The Testimony of Marina Oswald Before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury

By Steve Jones

Over the years Marina Oswald has been an enigma to many JFK assassination researchers. She has been accused of being a Soviet agent, a pawn of U.S. intelligence, or simply a confused and frightened young woman who was caught up in an overwhelming national tragedy. Her statements regarding the assassination have contradicted themselves at various times and she has vacillated back and forth as to whether she believes her husband Lee was guilty or innocent of the assassination of President Kennedy. Her Warren Commission testimony has been closely scrutinized by many, but until recently her testimony before the Orleans Parish Grand Jury on February 8, 1968 has been unavailable for public consumption. I read Marina Oswald's testimony with the hopes that it would shed some light into both the mystery of Marina and the assassination itself.

The testimony was plagued with communication problems that popped up from time to time. In 1968, Marina's English was still raw and at times she had to have questions repeated, or answered in such a manner that indicated she really didn't understand the question being asked. Nevertheless, some important information can be gleaned from her testimony.

Marina's testimony gives further corroboration to the belief held by serious assassination researchers that Ruth Paine was indeed affiliated with the CIA. Previous *Probe* articles demonstrate how Ruth's relationship with the Oswalds and her subsequent behavior after the assassination fit the pattern of an intelligence agent or asset. She was most certainly an FBI informant and collaborated with the FBI in manipulation of the evidence of Oswald's possessions after the assassination (see *Probe* back issues May-June '96, Nov-Dec '96, Jan-Feb '97, Nov-Dec '97, March-April '98). Without being asked, Marina volunteered to one of the jurors, "I was advised by the Secret Service not to be connected with her (Ruth Paine).... She was sympathizing with the CIA." Marina was told by the Secret Service that Ruth Paine had something to do with the CIA but was either unable to articulate exactly what that connection was, or was not told. After some confusion as to the exact nature of this connection, Assistant DA Andrew Sciambra asked, " In other words, you were left with the distinct impression that she was in some way connected to the CIA?" "Yes," Marina answered.

Marina testified that while living in Dallas she had an English tutor by the name of George "Boja," clearly a transcription error for George Bouhe. And to my knowledge, the following is new information. Garrison tells Marina that Bouhe's next door neighbor is none other than Jack Ruby. Marina already knew this and told Garrison that after the assassination, Bouhe visited her to tell her that it was just a coincidence that he happened to live next door to her husband's killer. Garrison tells Marina that not only were Bouhe and Ruby neighbors, but also that they were indeed acquainted with each other and shared a common swimming pool at the small apartment complex where they lived. This is an important lead possibly linking Ruby to Oswald that needs to be followed up with further research. Incredibly, Marina then tells Garrison that Bouhe knew Lee and that the two of them didn't get along well. But the context in which Lee and Bouhe knew each other is never mentioned. Who referred Bouhe to Marina? How long did this tutoring last? Did the tutoring occur between 1962 and early 1963, or in the fall of 1963 when Marina lived with the Paines? None of this is explained in the testimony. Bouhe was a member of the Dallas White Russian community. George De Mohrenschildt claimed that Bouhe had introduced him to Lee Harvey Oswald. When questioned, Bouhe denied this. His denial and his attempt to minimize his connections to Oswald and Ruby make him and interesting character.

During the testimony, Marina insists that she was completely in the dark about her husband's day-to-day activities during the summer of 1963 when they lived in New Orleans. Marina related how Lee never told her he had lost his job at the Reilly Coffee Company on July 19, 1963. She didn't learn about that until after the assassination. For the month and a half following his dismissal, Lee would continue to leave in the morning as if going to work and wouldn't return home until dinner time, or sometimes not until late in the evening. Was Oswald simply too embarrassed to tell his wife that he had lost his job and was spending his days looking for another one? Was he enjoying his newfound freedom and having fun exploring the sights and sounds of the Big Easy? If so, how did he support his family with no visible source of income? Or was Oswald involved in undisclosed intelligence activities? Remember that it was during this time in August 1963 that Oswald was positively identified as being in the company of Clay Shaw and David Ferrie in Clinton, Louisiana during a CORE voter registration drive.

Marina described a fascinating story related to Lee's employment status. One day while walking through downtown New Orleans she decided to pay a surprise visit to her husband at work. Someone at the Reilly Coffee Company told her that no one by the name of Oswald worked there. Garrison asked Marina how she could have done this when she spoke no English at the time. She explained that she knew a little English, enough to be able to ask for her husband. She also said that she could read some English that she learned from reading the labels on items at the grocery store. This is how she was able to recognize the Reilly Coffee Company street sign.

Marina could not recall if this incident occurred before or after mid-July when her husband had supposedly been fired from his job. If this event happened before July 19 then it opens up the possibility that Lee never really worked at Reilly at all and that his "employment" there was simply a cover for his other activities. Once again, as in the Bouhe story we are left with tantalizing clues but no definitive answers. Marina sums up her knowledge of Lee's daily activities by saying, " he tried to hide all of his activities from me, he would say I have to sneak out and he would go."

Over the years Marina has claimed that she took the infamous backyard photograph that appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine. Many

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photographic experts have claimed, for reasons too detailed to describe here, that the photograph is a fake. This has led some researchers to doubt Marina's veracity regarding this incident. Her grand jury testimony sheds little light on this controversy. At first she said that she took the picture at the rooming house on Beckley Street where Lee rented a room for the last six weeks of his life. Even the juror questioning her knew that this was highly unlikely and tried to refresh her memory. At this point Marina appeared to become very confused and said, "[W]e moved on Beckley and then went to Ergert" probably meaning Elsbeth, the street where the couple briefly lived when they first moved to Dallas. She never definitely said that she took the picture in the backyard of their home on Neeley Street (where the photo was clearly taken). Giving Marina the benefit of the doubt, one can say that perhaps because of her poor English she didn't understand the question. The other possibility is that her confusion was not genuine and that she was hiding something. It's hard to tell from reading the transcript.

Garrison was very interested in pursuing the issue of Oswald's Manlicher-Carcano rifle and asked a lot of questions about it. Marina stated that Lee kept the rifle in a closet in their apartment on Magazine Street. She claimed to have seen him clean it several times, but never saw him fire it, or knew of him ever firing it. Garrison seems especially interested in learning how the rifle got from New Orleans back to Texas. Marina claimed that Lee did all of the packing of their belongings into Ruth Paine's stationwagon (Ruth drove from Irving, Texas to New Orleans to pick up Marina and take her back with her) and that Ruth did all the unpacking in Irving. The rifle was probably in the car because there is no indication that Lee took it with him to Mexico City or made other arrangements for it's transport to the Paine's home. After the assassination, Ruth expressed shock and indignation that Lee had kept a rifle in her garage. But if Ruth did the unpacking, then how could she have not known of the rifle?

Marina claimed that after the assassination, the FBI told her that Lee was also a suspect in the attempted shooting of General Edwin Walker the previous April. It was only after the FBI told her this that Marina volunteered her own story that indeed her husband had told her that he had shot at Walker. When Garrison pointed out that the slug found in Walker's house was a completely different kind then the Manlicher-Carcano used, Marina claimed innocence of anything other than what Lee had told her about the incident.

Marina also admitted that one week prior to her testimony she was visited by a United States attorney and an official from the Justice Department. Naturally Garrison was suspicious of this and asked her if the visit had anything to do with her upcoming Grand Jury testimony. Marina said that the government officials talked to her about returning some of Lee's belongings to her. More than four years go by and they choose several days after she is subpoenaed to visit her about her husband's possessions? Garrison clearly saw through that one but didn't press the matter further. Marina ended her testimony by saying that she believed that her husband Lee killed President Kennedy. When Garrison asked if she was ever told anything about the assassination other what federal law enforcement agents told her, she replied, "no."

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Although Marina Oswald offers us some important revelations here, what impressed me the most about her testimony is the manner in which District Attorney Jim Garrison and his staff conducted the questioning. While always courteous, they aggressively probed areas of investigation that were ignored by the Warren Commission. Garrison saw that the circumstantial evidence clearly pointed to Oswald being a U.S. intelligence agent, and he persued that angle as thoroughly as possible. He was making connections between Ruby and Oswald and was onto the Paines. In short, Jim Garrison was doing what two official government inquiries never did—honestly investigate the Kennedy assassination. Thanks to the new file releases, we now know much more about how the U.S. government and its allies in the news media pulled out all the stops in trying to destroy Jim Garrison's investigation. If Garrison had been allowed to bring his case to court without interference, it is very likely his areas of inquiry would have further explained the factors and actors behind the Kennedy assassination. That is why thirty years later disinformants are still trotted out to impugn his character and credibility. One can only imagine what might have been. ⌖

Jesse Ventura and the JFK Case - Part 2

By Jim DiEugenio

Our readers know that two issues ago, our cover story consisted of highlights from the memorable Jesse Ventura interview in *Playboy*.

As we noted, with that riveting dialogue, the Minnesota governor became the highest elected official to unleash an unqualified and vehement attack on the Warren Report and its conclusions. Ventura's diatribe against the no-conspiracy verdict, plus his various other outspoken and controversial opinions created a media furor. He was on the cover of *Newsweek*, was a guest on David Letterman's show and made the rounds of the network and cable newsmagazine programs. *Probe* covered the last items and found Ventura quite bracing in his refusal to back down from his opinions on the JFK case.

The publishers of *Playboy* know when they have a good thing in hand, i.e. a subject that will sell more magazines. So on the cover of the March issue, the magazine stated that it was running more of that interview which was conducted by semi-regular correspondent Larry Grobel. This segment is basically a section of outtakes from the interview. Although not as long or as interesting as the first installment, Ventura and Grobel still manage to touch on some elements of the JFK case. And Ventura makes some interesting comments on the contemporary scene in general.

On the Media

—Just like the media—they call themselves experts on elections and yet not one of them could predict my win. Now they're being questioned by the public and don't like it. Why do you think they attack me now?

On Campaign Finance Restrictions

—I would like to see more restrictions put on campaigning, where you're not allowed to start campaigning for any office until so many days before the election. Right now it's: Buy the election. Who can raise the most money? This is one area in which I believe in socialism. If you achieve major party status, each candidate should be given an equal amount of money from the government....

On Term Limits

—It's like term limits. Eighty-five percent of Americans want term limits, yet you never see them