Search for a Stripper
by Ian Griggs

I am about to introduce you to one of the most mysterious and charismatic ladies in this entire case. Many researchers know her by her Carousel Club stage name KATHY KAY or perhaps by her supposed "correct name" KAY COLEMAN or maybe KAY HELEN OLSEN. I doubt, however, that many know that she began life in London, England with the unremarkable name: LILIAN HELEN HARVEY.

(Author's note: I have spent several years studying this important character in the case. My eventual aim is to publish the definitive account of her background and the part I believe she played in the events before, during and after the assassination of President Kennedy. What follows is a greatly abbreviated version of my current research in this area. I have tried to cover her life and background as well as the time that she worked for Jack Ruby and her subsequent disappearance from Dallas.

I have deliberately omitted details of several of my original sources since some of them are people occupying sensitive positions of authority on both sides of the Atlantic. Those of you familiar with my previous published research know that I always make a point of acknowledging my sources. However, discretion and certain assurances I have made dictate that this cannot always be done in this instance.)

Introduction
When I first undertook to study, and hopefully trace, Kathy Kay, I did so purely because she was another "British Connection" in this case. At that point (1993) I did not even know her real name.

Having already carried out a comprehensive study of the Carousel Club entertainers, I was well aware that a stripper's real name seldom bore any similarity to her stage name. In the early days I was assured by several people that Kathy Kay was dead. I am now certain that these opinions were nothing more than erroneous, but honestly-held, beliefs. I do not think that there was anything sinister here.

The knowledge that "Kathy Kay" had been born in England, however, proved the very stimulus I needed. Just who was this mysterious lady, and how had she become one of the most

85 Dryfield Road, Edgware, London - Lillian Helen Harvey was born in this house - Photograph Ian Griggs 1995

19 Chelsea Avenue, Thorpe Bay, Essex (house with two satellite dishes) - The house where Lillian Helen Harvey lived with her parents prior to her marriage to Kenneth Joseph Coleman - Photo Ian Griggs 1995
popular strippers in Jack Ruby's Dallas club?

True identity

Although it takes just a few lines here to correctly identify Kathy Kay and provide her early background, the process of obtaining even the most basic information occupied several months. I have neither the time nor space here to explain my methods in depth so the following paragraphs provide nothing more than a rough framework.

Working purely from some very sketchy descriptive information which I located in an FBI report dated 11th December 1963 (CE 1480), I conducted intensive research at the Office of Population Census & Surveys (OPCS) in London. This houses complete details of all births, marriages and deaths in the UK. Following much hard work and effort, I eventually succeeded in locating and obtaining copies of the Birth Certificate and first Marriage Certificate. (Note: OPCS has changed its title to the Family Record Office but it remains at the same location, St Catherine's House, London).

These documents showed that the lady we have come to know as Kathy Kay had been born Lilian Helen Harvey on 13 April 1936 in a small terraced house in Dryfield Road, Edgware, a pleasant, well-to-do district of north west London.

On 5 June 1954, less than two months after her 18th birthday, she had married Kenned Joseph Coleman, official No. AF 18379450, a Staff Sergeant serving with the 20th Fighter Bomber Wing of the United States Air Force based at Wethersfield, Essex.

He was six years her senior, having been born in Nashville, Tennessee on 3rd March 1930. At the time of her marriage, Lilian was living with her parents at a house in Chelsea Avenue, Thorpe Bay, on the eastern edge of the better-known town of Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

I also learnt that her occupation at the time of her marriage was "buncher in an artificial flower factory" but efforts to trace her employers proved fruitless. None of them were still trading.

Initially I was perplexed how a teenaged girl in Thorpe Bay could have come to meet a member of the USAF based at Wethersfield, some 50 miles away. With local help, however, I established with 99% certainty that Lilian had met Staff Sergeant Kennedy at one of the regular weekend dances at the base when local girls from the surrounding towns and villages were bussed in to provide dance partners.

I visited and photographed the Edgware house, the Thorpe Bay house, the former USAF Wethersfield base and the Roman Catholic Church of Our Blessed Lady and St Helen Empress, Southend where the marriage had taken place. The current priest, Father Tom Lavin, was very helpful in showing me original documents pertaining to the marriage.

Going to America

On 14 May 1956, just under two years after their marriage, Kenned and Lilian Coleman left England for the United States. They lived in Victoria, Texas but I have been unable to establish whether or not Kenned was still in the USAF at this time. I do know, however, that he had family connections in Houston, TX (where he had been confirmed in 1941).

They had two daughters, Suuzan (born in England) and Sheri (born in the US), but in 1958 the couple separated. Lilian moving to Riverside, California whilst Kenned went to Illinois. Lilian retained custody of the children. They reunited briefly later...
CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE

Marriage solemnised at Church of Our Blessed Lady and St Helen, Deptford, London, on the 5th June, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name and surname</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Father's name and surname</th>
<th>Rank or profession</th>
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</thead>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Kathleen Joseph Coleman</td>
<td>24/25</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>J. Coleman</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jane Mary Davies</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>J. Davies</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This marriage was solemnised between

Kathleen Joseph Coleman
Jane Mary Davies

in the presence of

R. C. Harvey
R. C. Harvey

22nd February, 1954

MX 857739
that year when Lilian joined Kennard in Illinois and they then moved to Kansas, living initially in Salina and then to Wichita.

During this period, Kennard was very sick and this may have been the initial reason for their brief reconciliation.

They divorced in 1960 (I have copies of the relevant documents).

**Dallas**

Together with her two daughters, Lilian moved to Dallas, Texas in June 1961. The reason she chose this particular city is not clear. The following month, she began to work as a stripper at the Carousel Club. She was introduced to Jack Ruby when she "just went up to his club to see some girlfriends." Whether these girlfriends were on Ruby's payroll or were other acquaintances I do not know but Lilian's activities in late 1960 and early 1961 are unclear. Perhaps she had already entered "show business".

Lilian now became Kathy Kay and apart from a brief spell in 1962 when she worked at the Colony Club (literally next door to the Carousel), she continued to work for Ruby right up until the assassination. The Carousel Club advertisement in the Dallas Times Herald of 22nd November 1963 shows Kathy Kay as one of "Five Exotics" due on stage that evening. That performance, of course, never took place as Ruby closed the club following the assassination.

Kathy Kay was one of the most popular of Ruby's girls. She was tall, slim and blonde with blue eyes and she had something which none of the other girls had - an English accent.

Several ex-patrons of the Carousel Club have mentioned to me that she would talk to the audience when she was on stage. That was to become an accepted part of her act. It was almost a trademark. She had no need to include a snake or balloons in her act. Her natural voice became her gimmick.

The former Carousel Club feature stripper Shari Angel told me, "She was English. She was my pal. She spoke a lot of cockney." (Shari was unaware that true Cockneys do not originate from the part of London where Lilian Harvey was born but this remark did confirm her London roots.)

**Enter Patrolman Harry Olsen**

Despite the denials of the Warren Commission investigators, it now appears that the Carousel Club became a regular haunt for several off-duty DPD officers, both plain clothes and uniform. One of these was Patrolman Harry Neal Olsen, a member of the Headquarters Station staff within the Patrol Division of the DPD. Olsen claimed that he had first met Ruby during a routine check of the Carousel Club in 1961. He became a regular patron and, in his own words, began dating Kathy Kay "from the early fall of 1962."

At this time, she was a divorcée and Olsen was separated from his wife and waiting for his own divorce to become final, which it did in October 1963.

Jack Ruby had no objection to one of his star performers dating a policeman, in fact he welcomed it. Kathy would usually dance seven nights a week and Olsen would be there to watch her on at least one of those nights. Although he did not particularly like Olsen, Ruby came to trust his judgment and would sometimes consult him when he had personnel problems. It seems that the club owner and the cop got to know one another without becoming particularly good friends. As I will explain later, there was at last one
occasion when they went ice-skating together.

During this period, Kathy Kay was living in an apartment at 325 North Ewing Street, Oak Cliff. I have learnt from one of her ex-neighbours that she and her two daughters were well-liked in the immediate apartment complex and they would join in local activities at the pool, barbecue area, etc. Kathy's employment at the Carousel Club was no secret and neither did it appear to carry any social stigma. One unsubstantiated rumour which I picked up here is that she was visited at her apartment by Lee Harvey Oswald on at least one occasion. Unfortunately, this came to me via a third party and I have to treat it with a great deal of suspicion. At least some of the time, Olsen also lived with Kathy Kay at the apartment.

From her Warren Commission testimony it becomes obvious that Kathy Kay got along well with Jack Ruby. He visited her several times at her apartment but these visits were strictly in connection with club business. She also pointed out that he entertained "all the employees" at his own apartment on 4th July each year.

The day of the assassination

Kathy Kay worked at the Carousel Club on the evening of Thursday, 21st November 1963 as usual. Later she could not recall what she did on the morning of the 22nd but surmised that after getting up in mid-morning, she had been by the pool with her children.

She then visited Harry Olsen at "an estate just a ways from where I lived." I feel that this strange episode has been so well described and documented that I need not repeat it here.

Patrolman Olsen was off duty at this time, having broken a kneecap several weeks before. He was forced to wear a cast on his leg and walked with the aid of crutches.

This injury had occurred when Jack Ruby, Kathy Kay, feature stripper Shari Angel and Olsen had gone ice-skating together at Fair Park. Ruby had accidentally crashed into Olsen on the ice and run over his leg, injuring his kneecap.

Both Harry Olsen and Kathy Kay remained strangely reticent about their actions on the afternoon of the assassination. The location of the estate which Olsen claimed to have been guarding has never been established. At about 1.15pm, Kathy telephoned the Carousel Club and was told by Andrew Armstrong, the bartender, that the club would not open that evening. She then returned to her apartment and sat with her landlady, presumably following the media coverage of the assassination. On completion of his "guarding job", Harry arrived just after 6pm, and they watched TV together.

Later that evening, Kathy Kay and Harry Olsen drove (in his car) to Dealey Plaza "to see where the President was shot".

At around midnight, they were sitting in the parked car outside a garage on the corner of Jackson and Field in downtown Dallas when they met Jack Ruby. Whether this was a chance meeting or an arranged rendezvous has never been established. According to Olsen, he then spoke with Ruby for "two or three hours" in the presence of Kathy Kay. In her version, the conversation went on for "an hour or so at least".

It was during this conversation that Kathy Kay was alleged to have passed the remark about the alleged assassin: "In England they would have Oswald by his toes and drag him through the street". In her testimony, however, she denied that she had ever used those words. I am inclined to believe her denial as this expression does not appear to be one which would come naturally from a Londoner.

Nothing remarkable appears to have happened to Kathy Kay the following day (Saturday 23rd).

Ruby shoots Oswald

At about 11.30am on the morning of Sunday 24th, Kathy Kay was awoken by one of her daughters who told her: "Jack shot Oswald!" At about 4.00pm that afternoon, Kathy Kay and Harry Olsen drove to Henrietta, Texas to visit Harry's parents. It would be interesting to learn the reason for this visit. Olsen's father was a preacher and he was unaware of his future daughter-in-law's occupation. They drove back to Dallas later that night. Kathy had a driving licence at this time and in view of Olsen's incapacity it is almost certain that she drove the car on the 320 miles round trip.

A few days later, after obtaining clearance from the union (the American Guild of Variety Artists - AGVA), Kathy Kay collected her costumes, back pay and personal effects from the Carousel Club. On 2nd December, she went to work at the Kings Club in Oklahoma City because she "wanted to make some money for Christmas". Another of Ruby's ex-stripppers, Nancy Morrow Powell (stage name Taunni True), was living in a motel room there and Kathy stayed with her for three
THE DEALY PLAZA ECHO

The following description was obtained at the time of interview:

Race: White
Sex: Female
Marital Status: Divorced
Eye Color: Blue
Complexion: Fair
Height: 5'7
Weight: 140
Hair: Light

Address:
1326 Dallas, Llanore, England
(entered United States May 14, 1956, as wife of COLEMAN.)

COMMISSION EXHIBIT No. 1480—Continued

Excerpt from Warren Commission Exhibit CE1480 showing the description of Kay Helen Coleman - FBI Report dated 11 December 1963.

weeks. Harry Olsen remained in Dallas at this time.

The following few weeks of Kathy Kay's life are difficult to trace. However there is a record of an interview of formerCarousel Club emcee/comedian Wally Weston (a former husband of Shari Angel) by FBI Special Agents Jesus Hormigo and John M Erwin at Casselberry, Florida on 3rd September 1976 which suggests that she was present at a meeting (venue unspecified) "approximately three weeks after the shooting of President Kennedy". During this interview, Weston said that during the meeting "he was talking with Kathy Kay in the presence of Billy Willis, a drummer, about Jack Ruby killing Lee Harvey Oswald. Kay told him that she had danced with the man who shot President Kennedy about one month before the shooting, which was about a week before Weston slugged the customer who called him a Communist (claimed by Weston to have been Oswald). Kay remarked that it was the same man that shot President Kennedy that she had danced with earlier and that Weston had slugged."

The next definite event I have established is her marriage to Olsen on 16th January 1964 at the Rosemont Christian Church, Dallas. Kathy Kay became Mrs Kay Helen Olsen, the name under which she testified before Assistant Counsel Arlen Spector of the Warren Commission on 6th August 1964 in Los Angeles, California. On 1st February 1964, the couple, together with Kathy's two children, moved to that city. Although I have been unsuccessful in tracing their LA address, I have learnt from certain official documents that they occupied at least two different addresses in Long Beach, California during late 1964.

Divorce and remarriage

The marriage between former stripper Kathy Kay and ex-cop Harry Olsen was not to last but I have been unable to establish whether when it ended or the circumstances. I have, however, managed to trace the name of her third (and current) husband, together with their present address. I am sworn not to divulge either. Suffice to say that all her addresses in the past few years, it is in California. I do not believe that she has lived outside the state since settling there after her 1964 marriage to Olsen.

I have traced California addresses which the former Kathy Kay has occupied in San Jose (where she worked in real estate), Campbell, Long Beach (two), Riverside, Santa Cruz and Sunnyvale, plus, of course, the present one.

An Unsatisfactory Ending

Naturally, there was only one way that I wanted all this research to finish; conducting a video or audio interview face to face with Kathy Kay.

On 13th June 1995, I flew to San Francisco (via Dallas, TX and Albuquerque NM) to take part in a live TV show being hosted by my good friend and fellow researcher Hal Verh. This was the obvious chance to get out to visit Kathy Kay. I had kept her home address and telephone number very much to myself - in fact, the only researchers who know them are a close contact in Kansas (who was instrumental in finding them) plus my British friend and collaborator Melanie Swift (whose sister, coincidentally, had been married at the same church as Lilian Harvey and Kenned Coleman).

Kathy Kay at work on the runway of the Carousel Club, Dallas. Photograph taken by Larry Rocco two weeks prior to the assassination. Taken from Armstrong Exhibit No.5303-l (191136)
THE DEALY PLAZA ECHO

A few months prior to this California visit, I had spoken with Beverly Oliver in Dallas and she had kindly given me a copy of her book Nightmare in Dallas in which she had written a personal note to Kathy. It closed with the sentence “You can trust Mr Griggs with everything” which it was hoped would help to put Kathy at her ease when I met her.

When I arrived in San Francisco I stayed at a very pleasant motel close to the marina, just a mile from the Golden Gate Bridge. I had still not attempted to make contact with Kathy Kay so I was quickly on the telephone, hoping to reach her. I must have telephoned a dozen or more times within a four-day period but all I ever got through to was an answering machine. This provided a very strange message spoken by her current husband, Stephen, but it was confirmed to me that I had the right number as her current married name was mentioned and part of the recorded message referred to her as “Kay” – and actually concluded with her laughing in the background.

Despite leaving the telephone number and address of my motel, I did not receive any call back from either Kathy or her husband. I even sent her a letter, explaining who I was and my reason for being in San Francisco. I enclosed a few photographs of the Edgeware house where she had been born, the church where she first married, etc. Maybe she watched my television appearance – I don’t know.

One evening, a couple of days before I was due to fly back to Dallas and then home, something happened (which I am unwilling to divulge here) which convinced me that I would be unable to contact the former Kathy Kay. I simply spent my remaining time in California acting the tourist!

I wandered around the many attractions of San Francisco, visited the old Haight-Ashbury district (to pay homage to The Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin), walked the Golden Gate and watched the yacht races in San Francisco Bay. I certainly made no further attempt to contact Kathy Kay.

That was it. Maybe I’ll try again someday. Maybe I won’t!

Rumours

Rumours abound about the lady who is the subject of this paper. As is often the case, however, most of them are just that - rumours!

Apart from Wally Weston’s uncorroborated claim made to the FBI in 1976, there is no proof or corroboration that she ever danced with Lee Harvey Oswald in the Carousel Club. She denied that she ever saw him in there. There is nothing to substantiate stories that she saw her dance and became infatuated with her. There is nothing to add credence to a story that circulated a few years ago to the effect that she was seen to drop a paper bag containing a pistol somewhere behind the picket fence. There is nothing to suggest that she was in any way implicated with the assassination of the President or the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald.

As I have proved, there is no truth in the rumour that she is dead! She is alive and well and living in California, in a small town a hundred miles outside San Francisco. She is now 62 years old and has absolutely no wish to be found and interviewed by researchers like you and I. Her husband, Stephen, has Italian sounding surname - but a voice which seems to have a touch of Welsh about it. Perhaps in her mature years, the lady who captivated the Dallas nightlife in the early 60s with her English accent has reverted to her European roots.

Sources and acknowledgements

As I explained at the beginning of this paper, I am not at liberty to divulge all the primary sources which I have used here. Many people who have assisted my research must, at their own request, remain anonymous.

Sources which I can name include the following:


5. Various FBI reports recently released under the JFK Act.

6. The staff of the Family Records Office, London (formerly the OPCS).

7. Researchers: Malcolm Blunt, Barbara Carlyon, Rob Shaw and Melanie Swift in the UK and Mike Blackwell, Brian Edwards, Rachel Rendish, Gary Shaw and Hal Verb in the USA, plus many others

8. Several former acquaintances of Kathy Kay including Shari Angel, Beverly Oliver and Johnny Calvin Brewster, an ex-Oak Cliff neighbour.

9. Some excellent photographs of Kathy Kay can be found in the Warren Commission 26 Volumes. See Armstrong Exhibit 5300, a series of six photographs showing Kathy Kay with Alice Alexander and Jack Ruby. Armstrong Exhibit 5303-A is a photograph showing Kathy Kay on the Carousel Club runway during her act. (A note in the index to Volume 19 states that the preceding photographs, 5303-A to H, "are not reproduced because of their questionable taste and negligible relevance.") I have copies of them and seven appear to show Kathy Kay. By today's standards they could never be considered offensive.

10. Kathy Kay is mentioned in the Warren Commission testimony of 18 people as well as her own and Harry Olsen.

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