

CHAPTER 14

Lee Harvey Oswald

"[Oswald] ... realize[d] that this was no simulated assassination but the real thing ..."

— Footnote buried in the 1968 book *Farewell America*, p. 339

"... Oswald had been told that he was to stage a fake assassination attempt to alert the government of the necessity for beefed-up Secret Service security."

— *Encyclopedia of the JFK Assassination*, p. 231 (based on the work of Hugh C. McDonald, former chief of detectives, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, FBI academy graduate, military intelligence veteran, and Hughes Aircraft employee)¹

The "patsy" in the security test, as well as the assassination,² was Lee Harvey Oswald, who made every agent's worst nightmare come true, and in the worst-case scenario: in the most optimum conditions, courtesy of the agency itself! Conspiracy or no conspiracy, total agency plan or "rogue element" plot, the security test made *everyone* involved—including those on the "official" side of the trip planning—cover-up their actions and in-actions. But there is a twist to all of this: Oswald may have had a connection to the *Secret Service*.

Oswald's one-man "Fair Play for Cuba Committee" headquarters in New Orleans was located at the decidedly anti-communist housing of former ONI and FBI Agent Guy Bannister's operations at 544 Camp Street. This building stood in the heart of the *intelligence community*—the ONI, the FBI, the CIA, and the *Secret Service*.³

In this same immediate area, Oswald was seen frequenting the Crescent City Garage, an establishment well known to the Secret Service—their official cars were stored there. Adrian Alba, owner of the garage, was also known to the agency. Both Alba and Oswald spent a great deal of time perusing Alba's gun magazines (the rifle traced to Oswald came from one of the coupons Oswald allegedly cut out from one of Alba's gun magazines, as "discovered" by the Secret Service, who confiscated the original magazine from Alba's garage, beating the FBI to the punch).⁴

Alba told the House Assassinations Committee that Oswald made contact with an "agent from Washington" within a short distance from his Crescent City Garage.⁵ The agent in question had previously obtained a green Studebaker automobile from Alba; records show that the Studebaker in question was signed out by a *Secret Service* agent!⁶ Oswald met this agent at least twice, according to Alba, one time even receiving a "good-sized envelope" which Oswald hid in his shirt on his way back to work.⁷

Not long after the shooting on November 22, 1963, Oswald calmly walked out the front door of the Book Depository when, according to Oswald himself, "a

young crew-cut man rushed up to him and *said he was from the Secret Service, showed a book of identification, and asked him where the phone was. Oswald said he pointed toward the pay phone in the building and that he saw the man actually go to the phone before he left.*⁸ [Emphasis added.]

Lane Bertram, SAIC of the Houston office,⁹ tried to link Oswald with the rival agency—the FBI—after the shooting, and planted the story that Oswald heard about a Kennedy-inspired plot to kill Castro, which made Oswald kill JFK!¹⁰ In addition, Bertram was the agent who reported of *Jack Ruby's presence in Houston on November 21, 1963 (when JFK was present), as Ruby was stalking the President*—Ruby had been seen by five witnesses on the 400 block of Milam Street in Houston for “several hours”, while Ruby was also spotted one block from JFK’s “entrance route to and from the Rice Hotel where [JFK] stayed.”¹¹ Finally, when New Orleans lawyer Dean Andrews (a man known to the Secret Service for his assistance in legal matters) testified to the Warren Commission that a “Clay Bertrand” called him on November 23, 1963 and asked him to defend Oswald (Andrews had previously seen Oswald in the summer of 1963 on various legal matters), no one realized that “Clay Bertrand” was phonetically close to Lane Bertram.¹² In fact, the SAIC of the New Orleans office, John W. Rice, stated that Andrews was “*well known to this office [emphasis added]*”.¹³ However, when the FBI attempted to find out who the man really was, they stated: “... locate any record identifiable with Clay Bertrand or *Bertram [emphasis added]*”!¹⁴ Finally, Ruth Paine stated that Oswald went to Houston to see an unidentified friend on September 26, 1963 (the *same* day that the White House officially announced JFK’s trip to Dallas for the Fall).¹⁵ The ARRB’s Doug Horne noted in a memo dated April 16, 1996: “It is interesting to note that three events—Oswald’s departure from New Orleans on or about 24/25 September (September 23 is the last full day he can be firmly placed there by eyewitnesses, but there are some indications he may not have left until September 24 or 25), the “Leon Oswald”–Angel–Leopoldo visit to Sylvia Odio in Dallas on 26 or 27 September, and the Oswald visits to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City on September 27—all occur immediately after un-named White House sources report to the press that on September 24, 1963 a final decision was made to visit Texas on a 2-day trip scheduled for Nov. 21–22, 1963 ... the Secret Service Protective Survey Reports ... which were destroyed in 1995 commence with trip files starting on this same date: September 24, 1963.” [Emphasis added.]

The Warren Commission’s J. Lee Rankin to Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon: “Have you made any inquiry into the Secret Service to determine whether or not Lee Harvey Oswald was ever an agent of that Service?” Dillon: “Yes. *I heard rumors of this type of thing very early*, and I asked the direct question of Chief Rowley and was informed that he never had any connection with the Secret Service.”¹⁶ [Emphasis added.] Dillon “heard rumors”?

“Everyone thought (Ruby) was a Secret Service agent.”

— CBS newsman Robert Huffaker’s bizarre comment made on November 24, 1963, right after Ruby shot Oswald in the basement of the Dallas Police station

Returning to Bertram, *The Houston Chronicle* reported on November 22, 1963:

Lane Bertram, agent in charge here of the Secret Service, the agency charged with protecting the President's life, said: "There was no information that an assassination attempt would be made against Mr. Kennedy during the Texas tour." Bertram, whose agents helped protect the President during his visit here, said: "We always anticipate trouble but there was nothing to indicate what would happen in Dallas. We knew there was always the possibility that some mentally deranged person would make an attempt on the President's life. *We were worried about the irrational [rather] than hired assassins.*"

Bertram said he was amazed at the assassination in light of the warm reception Kennedy received from "remarkably well-behaved and respectful crowds in Houston." This is the first time a President has been killed since the Secret Service was organized after the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, Bertram said.

Secret Service agents here have checked out or are investigating a half dozen threats against the President, but there is nothing to indicate that any of the threats was serious, Bertram said. The White House switchboard set up at the Rice Hotel during Kennedy's stay here received a number of crank calls but no threats, he said.

Every precaution possible is taken to protect the President when he appears in public, but it is impossible to guarantee perfect protection, he added.

When a Secret Service man takes his oath he swears to do anything necessary to protect the President, even to stepping in front of an assassin's bullet, Bertram said.

[Emphasis added.]¹⁷

Michael Dorman, later of *Newsday* fame and a harsh critic of Jim Garrison, dedicated his book "... to all the present and former members of the U.S. Secret Service, with particular appreciation to retired Agent Lane Bertram,¹⁸ who took the trouble to show a young reporter the ropes in days gone by." This Oswald-did-it book stands out for its sickeningly sweet approach to the Secret Service's ultimate failure.¹⁹

¹ Hugh C. McDonald, *Appointment in Dallas* (Zebra Books, 1975). McDonald is also the author of *LBJ and the JFK Conspiracy* (Condor, 1978), as well as three instructional books about police work which are still standard texts in many police academies.

² Begrudgingly, and still with an open mind for any further revelations, the author accepts that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Officer J. D. Tippit, due in no small measure to Dale Myers' outstanding book *With Malice: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Murder of Officer J. D. Tippit* (Oak Cliff Press, 1998). However, this in no way infers that Oswald was the sole killer of President Kennedy and/or that there was not a conspiracy; far from it. In fact, it is the author's belief that Oswald killed Tippit either because (a) he was going to be killed *by* Tippit (self defense), as Tippit may have been in on a conspiracy to silence Oswald (a theory once espoused by the HSCA's Andy Purdy); or (b) he panicked and killed an innocent officer. With regard to Myers' JFK assassination work, the author is far less impressed.

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- ³ Numerous sources including *Not in Your Lifetime*, *Crossfire*, and even the movie *JFK*.
- ⁴ 26 H 764; 10 H 220; 23 H 728.
- ⁵ As reported in *Crossfire*, p. 229.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 229.
- ⁸ 24 H 479.
- ⁹ 25 H 161. Interestingly, Rufus Youngblood worked with Bertram when Rufus was a rookie field agent in the Atlanta, Georgia office (*20 Years in the Secret Service*, p. 17).
- ¹⁰ CD 705, pp. 1, 767; see also *Look*, July 12, 1966, p. 69. See also *JFK: The Book of the Film*, pp. 132–3.
- ¹¹ 25 H 378–381. See also 23 H 169 report of SAIC of Houston Office Lane Bertram regarding Joe Bonds, former business partner of Ruby's, as well as 26 H 184–5 Bertram report regarding stripper Pixie Lynn—her allegations concerning Ruby and Oswald attending homosexual parties in Dallas.
- ¹² Andrews interview with Fred Newcomb; CD 75, p. 305; 11 H 327; 26 H 704; 11 H 332–3; 26 H 357; see also *Murder from Within*, pp. 271–2, 287–9.
- ¹³ CD 87.
- ¹⁴ 26 H 356.
- ¹⁵ 23 H 409; 3 H 10; WR 651; *Time*, December 6, 1963, p. 33A; *The Dallas Morning News*, September 26, 1963 states (reporting from Jackson Hole, Wyoming): “White House sources told the Dallas Morning News exclusively Wednesday night that President Kennedy will visit Texas Nov. 21 and 22 ... The final White House decision to make the trip to Texas came late Tuesday night, these sources said ... it was considered likely that the President will visit Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Fort Worth.”
- ¹⁶ 5 H 585.
- ¹⁷ *Houston Chronicle*, November 22, 1963, “3rd Extra” edition, by Bob Tutt. (Note: This Extra edition was the third of four printed by the Chronicle as the story of President Kennedy's assassination unfolded. Its lead headline read: “Assassin's Bullet Kills Kennedy; Connally Shot, in Grave Condition”.)
- ¹⁸ From www.chron.com/content/chronicle/special/jfk/index.html: “Where Were You?” (Houston) “On November 22, 1963, my family lived in Houston, and I still am living here. When I heard the news about President Kennedy, my 3-year-old son and I were at a Laundromat on Long Point in Spring Branch. The Laundromat had a TV set, so we heard the first announcement. That evening, my husband and I went over to visit our neighbors who lived in the house behind us, *Lane and Edna Bertram*. *Lane Bertram at that time was head of the Secret Service here in Houston and had just been in charge of President Kennedy's visit to Houston the day before*. We had all talked about the successful visit that evening and the upcoming visit to Dallas the next day. I will never forget Lane's comment about the assassination in Dallas. Lane said, “*It should never have happened, there is no excuse for it; and it could never have happened here in Houston!*” [Maybe because the Secret Service was actually protecting JFK properly in Houston?] Such a tragedy! Arlynn Battenfield, Houston.” [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁹ Michael Dorman's *Secret Service Story* (1967), p. 4, regarding Bertram. See also p. 8.