

The Paines: Suspicious Characters

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Ruth and Michael Paine, in whose home Marina Oswald lived in the fall of 1963, are among the most significant, yet least studied of the figures surrounding the Kennedy assassination. Wittingly or unwittingly, they moved the "plot" along. By taking in Oswald's family, the Paines insured the continued separation of Lee and Marina, thus allowing Lee to "play his little spy games" in the absence of witnesses to his activities and associates during the critical time leading up to the assassination. The Paines were the closest persons to Oswald during the months just prior to November 22nd, and their portrayal of him as a cantankerous, violence-prone character with questionable political beliefs lent credibility to the official "lone nut" scenario.

Hospitality

In addition to sheltering Marina, the Paine residence provided a storage space for nearly all the evidence used in the "official-unofficial" indictment of Oswald. Even prior to the assassination, Ruth was collecting "evidence." A letter from Lee to the Russian embassy had been found by Ruth on November 10th. She copied it by hand and later turned it over to the FBI. The Klein's order form, the Walker photograph, the backyard photo, and radical literature all surfaced when Ruth invited the Dallas Police and FBI to search her home, giving them carte blanche to both Lee and Marina's possessions. Ruth went through Marina's drawers and gave the FBI items pertaining to Lee's Mexico City trip, including a bracelet, postcards, and a map. One wonders why someone planning to commit an assassination would allow such items to remain in another person's residence in lieu of destroying or removing the incriminating evidence.

According to her own testimony, Ruth is "irritated" at Lee when he phones her and asks if she will contact attorney John Abt. She was "stunned" that he would call her, and angry that he was "so presuming of his own innocence."¹ Her lack of concern

for his civil rights, and her admitted anger at his constitutional right to a "presumption" of innocence is strange. Especially when one considers that Ruth was in charge of the membership drive for the local ACLU. But, more important, the basis for the locality of the murder weapon, and its association with Oswald, unfolds throughout the testimony of the Paines.

Michael Paine's Warren Commission testimony² confirms that Lee owned a rifle, which was wrapped in a blanket in the Paine's garage. This is hindsight of course, since Michael Paine claims he never realized the item wrapped in a blanket and tied with string was a rifle. He admits to handling this bundle several times while working in his garage, but he thought it was camping equipment. Michael Paine says he reasoned that, since the blanket was green, it must have contained something rustic! It is hard to believe that a man who was in a combat artillery unit in Korea, and also in the Army Reserves for six years, as Michael Paine was, could not recognize the weight and feel of a rifle, especially if it belonged to someone whom he considered prone to violence. Not to mention the fact that green is a military color as well as a rustic one. It seems Paine knew it was a rifle all along, and later chose to hide that fact. Or perhaps it really wasn't a rifle, but he is willing to lead the Commission to that assumption.

Ruth's testimony³ places the rifle in Oswald's hands in time for the assassination. She claims that on Thursday night, November 21st, Oswald showed up unexpectedly (he usually visited on weekends) to visit his family. Around 9 P.M. that evening, Ruth went into the garage and found that a light had been left on. She assures the Commission that she would never, ever leave a light on, and thus assumed that Lee had been in the garage to get some of his belongings which were stored there. The Commission reasons that this is when Oswald retrieved his gun in preparation for the next day. As any good defense attorney would say, the only thing this tells us is that Ruth was in the garage that night. It is hard to imagine Lee going into the garage undetected to rummage around for brown wrapping paper, constructing a package to look like curtain rods, etc. Marina claims in her testimony⁴ that Lee watched television, then went to bed around 9 P.M. She herself stayed up until 11:30 and never saw Lee go to the garage. Furthermore, the person who had the most access to, and reason for entering the garage was Michael Paine who himself tes-

tified that he often would stop by to use his tools which were also stored there.⁵

The Paines always maintain a delicate and contradictory balance between intimacy and distance vis a vis Lee Harvey Oswald. They take on the mantle of "expert witnesses" when they testify to his "violent" character or unconventional political opinions. On other occasions they say they never detected his "violent" nature and that he was harmless.⁶ The day after the assassination, Michael Paine tells his father that he thought Oswald was the kind of person who could have assassinated the President.⁷ Just prior to the assassination, Ruth tells the FBI that Oswald is an "illogical" person who is a "Trotskyite Communist."⁸ Why would the Paines allow someone who was illogical, capable of murder, and a Communist to stay in their home on weekends, especially with their own children present? But when they want to avoid further scrutiny, the Paines subtly distance themselves from Oswald by exhibiting faulty memory, or claiming they didn't really spend much time with him. If they didn't know him well enough to detect his violent nature, how can they be so sure he committed the crime? Michael especially tries to avoid being pinned down when the Commission seems to be asking how much time he spent with Oswald. In answer to their question of how often he would visit his home during the fall of 1963, he responds:

... well as I say it was two nights a week, two evenings a week was a regular thing. I would frequently come around weekends. The garage had been my shop with my tools that I occasionally used, and I would stop by on weekends, on Sunday anyway, Fridays for sure, Sunday accidentally and generally on a Tuesday or Wednesday.⁹

One cannot imagine a more circumspect answer to the query of how many times he saw Oswald at his home. He also conveniently avoids mentioning Thursdays, the night Ruth found the light on in the garage.

Eye of the Storm

In assessing the significance of the Paines, it is important to recall that there are two time frames when the Paines and Oswalds are intertwined—spring and fall of 1963—and that they coincide with several important events which include the purchase of the rifle, the Walker incident, the Mexico City trip, and Oswald's hiring at the Texas School Book Depository.

Ruth Paine first meets Marina in February of 1963. Everett Glover, a friend of Michael Paine and George de Mohrenschildt,

invited Ruth to a party to meet Marina because he knew Ruth was interested in honing her Russian language skills.¹⁰ On March 8th, Ruth Paine initiated contact with Marina by writing her a note, and on March 20th, she visited Marina. In between, on March 13th, Oswald allegedly purchased the rifle. On April 2nd, Ruth invites the Oswalds to dinner, and although she and her husband Michael are separated, he is in attendance as well. In fact, he picked up the Oswalds at their home. On April 7th, Ruth wrote a note to Marina (which she claims she never sent), inviting Marina to live with her. By April 20th, there was a picnic with the Oswalds, and at the end of the month, Marina is staying with Ruth temporarily while Lee goes to New Orleans in search of employment and an apartment. In the middle of this cluster of activity, the Walker shooting took place on April 10th. During that summer the Paines and Oswalds parted company. After dropping Marina off in New Orleans to start a new life with Lee, Ruth returned to Irving and the two women maintained a written correspondence with each other.¹¹

In the first week of June, Ruth received a letter from Marina. Ruth says she only glanced at the letter:

Ruth Paine: . . . a month later to write a proper reply to her, I read this through more carefully and found in the middle of the paragraph discussing my writing a comment by her saying "Very likely I will have to go back to Russia after all."

Jenner: What was the last part?

Ruth: Very likely I will have to go back to Russia after all. A pity.

Ruth says she was so shocked at having not picked it up because of her poor Russian. She immediately wrote back and invited Marina to live with her in Irving instead of going back to Russia.¹² It does seem odd that Ruth, who has been so concerned about Marina's well-being, would only glance at her letter, and not even attempt to answer it until a month later. Marina responds by mid-July claiming that her relationship with Lee has greatly improved and she thanks Ruth for the invitation but declines it.¹³ By July 27th, Ruth is on vacation, traveling around the country visiting friends and family. In mid-August, while on vacation, Ruth receives another letter from Marina who writes that Lee is unemployed. Ruth decides to stop off in New Orleans on her way back home. She stays

with the Oswalds for three days. It is then decided that Marina will return to Dallas with Ruth so she can have her baby in the Parkland Hospital Clinic.¹⁴ Yet according to FBI interviews of Ruth's friends and family, Ruth told everyone she was going to pick up a Russian woman in New Orleans and bring her home to live with her in Irving.¹⁵ Did Ruth make up her mind, prior to arriving in New Orleans, that Marina was going to live with her? Was there another deliberate attempt to separate Marina and Lee? If so, for what reason?

By September 27th, Marina is again living with Ruth in Dallas and Lee is in Mexico City. Michael Paine has even committed to contribute financially to Marina's support while she is living with Ruth.¹⁶ By October 15th, Lee is back in Dallas and working at the depository, employment in large part facilitated by Ruth Paine.

This synopsis places the Paines directly in the maelstrom of events leading up to the assassination. Yet, the focus of the FBI investigation of the Paines concentrated almost entirely on whether they were subversives instead of their day-to-day activities during the time period that coincided with their friendship with the Oswalds. They seemingly didn't investigate Michael at all. They never searched his apartment in Grand Prairie, or examined his telephone records. After the assassination, Michael quickly left his Grand Prairie apartment and reconciled with Ruth.

However, the FBI background check did reveal many "left wing" tendencies with which the paranoid J. Edgar Hoover could have interpreted as subversive like: subscriptions to liberal periodicals, subscriptions to Russian periodicals, membership in the ACLU and the Congress of Racial Equality, associations with convicted draft dodgers, and Russian pen-pals and relatives associated with communism.¹⁷ In the climate of the times why weren't the Paines considered suspects in a leftist plot? In fact their left wing bonafides, spanning a fifty year period (Michael Paine's grandfather and father were on the FBI Security Index)¹⁸ were more believable than Oswald's. Ironically, Hoover sought to shield the Paines from further scrutiny. In fact, in a letter to Rankin, Hoover warns that there could be serious repercussions if certain information about the Paines were made public.¹⁹ What type of revelations would

worry Hoover enough so he would try to conceal them?

Parallel Universes

Who were the Paines? According to friends and family whom the FBI interviewed, the Paines were upstanding, loyal Americans. Their relationship with the Oswalds could only have been of a charitable nature. Nevertheless, a close scrutiny of their FBI files reveals some intriguing intimations that link the Paines, like Oswald, to the intelligence community.

Michael Paine is a direct descendent of Ralph Waldo Emerson. His mother, Ruth Forbes Paine Young, was of the wealthy merchant and banking family, the Forbes family of Boston. One of his aunts on his mother's side married a Cabot. His grand-uncle, Cameron Forbes, served as both governor and later ambassador to the Philippines. In 1963 Michael, a Harvard dropout, lived off trust funds from both the Forbes and Cabot families, and a job (perhaps a sinecure arranged by stepfather Arthur Young) as a research engineer at Bell Helicopter.²⁰ Nevertheless, in spite of their differences in social standing, Michael Paine and Lee Oswald bear some striking resemblances. Both their mothers married three times, and both men were deprived of being raised by their real fathers. Both men were described by associates as sullen loners, who liked to argue politics, and Michael would often take both sides of a political argument just to get people riled up.²¹ Michael attended ACLU meetings and also expressed interest in attending John Birch Society meetings. Both men were experiencing marital difficulties in 1963, and living apart from their wives. More importantly, there were elements in the backgrounds of both Paine and Oswald that suggested intelligence links.

Although the Forbes clan was a wealthy, traditional New England family, the Paines veered off to the left. Michael's father, Lyman Paine was a famous Trotskyite who became a collaborator of socialist C. L. R. James.²² His grandfather was an "eccentric" minister who championed "communist front organizations."²³ Michael's stepfather, however, was connected to the defense industry as the inventor of the Bell Helicopter. Michael's mother, Ruth, played a significant role in CIA officer Cord Meyer's "World Federalists," and was a close friend of Mary Bancroft, former OSS operative and mistress to Allen Dulles.²⁴ At one point, Michael worked for

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the Franklin institute, a known CIA conduit.²⁵ Furthermore, there are indications that Michael Paine, like Oswald, acted like a provocateur.

According to an FBI document,²⁶ in 1963 a student at SMU often observed a man fitting Michael Paine's description eating breakfast in a cafeteria across from the campus. On one such occasion, this man accosted the student and began a heated discussion about America's unfair treatment of Cuba. In addition, the man claimed to know a Lee Harvey Oswald who was a communist. The event allegedly occurred in April 1963, around the same time that an FBI informant claimed that Oswald had been passing out Fair Play for Cuba Committee literature on the streets of Dallas.²⁷ When questioned by the FBI, Paine admitted to eating breakfast on Sunday mornings at his cafeteria and in engaging the students there in political discussions about Cuba. Thus we have documented evidence of Paine, and Oswald, engaging in similar activities in the same time period.

Ruth Paine's background discloses several links to the intelligence community. She came from an upper middle class New York family, who later moved to Ohio. Her father, a top executive for Nationwide Insurance, had worked for the OSS.²⁸ An FBI document stated that the CIA considered using him to operate a cooperative educational center in Vietnam in 1957, but for some unknown reason decided against it.²⁹ More interesting is Ruth's assertion to the New Orleans grand jury convened by Jim Garrison, that her father, "... was on leave to an agency called the International Cooperative Alliance."³⁰ There is precious little information on the ICA, but de Mohrenschildt claimed in his Warren Commission testimony that he traveled abroad for the ICA.³¹ Furthermore, CIA asset and de Mohrenschildt acquaintance, Joseph Dryer, was asked if he could associate anyone else with the name, Clemard Charles, a Haitian business associate of de Mohrenschildt's. The House Select Committee gave him a list of names and Dryer recognized the name of William Avery Hyde, though he couldn't quite recall why.³² A more interesting question is why did the HSCA place Hyde's name on the list?

In her New Orleans grand jury testimony, Ruth admitted that her brother-in-law, John Hoke, was employed by the Communications Resource Division of AID,

and subsequent to the assassination, so was her father. There is plentiful evidence that the Agency for International Development was used as a CIA front and conduit to finance covert operations. Former Ohio governor John Gilligan, who headed AID during the Carter years said, "... at one time, AID field offices were infiltrated from top to bottom with CIA people. The idea was to plant operatives in every kind of activity we had overseas-government, volunteer, religious, every kind."³³

Ruth's sister, Sylvia Hyde Hoke, worked for "a government agency," but which one, Ruth did not recall. FBI background reports on Ruth's family indicate her sister worked for the Air Force,³⁴ but there is another document which claims she is a CIA employee.³⁵

Could it be that William Avery Hyde, the businessman, had been recruited early in his career by the CIA (recall he was OSS) and that while doing insurance business abroad he also did intelligence work? Did he eventually use his influence to get his daughter (Sylvia) and son-in-law, employment in the intelligence community? If so, was this an intelligence family with Ruth acting as an informal asset?

Because of the evidence and circumstances collected above, the authors believe the Paines merit further scrutiny by the Review Board. We do not necessarily believe they participated in a plot to murder President Kennedy, but as Sylvia Meagher pointed out:

Ruth Paine... is a complex personality, despite her rather passive facade.

Some examples from her testimony show a predisposition against Oswald and a real or pretended friendliness toward the FBI and other Establishment institutions which should not be overlooked in evaluating her role in the case ...

Mrs. Paine is sometimes a devious person, and her testimony must be evaluated in that light.³⁶

In 1964, Robert Oswald said, on more than one occasion, that he felt the Paines, especially Michael, knew more about the assassination than they were telling.³⁷ We believe the real story of their role in the lives of the Oswalds still remains undisclosed. To clear up the mystery and the discrepancies, they should be called as witnesses by the Board.

In the next issue, Probe will present the second part of this series which will focus on Ruth Paine's activities after the assassination, including those in Nicaragua in the eighties. These excerpts are part of a soon to be published annotated volume on the Paines. ♣

Notes

1. WC Vol. III pp. 85-86
2. WC Vol. II p. 415
3. WC Vol. III pp. 46-47
4. WC Vol. II p. 66
5. WC Vol. II p. 414
6. WC Vol. II p. 422
7. FBI 105-126128-1st NR 99, 3/24/64
8. FBI 105-126128-26, 2/11/63
9. WC Vol. IX p. 436
10. WC Vol. IX pp. 25-26
11. WC Vol. II pp. 444-452; WC Vol. II pp. 488-494
12. WC Vol. II pp. 491-492. It was during this time that Ruth wrote to Ruth Kloefer and requested she visit Marina in New Orleans. According to an article, "A Fix in Time: Vernon Bundy Reconsidered," (*Probe*, 1/22/95) by researcher Bill Davy, Ruth Kloefer had connections to Clay Shaw.
13. WC Vol. II p. 497
14. WC Vol. III pp. 4-5
15. FBI 105-26128-75, 3/14/64; 105-126128-72, 3/13/64
16. WC Vol. II pp. 492-493
17. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 26, 12/26/63; 105-126128 1st NR 18, 12/23/63; 105-126128-13, 12/23/63; 105-126128-11, 12/18/63; 105-126128-10, 12/17/63; 105-126128 1st NR 93 2nd NR 93, 3/20/64
18. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 88, 3/18/64
19. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 120, 10/23/64
20. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 11, 1/7/64
21. FBI 105-126129030 NR 49, 3/16/64
22. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 93, 2nd NR 93, 3/20/64
23. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 88
24. Kelly, William, "Lines of Inquiry"; unpublished manuscript, pp. 69-70
25. FBI 105-126128 1st NR 26; CIABASE by Ralph McGehee, Herndon, VA, 1992.
26. DL 100-10461, 6/15/64
27. WC Vol. IV p. 414
28. CIA memo dated 12/5/63, his agency file number was ssd 157435
29. FBI 105-126128-5, 12/12/63
30. Grand Jury Testimony, p. 59
31. WC Vol. IX p. 202
32. HSCA Vol. XII pp. 60-61
33. Blum, William, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Intervention Since WWII*. Common Cause Press, 1995, p. 235
34. FBI 105-126128-29, 12/16/63
35. CIA memo dated 11/29/63
36. Meagher, Sylvia, *Accessories After the Fact*, Vintage Books, 1992, p. 217