THE MAN WHO COULD --AND COULDN'T-- DRIVE

Marina Oswald, Robert Oswald and Ruth and Michael Paine all told the Warren Commission in no uncertain terms that Lee Harvey Oswald did not drive an automobile and did not have a driver's license. But more than thirty witnesses said Oswald did drive, including former employees of the Texas Department of Public Safety License Records Department who saw, touched and handled Oswald's driver's license after he was killed. This article explores these seeming contradictions.

Marina Oswald repeatedly told the Warren Commission that her husband did not drive. For example:

Mrs. OSWALD. Never. No; this is all not true. In the first place, my husband couldn't drive, and I was never alone with him in a car. Anytime we went in a car it was with Ruth Paine, and there was never—we never went to any gun store and never had any telescopic lens mounted.

Mr. RANKIN. Did the four of you, that is, your husband, you, and your two children, ever go alone any place in Irving?

Mrs. OSWALD. In Irving the baby was only 1 month old. I never took her out anywhere.

Representative FORD. Did you ever go anytime——

Mrs. OSWALD. Just to doctor, you know.

Representative FORD. Did you ever go anytime with your husband in a car with the rifle?

Mrs. OSWALD. I was never at anytime in a car with my husband and with a rifle. Not only with the rifle, not even with a pistol. Even without anything I was never with my husband in a car under circumstances where he was driving a car. (WC V, 401)

Michael Paine also indicated several times that Lee Harvey Oswald did not drive. For example:

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you ever see Oswald drive a car?

Mr. PAINE. No; I did not. (WC II, 413)

Ruth Paine told the Warren Commission that as late as the weekend before the assassination of JFK, Oswald had failed to obtain a learner's permit so that he could eventually acquire a valid Texas driver's license.

Mr. JENNER. You did talk with him on the telephone?
Mrs. PAINE. That is my recollection. I am certain that I talked with him, that he was surprised that he didn't need a car. I had to tell him that he didn't need a car to take with him to take his test.

Mr. JENNER. Take his initial test?

Mrs. PAINE. Take his test, and suggested that he go from Dallas himself to take this test. Then he called us Saturday afternoon of the 16th to say he had been and tried to get his driver's permit but that he had arrived before closing time but still to late to get in because there was a long line ahead of him, the place having been closed both the previous Saturday for election day and the following Monday, the 11th, Veterans Day. There were a lot of people who wanted to get permits and he was advised that it wouldn't pay him to wait in line. He didn't have time to be tested.

Mr. JENNER. Could you help us fix, can you recall as closely as possible the day of the week, this is the weekend of the assassination, was it not?

Mrs. PAINE. The weekend before.

Mr. JENNER. The weekend before, and this conversation you are now relating that you had with him in which he said that he had gone to the driver's license station, when did that conversation with you take place?

Mrs. PAINE. That conversation was with Marina, and she told me about it.

Mr. JENNER. When did she tell you about it?

Mrs. PAINE. He called her, it must have been Saturday afternoon, soon after he had been, he went Saturday morning and they closed at noon.

Mr. JENNER. I see. This was the weekend he did not come out to Irving?

Mrs. PAINE. This was the weekend he did not come out. (WC II, 516)

Marina and the Paines clearly testified that Oswald did not drive and did not have a driver's license. It is remarkable, then, that more than thirty people told the Warren Commission, the FBI, and/or Garrison investigators that Oswald did drive. Some of these people saw (LEE) Oswald's driver's license and others described the car he was driving:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE WHO HAD KNOWLEDGE THAT LEE COULD DRIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cliff Shasteen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce Bostic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Hutchison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inez Laake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Moore (saw driver's license)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayle Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floyd Guy Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Ernie Isaacs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrude Hunter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Budreau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Whitworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford Wormser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Pope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBI Agent Bob Barrett (saw driver's license)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leo Sepulveda       DPD Captain Westbrook (saw driver's license)
Sonny Stewart       Edward Brand
Robert Janca        Garland Slack
Robert Roy          William J. Chesher
Al Bogard           Howard Price
W.M. Hannie         Sterling Wood
Mrs. Lee Bozarth (handled Oswald's driver's license) Dr. Homer Wood
Aleatha Frair (held Oswald's driver's license)       Randy Sundy

Let's look at the testimonies of a few of these people.

AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, 1963: Irving City Council member and owner of Clifton's Barber shop, Cliff Shasteen, told the Warren Commission that he and his fellow barbers cut Oswald's hair on 6 or 7 occasions, beginning in the summer of 1963:

Mr. Shasteen. ...I think the boy on the front chair cut it once and the boy in the middle chair cut it a couple of times, but I think I cut his hair three or four times....

Mr. Shasteen. ...he may have missed some haircuts and one or two in between somewhere in there. ...

Mr. Shasteen. ...it seemed to me like there was a dead spot in there. Some time maybe a month or 6 weeks that we might not have saw him, he the first time I cut his hair, but the last three haircuts—it seemed to me like he was pretty regular. ...

Mr. Jenner. So, if you had a dead spot, allowing for—let's say getting a hair-cut somewhere else occasionally, or not coming in precisely at the end of every 2-week period and having in mind that your present recollection is at least five or six occasions, that would run it back into the summertime?

Mr. Shasteen. Yes; it was.

Six or seven haircuts every two weeks, plus a 4-6 week "dead spot", means that (LEE) Oswald had been getting his hair cut regularly at Shasteen's since August. But in August/Sept. (HARVEY) Oswald was still in New Orleans with Marina and did not return to Dallas/Ft. Worth until the first week of October. During one of Oswald's visits to Clifton's barber shop Shasteen noticed that Oswald was wearing khaki-colored coverall's and yellow house shoes:

Mr. Shasteen. Yes; he wore unionalls or coveralls, you know, were G.I.., of some description and they were green or a khaki-colored.......he had on a pair of yellow house shoes and I never saw any like them before.......slip-ons, only they were a little heavy—they were just a little heavier than just a common house shoe, and I admired them and I said, "Them looks expensive," and he said, "They are not.... He said, "I gave a dollar and a half for them." I said, "My goodness, where did you get a pair of house shoes for a dollar and a half?" And he said, "Down in Old Mexico".... And I said, "Man, I'd like to have a pair of them because I have to wear a shoe built up," you see and they were heavy enough that I could build that shoe up and he said, "Well, I'll get you a pair the next time I'm down there," and that is the only time he ever was nice and polite—in the conversation, any time anything
would come up—anybody else would talk to him, he was just disgruntled.

Khaki-colored or green coveralls and yellow house shoes, worn by (LEE) Oswald and seen by Shasteen and fellow barbers, were never found among (HARVEY) Oswald's possessions at 1026 N. Beckley or the Paine's by the Dallas Police. And (HARVEY) Oswald was not known to have made repeated trips to Mexico.

Mr. JENNER. You have a distinct recollection that on occasions when this man came into your shop for a haircut, he drove an automobile up to your shop?

Mr. SHASTEEN. He drove that there 1955, I think it's a 1955, I'm sure it's a 1955 Chevrolet station wagon. It's either blue and white or green and white it's two-toned—I know that. Now, why I say—why I take it for granted that Mrs. Paine was with him when he come to the grocery store—I do remember he wasn't driving when they would come to the grocery store, there would be a lady driving and I'm assuming that that was Mrs. Paine, because like I say, I have been—I have never been close enough to her and knew it, to speak to her, but she trades at the service station where I do and I saw her in there and I never did pay any attention to her and I saw her passing, met her in the road in the car and those things. (WC X, 317)

(LEE) Oswald occasionally drove to Shasteen's shop sin a two-toned "blue and white or green and white" station wagon. But on one occasion Shasteen saw Oswald and a 14 year old boy drive up to his barber shop in a dark colored 1958 Ford:

Mr. Shasteen. No; I think it was a 1958 Ford—them there old gun-colored, it was a dark color, but it wasn't black or nothing, and that's what let him out—the kid out in front.

Shasteen is clear that he saw (LEE) Oswald drive a dark colored 1957/58 Ford to his shop, accompanied by a 14-year-old boy. But (HARVEY) Oswald was never known to have driven a car or associated with a 14-year-old boy.

OSWALD, WIFE, AND BABY TRAVEL TOGETHER

SEPTEMBER, 1963. About 4:00 in the afternoon Oswald, his wife, his child and 2 adult males arrived at Cliff's Junkyard on the Old Gentilly Highway in New Orleans. They had pushed in a 1955 Pontiac station wagon into the yard and wanted to sell it as junk to owner Cliff Wormser. Cliff's wife was standing nearby, saw a young woman and baby sitting in the car, and began walking toward the car. One of Oswald's companions told Mrs. Wormser that the woman would not understand her because she was Russian and spoke no English. After Cliff purchased the vehicle for $15 the group left in the vehicle in which they had pushed the station wagon into the junkyard.

OCTOBER, 1963. The FBI reported that on October 4th, 1963, (LEE) Oswald, with his wife and child, arrived by car in Alice, Texas (400 miles south of Dallas) and spent the night. (Ruth Paine said (HARVEY) Oswald, Marina and their child child spent the evening and night of October 4th at her home in Irving, Texas). The next day, October 5th, (LEE) Oswald drove to the local radio station, KOPY, filled out an employment application. He told station manager Laymon Stewart and traffic manager Robert Jancza that he had just come from Mexico. After being told that KOPY did not have any openings, "Oswald" asked about other radio stations in the area and was told to check stations in nearby Pleasanton and Sinton.

OCTOBER, 1963. "Oswald" drove to a nearby service station in an older model, light colored,
Chevrolet or Plymouth sedan and filled up with gas. He asked the attendant for the location of a pay telephone and obtained $2 in change. "Oswald" may have telephoned Mrs. Ben Parker, who remembered a phone call she received from a man shortly before he arrived at her husband’s radio station to inquire about employment. "Oswald" soon arrived and met Dr. Ben Parker, owner of radio station KBOP. Parker explained that he did not have a job available and "Oswald" soon left.

OCTOBER, 1963. In the latter part of October (LEE) Harvey Oswald, his wife, and child arrived by car at the home of Mrs. Alvene Magee in Baton Rouge, LA. They were driving a 4-5 year old light colored station wagon. The man introduced himself as Harvey Lee Oswald and said that he had recently worked for a coffee company in New Orleans. He looked at an apartment Mrs. Magee had for rent and asked if the apartment had good locks. Oswald explained that he had a gun collection and that he didn’t want any of his guns to be stolen. As he was getting into the station wagon Oswald said "I hear that Kennedy’s going to make a tour down to the Southern States."

EDITH WHITWORTH

Edith Whitworth operated a used furniture store at 149 East Irving Boulevard and recalled that Oswald drove to her store in a "two-toned blue and white" automobile:

Mr. LIEBELER. You saw him drive up in the car?

Mrs. WHITWORTH. Yes; because it was all glass in front and I was sitting at the--well, it's the cash stand--we call it there.

Mr. LIEBELER. Which direction was he driving the car at that time?

Mrs. WHITWORTH. Driving west on a one-way street—that’s a one way there.

Mr. LIEBELER. Running from east to west?

Mrs. WHITWORTH. East to west.

Mr. LIEBELER. What kind of a car did he have, Mrs. Whitworth?

Mrs. WHITWORTH. Well, as far as I can remember—I wouldn’t be—I wouldn’t say for sure. All I can say is that I believe, you know, not paying a lot of attention to the car and the car not meaning anything at that time, that it was a two-tone blue and white. It was either a Ford or a Plymouth. Now, I wouldn’t swear to that, but it was either one the car didn’t mean anything to me at that time. Anyway, he came in and he stood--. (WC XI, 264)

Gertrude Hunter, a friend of Furniture Mart owner Edith Whitworth. Gertrude Hunter confirmed her friend's statement. She said Oswald arrived in a 1957 or 1958 two-tone blue Ford.

Mr. LIEBELER. It appears from information that has been provided to us by the FBI that you were in a store operated by Mrs. Whitworth sometime in 1963—that was formerly operated by Mrs. Whitworth—at which time people who you now believe to be Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife and children came into the store, is that correct?

Mrs. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Would you tell us all the circumstances surrounding that event as best you can remember them?

Mrs. HUNTER. Well, it was after 2 o’clock and I had went down to talk to her—we were
planning on a football trip and we were just sitting there in the store talking, discussing football games, and who was going with who and all, and this man drove up out in front of the store and he got out and he come in and he asked for a gunsmith.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you see the car drive up?

Mrs. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Did you see who was driving it?

Mrs. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. Was this man driving it?

Mrs. HUNTER. Yes.

Mr. LIEBELER. How many people were in the car?

Mrs. HUNTER. Just him and a woman and two children.

Mr. LIEBELER. Nobody else?

Mrs. HUNTER. No one else.

Mr. LIEBELER. You are quite sure about that?

Mrs. HUNTER. I'm positive, because I was sitting right there I was sitting this way and the door was right here [indicating], and he drove cater-cornered up.

Mr. LIEBELER. And there are glass windows in the front of the store so that you could see right out into the street?

Mrs. HUNTER. It is a solid glass there and the door was standing open there.

Mr. LIEBELER. Do you know about what kind of car it was?

Mrs. HUNTER. Now, the reason I'm definite about the car—a friend of mine in Houston—I was looking for them up and they had a car just like this and I had left a note on my mailbox that I would be at this place—telling them if anyone come I would be at this place and when they drove up I thought that was them and it was a two-tone-blue Ford.

Mr. LIEBELER. What year?

Mrs. HUNTER. 1957 or 1958—I won't be positive about that, but I would rather say it was about a 1957, I think. (WC XI, 254-255)

WC staffers were confused by the conflicting testimony, and so they arranged to have Marina Oswald, Gertrude Hunter, and Edith Whitworth appear together in an attempt to resolve the conflicts. Hunter and Whitworth both identified Marina as the woman they had seen arriving at the Furniture Mart in a car driven by Lee Harvey Oswald, but Marina denied everything.

Mrs. OSWALD. I have never seen Lee drive the car in my lifetime. Lee never drove a car with me or the children in it. The only time I saw him behind the wheel was when Ruth Paine taught him to drive the car, he was practicing parking the car when Ruth Paine was teaching him to drive.

Mr. LIEBELER. And that was all in front of Mr. Paine's house; wasn't it?
Mrs. OSWALD. Yes. I'm sure this lady is trying to tell the truth, but the only possible person who could have driven the car when we were in that store could have been Mrs. Ruth Paine. She knows all the stores where we went because we never went there without her. (WC XI, 280)

NOVEMBER, 1963. Car salesman Albert Bogard told the Warren Commission that a man who identified himself as Lee Harvey Oswald walked into the Downtown Lincoln Mercury dealership early Saturday afternoon, November 9. He inquired about purchasing a vehicle and Mr. Bogard took him for a test drive on the Stemmons Freeway. (LEE) Oswald said he was not ready to purchase a car but within a few weeks he had some money coming in and would be back. Bogard wrote the name Lee Oswald on one the back of one his business cards. When he heard that Oswald had been arrested for shooting a policeman in Oak Cliff, he tore the card up. Bogard's story was corroborated by his sales manager, Frank Pizzo, and two salesman, Oran Brown and Gene Wilson.

The morning of the assassination (LEE) Oswald was at the Top 10 Record Store in Oak Cliff at 7:30 am. News reporter Earl Golz confirmed this story in his interview with store owner Dub Stark. This story was further confirmed by Top 10 Record store employee Louis Cortinas. This is virtually the same time that (HARVEY) Oswald was walking to Wesley Frazier's house in Irving --- 13 miles away. An hour later, around 8:30 am, (LEE) Oswald walked into the Jiffy Store on Industrial Blvd, near Dealy Plaza, while (HARVEY) Oswald was working at the TSBD. (LEE) Oswald purchased two bottles of beer, perhaps to calm his nerves, and was asked for identification by store clerk Fred Moore. (LEE) Oswald displayed his Texas driver's license, and Moore remembered the birthdate on the license as "October, 1939."

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, LICENSE RECORDS

On February 14, 1968, Aletha Faira made the following signed statement to Garrison investigator Gary Sanders:

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
STATE OF LOUISIANA
PARISH OF ORLEANS

STATEMENT

DATE: February 14, 1968

STATEMENT OF: ALETHA FRAIR

RESIDING AT: 8001 Benson
New Orleans, LA
Phone - 242-2126

My name is ALETHA FRAIR (MRS. JOHN FRAIR). I live at:

8001 Benson
New Orleans, La.
Phone - 242-2126
I worked for the Department of Public Safety in Austin, Texas from the early part of October 1963, through the early part of December 1963. While I was employed at the Department of Public Safety I worked in the License Records Department. This Dept. was responsible for the IBM computer records of all driver's licenses in the state of Texas.

My husband, JOHN, was working for the United Press International during November of 1963 and on November 22, 1963 he was in Uvalde, Texas, covering the birthday of ex-Vice President JOHN NANCE GARNER.

I did not go to work on the 22 of November, 1963, but the following event occurred (sic) the week after the assassination of President KENNEDY.

During the week following the murder of LEE HARVEY OSWALD, on either Wednesday the 27th, or Tuesday the 28th of November, 1963 the Texas driver's license issued to LEE HARVEY OSWALD came into my division.

The record (IBM card) on OSWALD was pulled from the files. Several other employees (5 or 6) of the Department saw the driver's license which was dirty and worn as though it had been carried in a billfold. The license was the talk of the office that day since everyone knew who OSWALD was, and the reason his driver's license records were being pulled from the active file was the fact that he had been killed.

In October of 1966 my husband and I moved to New Orleans and in June of 1967 my husband went to work for WWL-TV, Channel 4.

I, ALETHA Frair, hereby affirm that all of the above statement is true to the best of my knowledge.

Signed February 14, 1968.

(Signature of Aletha Frair)

(Signature of witness Gary Sanders)
(Signature of witness Jody Duek)

See the documents discussed above.

In a cover memo accompanying the typed statement, Garrison investigator Gary Sanders gave the names of six women, several still employed at the Texas Department of Public Safety, who would confirm Aletha Frair's statement.

These are a few examples of people who actually saw (LEE) Oswald's driver's license or saw him driving a 1955 Chevrolet station wagon, a 1957 or 1958 two-tone blue Ford, a dark colored 1958 Ford, or a 1959 Cadillac. (HARVEY) Oswald could not drive but (LEE) Oswald was seen driving on many occasions and had a Texas driver's license. We have to wonder why members of the Warren Commission, or any of their highly paid and skilled attorneys, did not simply place a phone call to the Texas Dept of Public Safety and ask if a Texas driver's license had been issued to Lee Harvey Oswald or if there was a vehicle registered in his name. Their failure to address and resolve simple problems like these is yet another reason the public lost faith in the Warren Commission a long time ago.