg. 205.)

"There was ample reason for confusion at Dealey. The crowds had concentrated on the presidential motorcade, a mesmerizing event for many. They were not expecting the rifle shots over a few seconds, and to complicate matters, the plaza is an echo chamber. In the turmoil that followed, it is little wonder that witnesses standing next to each other often heard and saw things differently" (Chapter 11, pg. 234.)

"Oswald had little time for planning, perhaps not much more than twenty-four hours. He had to decide how to slip the gun into the Depository and where to take a sniper's



position. His lack of preparation is evident by the fact he only had four bullets with him, though the rifle's clip could hold six" (Chapter 12, pg. 262.)

"One of the nurses offered to clean off her clothing, and she said, 'Absolutely not. I want the world to see what Dallas has done to my husband'" (Chapter 13, pg. 287.)

"Two of the most controversial issues in the assassination are whether Oswald could fire three shots in the necessary time and if the nearly whole bullet, Warren Commission Exhibit 399, found on the stretcher at Parkland Hospital could have passed through the President, out his neck, and then caused all of Governor Connally's wounds" (Chapter 14, pg. 316.)

"When Marina visited him, however, she felt his eyes betrayed is guilt. She knew that if he had been innocent, he would have demanded his immediate freedom and complained to the highest officials. His compliance, coupled with his assurance that he was not being mistreated, added to her feeling he had committed the crime" (Chapter 15, pg. 345.)

"If there was one Ruby trait that stands out," says Tony Zoppi, 'it is that he had to be where the action was'" (Chapter 16, pg. 373.)

"Although a suspect in the presidential assassination was arrested within ninety minutes of the shooting and the physical evidence seemed overwhelming, Ruby's Sunday murder of Oswald stimulated many suspicions and rumors. In the days following Oswald's death, unfounded but spectacular stories of left-wing and right-wing plots, the complicity of Cuban and Soviet leaders, even speculation about Lyndon Johnson hatching a plan to seize the presidency, swept the country. A Gallop poll taken a week after the assassination showed that only 29 percent of Americans believed that Oswald alone killed JFK" (Chapter 17, pg. 402.)

"Garrison dubbed himself 'the wagon boss of the buffs'" (Chapter 18, pg. 431.)

"Lee Harvey Oswald, driven by his own twisted and impenetrable furies, was the only assassin at Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963. To say otherwise, in light of the overwhelming evidence, is to absolve a man with blood on his hands, and to mock the President he killed" (Chapter 19, pg. 470.)

# Topics for Discussion

Why do some people feel that Lee Harvey Oswald had links to either American or Soviet intelligence?

Why did Oswald defect to the Soviet Union? Why did he not follow through on Soviet citizenship? What made him decide to return to the United States?

Most people who met Oswald concluded that he was mentally unstable. What evidence is there of this?

What evidence is there of Oswald impostors? Why is this important?

What role did conspiracy buffs say Jack Ruby played in the conspiracy? Is this viable?

What was the range and scope of the Warren commission's investigation? Why did it not put an end to the conspiracy theories?

What was the nature of the investigation of Jim Garrison?