

# DID LEE HARVEY OSWALD DROP ACID?

## New evidence suggests he was among soldiers given LSD in a CIA test program

IT WAS A HOT SUMMER DAY IN NEW Orleans in 1963. A young man walked into the office of Edward Gillin, an assistant district attorney. Gillin offered the visitor a seat, but the young man chose instead to stand across the desk from him. He had a question about a drug—one that Gillin had never heard of before.

This was no ordinary drug, Gillin was told. This drug would affect the social and economic history of the world for the next 200 years. The young man wanted to try the drug, and that was what had brought him to Gillin. He wanted to know if the drug was legal and if he could bring it into the country from somewhere else. It was important, he insisted, speaking for the better part of an

hour on the wonders of this new chemical.

By Martin A. Lee,  
Robert Ranftel and  
Jeff Cohen

Gillin just sat there, somewhat bewildered, trying to assimilate the story. Who was this guy? What was this drug that would transform the world? Any drug that could produce the results this person spoke of, Gillin reasoned, would have to be illegal.

He also concluded that his visitor was probably a bit crazy. Gillin suggested that the young man visit the New Orleans chemist, the police authority on such matters, and strongly urged that he consult his personal physician as well before doing anything further. The visitor left and Gillin never heard from him again.

A few months later—over the weekend of November 22nd, 1963, to be precise—Gillin came to recall that odd encounter. President John F. Kennedy was slain on Friday, a new president was sworn in two hours later, and on Sunday the accused assassin was himself shot down in a Dallas jail. As these incredible events tumbled into one another, Gillin thought of the conversation he had had that summer. As the details and descriptions of the life of the accused assassin became known, Gillin realized that the visitor he had received that afternoon in New Orleans was none other than Lee Harvey Oswald.

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IN JULY 1979, THE FINAL REPORT OF THE House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), the first full congressional investigation of the murder of President Kennedy, was published. The committee concluded that Kennedy was probably killed as a result of a conspiracy, although it stopped short of identifying the conspirators who may have been behind Oswald. The HSCA contended that Oswald fired the fatal shots at the president, but that he was accompanied by a second gunman. Thus, Oswald, a loser all his life, was finally relieved of sole blame. It had been a long road for Oswald from infancy to infamy, and now, at last, the government admits he may not have traveled it alone.

Since the assassination, the mind of Lee Harvey Oswald has been open turf for historians, psychologists and conspiracy theorists to muck about in, speculating on every conceivable motive and intrigue that might explain what role he may have played in the death of the president. Described as assassin or patsy, lone nut or conspirator, misguided Marxist or CIA operative, Oswald has never been pegged as a doper.

Gillin called the FBI the day Oswald was killed and told them he believed Oswald had been using unusual drugs, but the FBI seemed uninterested and the drug lead was never pursued.

Had the Warren Commission decided to investigate the psychedelic connection, the logical place to begin would have been to ask, did Oswald turn on, and if so, where did he get his drugs? As it turns out, there is good reason to believe that Oswald was taking psychedelics at a time when the CIA was handing them out. The temptation to connect these two facts demands a look at two relationships: that between the CIA and drugs, and between Oswald and the CIA.

THE CIA FIRST BEGAN EXPERIMENTING with LSD during Project Artichoke, an extensive behavior-control effort launched in 1951. Project Artichoke was aimed primarily at developing unorthodox methods of interrogation—including narco-hypnosis and a combination of various chemicals that, when properly administered, would catapult a person into a semiconscious limbo that the agency called "the Twilight Zone."

After several years, however, the CIA had not yet found a method of interrogation that would guarantee a recalcitrant subject would disclose sensitive information. This prompted the agency to step up its search for a truth

drug. It was during this search that CIA scientists first got their hands on LSD. Early reports looked promising. One document indicated that "experimentally, LSD has been used in interrogation and has proved remarkably successful." Another memo stated unequivocally that acid was "better adapted than known drugs to both interrogation of prisoners and use against troops and civilians."

Or so they thought. Later experiments showed that LSD was *not* a reliable speech-inducing agent. Accurate information could not always be obtained from a person who was high on acid, because the drug caused marked anxiety and loss of contact with reality.

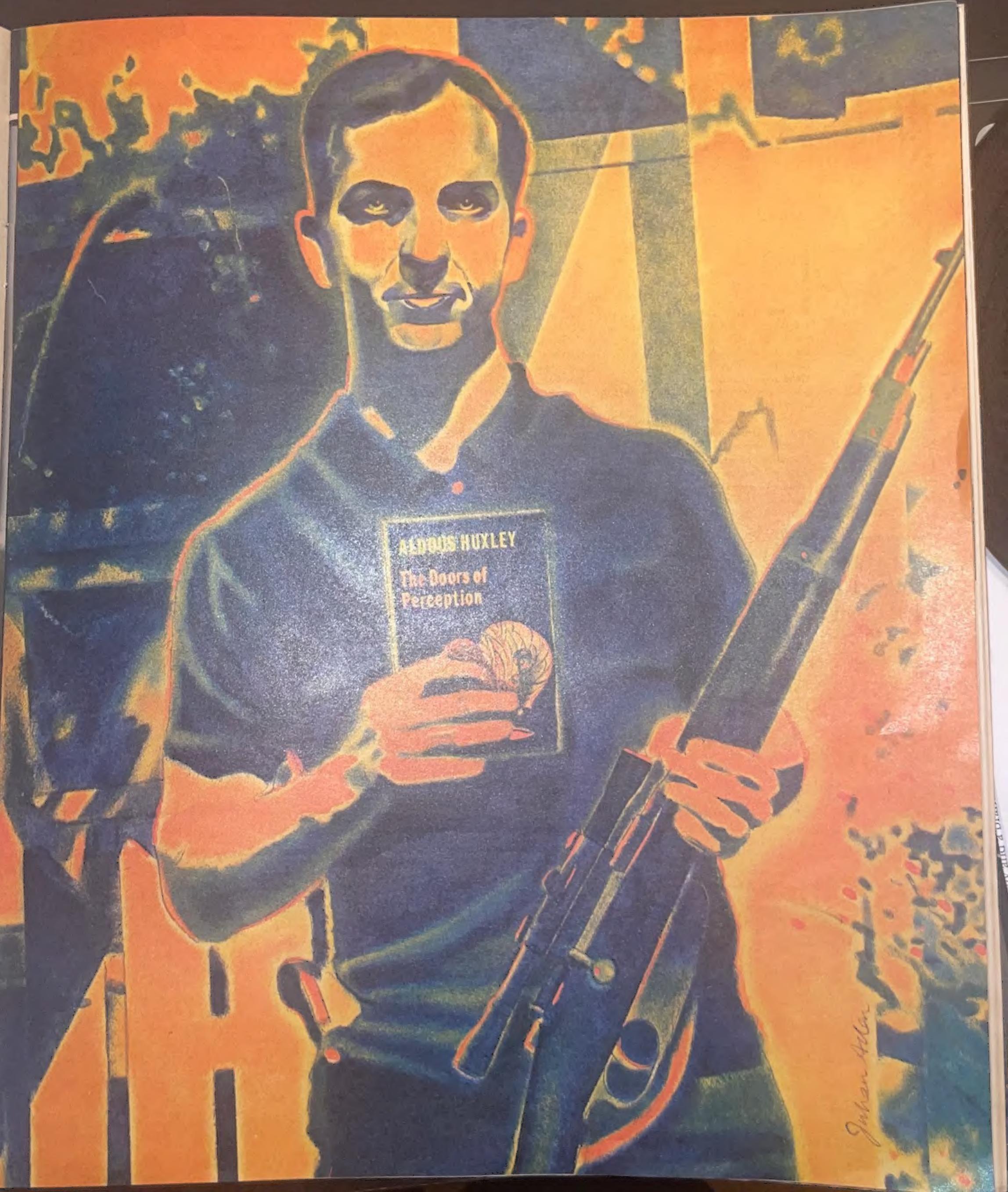
But this did not faze the CIA, which was fascinated by LSD. If it did not live up to its potential as a truth drug, Artichoke scientists would simply adapt the interrogation procedure to suit the "far-out" possibilities of this unique chemical. LSD led to totally new methods of interrogation.

Often a subject was given a surreptitious dose of acid, and once the effects took hold, he was told that unless he spilled the beans, he would be kept in a tripped-out state indefinitely. This tactic proved successful; LSD interrogations of enemy spies were in full gear by the mid-1950s and continued through the early 1960s.

Acid proved useful for other CIA purposes as well. In order to discredit socialist or left-leaning politicians in foreign countries, the agency would slip a hit to unwitting targets so they would become incoherent and embarrass themselves at public appearances. (The CIA has denied ever using dirty tricks of this sort in domestic politics.)

The CIA's acid experimentation took on more comprehensive and extravagant dimensions under the supersecret MK ULTRA program. Consisting of 149 different projects, MK ULTRA was one of the most sensitive covert operations ever undertaken by U.S. intelligence. In addition to hallucinogenic drugs, MK ULTRA comprised every conceivable mind-control tech-

OSWALD, STATIONED IN JAPAN DURING THE LATE FIFTIES, WAS RECRUITED BY THE CIA FOR ITS SPECIAL OPERATIONS, CONTENDS ONE OFFICIAL



ALDOUS HUXLEY  
The Doors of  
Perception

*Johan Holden*

nique: hypnosis, sensory deprivation, electroshock, ESP, lobotomy, subliminal projection, sleep teaching and thousands of different drugs. The CIA employed hundreds of academics and behavioral experts to help crack the secret code of the human mind in order to control it. A multimillion-dollar effort, this program literally spanned the globe. One location in particular deserves careful observation.

ATSUGI, JAPAN, WAS THE SITE OF THE CIA's headquarters in the Far East, a particularly strategic location in those years that bridged Korea and Vietnam. While the CIA's presence at the Atsugi Naval Air Base has long been known

(U-2 spy flights over Russia and China took off from Atsugi), an important facet of its activities has only just recently come to light.

Since the early 1950s, Atsugi served as one of two overseas field stations where the CIA conducted extensive LSD testing. A 1953 memo stated that LSD was being stored at the Manila and Atsugi CIA stations, and that its use in special interrogations in Europe was being considered.

In addition to interrogation sessions, the drug was also employed experimentally on military personnel. These tests continued throughout the Cold War decade and into the early 1960s. One marine-corps veteran who participated in the experiments at Atsugi recounted how two CIA officials gave him a variety of drugs and apparently tried to recruit him for CIA service: "This guy says, 'We just want to see how you'll react. If you're going to be a spy, don't you want to be informed about every mind-altering drug there is?'"

"They wanted to find out how well you could stand up under pressure. Like what if the KGB agent drops a tab of acid in your drink? You've got to be ready for it.

"It was pretty weird," the ex-marine explained. "I'm eighteen and chasing all the whores in town, and these CIA guys are buying my drinks and paying for the whores and giving me a whole lot of drinks with lots of weird drugs in them."

One of the drugs was LSD.

"Pretty soon all the shadows are moving around—we're in this bar, see—and Samurais are everywhere, and I started to see skeletons and things. My mind just started boiling over, going about a thousand miles a minute."

In addition to LSD, the Atsugi-based marine was given mescaline, sodium penothol, downers and speed. "I'm sure there are going to be some little old ladies who're gonna be surprised that illegal drugs like heroin and LSD were freely used by government agents," he continued. "But that's the way it was."

If that's the way it was, it's important to

mention that Atsugi was the home, during those years, of another young marine—Lee Harvey Oswald. In fact, Oswald served in the same marine unit as the source.

PRIVATE LEE HARVEY OSWALD ARRIVED IN Atsugi in September 1957. He was seventeen years old and had spent his childhood bouncing between foster homes and the company of his widowed mother in New York, Louisiana and Texas. A voracious reader who scored above average on aptitude tests, he had nonetheless been habitually truant and dropped out of high school. This led him into the marines and to Japan, ostensibly as a radar operator. According to one

CIA official, however, Oswald attracted the attention of the Tokyo CIA station and was recruited for its "special operations."

According to James Wilcott, a CIA finance officer in Japan at the time of the Kennedy assassination, news of the events in Dallas came as no great shock to agency personnel. First, they had expected someone to do something about Kennedy and his "anti-CIA policies." And second, the man who

appeared to have taken the task upon himself, Lee Harvey Oswald, was no stranger to the CIA.

The story that circulated among CIA personnel stationed in Tokyo, Wilcott maintains, was that Oswald had been recruited from the marines for a deep-cover operation into the U.S.S.R. With no friends in the marines, fleeting contact with his family and a history of moving about, he would easily have been able to embark upon a secret project without attracting much attention.

The most striking aspect of Wilcott's statement was that he'd heard speculation that the CIA's recruitment of Oswald at Atsugi was facilitated by a special "handle" the agency had on Oswald, after discovering "during a routine lie-detector test that he'd murdered someone or committed some other serious crime." A routine test? Or one assisted by modern chemistry?

The HSCA rejected Wilcott's story of Oswald's CIA recruitment for lack of corroboration from other Tokyo-based agents. Investigating covert matters twenty years after the fact is not easy, due, in part, to faulty memories—some intentionally faulty. As former CIA director Richard Helms stated when asked to explain gaps in his testimony on the JFK assassination, "My memory has been contaminated." Thus, any direct trail from the CIA to Oswald remains, as one might expect, clouded.

Oswald's career as a marine was, in a word, weird. At one point, he shot himself, wounding his arm in what appeared to be a feeble suicide attempt rather than the accident he claimed it was. His fellow marines saw it as a ploy to enable him to remain in Japan when his unit was to be transferred. The official

record says that he was shot with his .45-caliber service revolver, but it was later ruled that he'd been shot with a .22.

On another occasion, while Oswald was on guard duty, gunfire was heard. He was found sitting on the ground, more than a little dazed, babbling about seeing things in the bushes. His colleagues, unfamiliar with what in the Sixties would become known as a bad trip, walked him back to his barracks and put him to bed.

Somehow, between shooting himself and shooting randomly into the bushes, Oswald learned to speak Russian. Wilcott and others contend that these language lessons were courtesy of the CIA. (Private Oswald possessed a high-security clearance.) No one has suggested any other way he could have achieved the proficiency he did, but "Oswaldkovich," as he was dubbed by his befuddled barracks mates, was then prepared for the next step on what turned out to be a rather strange trip.

In September 1959, he requested and received an early discharge from the marines and then traveled (with unexplained money and by unknown means) to the Soviet Union. There, he swiftly appeared at the U.S. embassy to announce he was defecting and giving military secrets to the Russians. The change from marine to Muscovite was sudden and dramatic, leaving almost everyone puzzled. One exception was Oswald's mother, Marguerite, who showed herself to be a woman ahead of the times by contending in 1960 that her son was a spy for the U.S. government. Her argument was so compelling that J. Edgar Hoover sent out a memo two and a half years before the assassination suggesting there was more to Oswald than met the eye.

If Oswald was sent to Russia as a pseudo-defector, performing some covert task for the U.S. (exactly what the Russians suspected from the beginning), then it's quite possible he was given LSD as part of his training. A lengthy CIA memo entitled "Truth Drugs in Interrogation" reveals the agency's predilection for administering LSD to agents who were destined for dangerous overseas missions. The CIA feared that the Russians might use LSD in interrogations or as a brainwashing device.

An adversary intelligence service, in the words of the report, could employ LSD "to produce anxiety or terror in medically unsophisticated subjects unable to distinguish drug-induced psychosis from actual insanity." But as the report states, "an enlightened operative" (that is, someone who had tripped before and was therefore familiar with LSD's effects) would not freak out, "knowing that the effects of these hallucinogenic agents is transient in normal individuals." The question is, was Oswald "enlightened"?

LIFE FOR OSWALD IN RUSSIA WAS ALMOST AS strange as life in the marines. He traveled to obscure places doing mundane tasks; biographers still wonder what he was really up to. When the Russians told Oswald they were returning him to the U.S., he tried to slit his wrists—another unsuccessful suicide. As in the marines, he was allowed to stay.

In Minsk, where he was given work in a radio factory, he met and fell in love with an

attractive nineteen-year-old who, ironically, was a druggist. Her name was Marina Prusakova, and she lived with her uncle, a Soviet intelligence officer. Their courtship lasted but a month, most of it while Oswald was in a hospital and under medication, allegedly recovering from an adenoid operation. They were married, and Oswald inexplicably soon began making arrangements to return with his bride to America.

The Warren Commission briefly considered the possibility that Oswald had been brainwashed by Soviet secret police prior to his return to the U.S. The commission was suspicious about the "suicide" attempt, and hypothesized that Oswald might have been tampered with while hospitalized in Moscow. At one point, the commission asked the CIA for a briefing on the latest developments in mind control. Richard Helms, then head of CIA covert operations, concluded that while the Soviets were studying drugs like LSD for possible clandestine use, there was no evidence Oswald had been brainwashed.

Helms wrote in a June 1964 memo, "Soviet research in pharmacological agents producing behavioral effects has consistently lagged five years behind Western research. . . . There is no present evidence that the Soviets have any singular new potent drugs, or that they are particularly expert in the use of such drugs to force a course of action on an individual." (Later that same year, Helms privately urged that the CIA continue to test LSD and related chemicals on unwitting American citizens in order to keep up "with Soviet advances in this field.")

WHILE OSWALD WAS IN RUSSIA FALLING IN love with a pharmacist, the CIA was bedding down with mobsters in an effort to bump off Fidel Castro. Both longed for a return to the Cuba that had existed before Fidel, a right-wing haven for gamblers, drug runners and the United Fruit Company. The CIA's anti-Cuban alliance with the Mafia was originally supervised by then-CIA director Allen Dulles, who later sat on the Warren Commission but failed to inform the other commissioners of the CIA's assassination plots. Thus, the commission never considered the implications of what Lyndon Johnson called the CIA's "Murder, Inc." in the Caribbean.

The CIA's anti-Castro operations began before Kennedy took office with a series of foiled attempts to undermine Fidel's charismatic appeal. One plan was to spray Castro's broadcasting studio with a powerful hallucinogen similar to LSD, creating an embarrassing scene as the premier babbled in a drug-induced stupor. This plan was scrapped because the drug proved too unpredictable.

Yet another plot involved dusting Castro's shoes with thallium salts, which would cause his beard to fall out. Apparently hatched at the CIA's Bible Desk, "Operation Samson" postulated that Castro would lose his charisma once defrocked of hair.

After a few months of pursuing such dubious schemes, the CIA shifted its focus from bad trips and beard trims to eliminating Castro altogether. In August 1960, Colonel Sheffield Edwards, who had originally coordinated Project Artichoke for the CIA, was asked to organize an assassination

squad to snuff out Castro. Edwards turned to the CIA's Las Vegas contacts, eventually hiring mobsters Johnny Roselli, Sam Giancana and Santos Trafficante for the task.

Colonel Edwards' successor in charge of the Castro project, William Harvey, was another CIA spook who graduated from mind control to murder conspiracies. Harvey was one of a handful of CIA officers kept abreast of behavior-control projects from the beginning, and as CIA chief in West Germany in the 1950s, he employed LSD in special interrogations. He was then promoted to head Operation ZR-Rifle, which developed the CIA's "executive action capability" — a euphemism for the agency's capability to assassinate foreign leaders.

Harvey, along with MK ULTRA's head sorcerer-scientist, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, studied the feasibility of applying a bizarre array of gadgets and biochemical poisons to "executive actions." This program banded together the most right-wing elements of the CIA with their natural allies: anti-Castro mercenaries and the Mob.

Such an unholy alliance was not officially acknowledged until the 1975 Senate investigation headed by Senator Frank Church, which established that there had been eight attempts on Castro's life. (Castro, in a better position to count, numbered them at closer to eighty.) Senator Church reported that the plots utilized deadly bacterial powders, cigars dipped in lethal poison, exploding seashells, a poison fountain pen rigged with a hypodermic syringe and other devices that strain the imagination. The CIA even considered the possibility of using a hypnotized "Manchurian Candidate" to kill Castro.

In attempting to unravel these murder schemes, Church's Senate Select Committee on Intelligence found itself over a barrel when Johnny Roselli's body turned up inside one, floating in the ocean. He was one of several participants in the CIA-Mafia plots who met an untimely death. Before he was murdered in 1976, Roselli claimed that Oswald had been a mere patsy, and that the real presidential assassins had been a Mafia hit squad originally trained to kill Castro.

And what was the motive? CIA rightists were apparently incensed by JFK, who in his last year had obstructed anti-Castro paramilitary operations while making moves toward détente with Cuba. The House Assassinations Committee also suggested that the JFK conspirators were organized-crime figures, presumably Trafficante and others involved with CIA attempts on Castro.

IT WAS AGAINST THIS BACKDROP OF secret plots and CIA-Mafia connivance that Oswald returned to America in June 1962. During his years abroad, the drug expertise and enthusiasm of the CIA had advanced to the point where various chemicals, including LSD, were routinely used in questioning defectors, suspected double agents and the like. The returning Oswald seemed a prime candidate for special interrogation, given the circumstances of his defection and the suddenness of his return. Yet there is no evidence that the CIA or any other agency met with Oswald upon his arrival. (The State Department even loaned him \$435 for his return to the U.S.)

Oswald's life in America was no less peculiar than it had been in Atsugi or in Minsk. Lee and Marina settled in Texas and soon took up with an odd assortment of friends, none more unusual than George De Mohrenschildt. Born a Russian count before the revolution, De Mohrenschildt thrived in a world of political shadows, appearing at various times to be working for Polish intelligence, the Nazis, the French Resistance, the British, the Americans, the Rockefellers — a man of many masks. By 1962, he was calling himself a geologist and a friend to the Oswalds.

In April 1963, Oswald moved to New Orleans, where his social circle — in view of his alleged Marxist sympathies — was even stranger than in Dallas. There he met Carlos Bringuier, an anti-Castro Cuban exile with CIA connections. Oswald first sought to work for Bringuier, then appeared to be working against him. Eventually, the two engaged in a well-publicized street brawl and then a debate about Cuba on New Orleans radio. Joining Oswald and Bringuier in the debate was Ed Butler, a right-wing propagandist for the Information Council of the Americas (INCA), a group that later sold LPs of the debate as part of its anticommunist crusade. The president of INCA was Dr. Alton Ochsner, described as a consultant to the air force on "the medical side of subversive matters." The directorships of Bringuier's anti-Castro group and Ochsner's INCA included the owners of the Reily Coffee Company, where Oswald, the man being denounced by both organizations as a communist, had recently been on the payroll.

By far the strangest bird to intersect Oswald's orbit was David Ferrie. Eccentric in behavior, belief and appearance, Ferrie had been an Eastern Airlines pilot until he was arrested for a "crime against nature" with a sixteen-year-old boy. He was a priest in the Orthodox Old Catholic Church, a bizarre sect engaging in animal sacrifice and occult rituals. Ferrie had no hair on his body (perhaps someone had poisoned his shoes) and wore ill-fitting wigs and fake eyebrows that fooled no one and made a striking, if not shocking, impression on all who saw him.

Although the Oswald-Ferrie relationship is well-proved, it is unclear when it began. The House Assassinations Committee suggested that the two men may have met as early as 1956 in New Orleans, when young Lee was a cadet in a Civil Air Patrol squadron headed by Ferrie. By the time of the 1963 radio debate, Oswald and Ferrie were well acquainted. A right-winger who hated Kennedy, Ferrie was active in paramilitary operations against Castro and claimed to have flown in the CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

Ferrie was also a hypnotist and fancied himself a biochemist. He claimed to have created drugs that caused cancer (something the CIA was also secretly developing) or caused heart attacks indistinguishable from natural death (another CIA endeavor), as well as aphrodisiacs and amnesia-inducing drugs. At times, his apartment was overrun by laboratory mice. Many attributed his hairless condition to a chemistry experiment gone awry.

On top of all his strange hobbies, Ferrie worked as a pilot and private investigator for Carlos Marcello, the Mafia boss of New Orleans and Dallas, a sworn enemy of the Kennedys, a cohort of the CIA-Mafia conspirators and, according to his tax returns, one heck of a tomato salesman. Marcello claimed a \$1600 per month income from tomato sales, but somehow had accumulated a net worth of \$40 million (government investigators contend through drugs and racketeering).

Thus David Ferrie represents a nexus in the JFK murder mystery between the Mafia and the CIA, drugs and assassination. In 1967, his ranking as premier oddball in the case was assured when he died of an apparent suicide, soon after having become a key suspect in the assassination probe led by New Orleans district attorney Jim Garrison.

Into this bed of strange fellows crawled Lee Harvey Oswald in the summer of 1963. What kept him going through those days is not exactly clear: his jobs were meager and his political efforts halfhearted. The best explanation for his political schizophrenia is that Oswald was some type of informant posing as a pro-Castroite. His marriage was less than ideal, and Marina was beginning to see him as a bit of a space cadet. "Lee no like Russia," she once said. "Lee no like America. Lee like moon."

WHICH BRINGS US FULL CIRCLE TO WHAT began as a typical day for New Orleans assistant DA Edward Gillin but ended somewhere in the Twilight Zone with a strange visit from a young man preaching the virtues of psychedelic drugs. Gillin's assurance that Oswald had been his visitor was rejected by the FBI on the grounds that Gillin was extremely nearsighted and therefore incapable of eyewitness identification. But due to his poor vision, he had come more and more to rely on voice as a means of identification, and when Oswald's voice was played on the radio (the INCA recording previously mentioned), Gillin recognized it as that of his visitor.

He claimed that his visitor repeatedly referred to an author whose books on drugs described the new world that the visitor, too, had foreseen. The FBI, in a case of literary myopia, recorded the author's name as "Hucksley." "Hucksley" can, of course, be none other than Aldous Huxley, author of *The Doors of Perception*, the manifesto of psychedelic consciousness. Apparently, he was unknown to the FBI, which is not too surprising. (When informed in 1964 that Jean-Paul Sartre had called for a new investigation of the Kennedy assassination, J. Edgar Hoover promptly scribbled on a memo, "Find out who Sartre is.") In a slip almost too Freudian to be believed, the FBI's memos refer to *Brave New World*, Huxley's

pessimistic novel of a drug-induced totalitarian society, as *This Great World*.

Given Gillin's inability to eyeball Oswald and the FBI's blindness as to who "Hucksley" was, it is not surprising that the bureau's probe was inconclusive. However, had the FBI taken the trouble to review its own records, it would have found that during the summer of 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald checked out several books by Aldous Huxley from the New Orleans Public Library.

Edward Gillin, who is now a juvenile-court judge in New Orleans, remembers the conversation as if it had occurred last month. "He was looking for a drug that would open

his vision, you know, mind expansion," recalls Gillin. "I was very curious about any guy who would come into the DA's office asking if a drug is legal and giving me a long spiel about a book by Aldous Huxley."

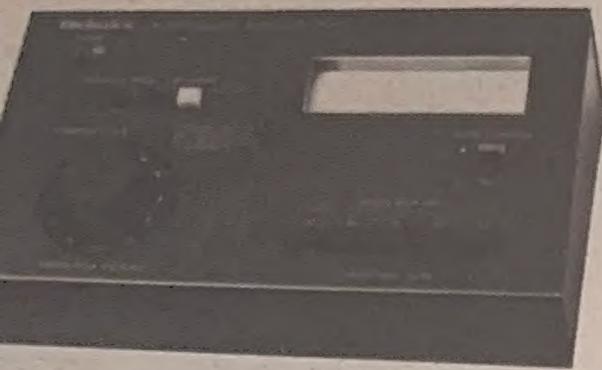
In September 1963, Oswald applied for a visa to go to Mexico. Like an old familiar ghost, the CIA cast another shadow across his path. The visa immediately preceding Oswald's was issued to a William Gaudet, an

admitted CIA contact. (At this time, Gaudet was employed by Dr. Alton Ochsner, the aforementioned INCA president.) When the Mexican government submitted the names of visa holders preceding and following Oswald's to the Warren Commission, only one name — Gaudet's — was omitted. No explanation for the omission has ever been offered.

Why did Oswald want to go to Mexico? Having received no help from the New Orleans DA's office, perhaps he was heading south of the border in his quest for drugs. George De Mohrenschildt had traveled frequently to Mexico, and his stories may have figured into Oswald's plans. (De Mohrenschildt committed suicide in 1977, shortly before he was to testify before the House Assassinations Committee.) Visa in hand, Oswald went to the library to pick up more books by Huxley and a few by Ian Fleming, and soon he was on the long bus ride to Mexico City.

What Oswald did there the last week in September has never been totally clear. It's alleged he contacted the Soviet or Cuban embassies. It's reported he hung out on college campuses and attended a party with people connected to early LSD experiments. But Oswald's trail is far too cold to determine just what he was thinking. Perhaps the books he was reading are the best clues to what his trip was about: espionage and mind expansion. In any event, he soon returned to the U.S., to Dallas and to his place in history.

On November 22nd, 1963, the Kennedy administration came to an abrupt end. On that very day, a cancer stricken Aldous Huxley lay on his deathbed, took a sizable dose of LSD and passed on...tripping. [Cont. on 54]



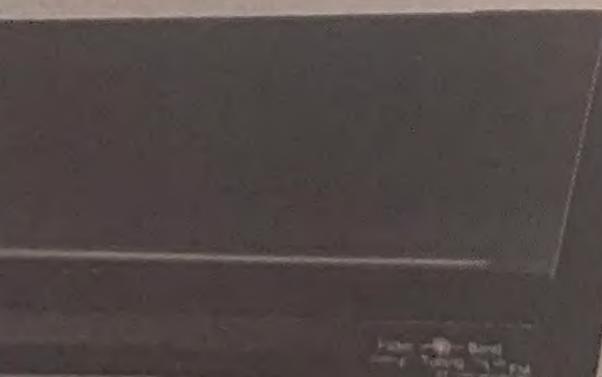
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room. The SH-8000 comes with an omnidirectional, back-electret condenser-type microphone and a carrying case. The suggested retail price is \$150.

**M**eeet Mister Disc, a portable record player from Audio-Technica. It's not meant to be enjoyed while walking, jogging or roller skating. But it is a convenient way of listening to records, regardless of where you happen to be. The two-and-a-half-pound player measures just over eleven inches long, four inches wide and two and a half inches high. It comes with an Audio-Technica magnetic cartridge, and it plays LPs and 45s, powered by three C batteries or through an AC outlet with the use of an adapter. You can listen to records through a pair of lightweight, foldable headphones (included), or through any standard audio system. Mister Disc is advertised at \$169.95.

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The deck's autoreverse mechanism automatically fast-winds to the end of a side once the music stops, reverses direction, fast-winds to the end of the leader and begins playback of the other side. This way, there's no need to manually select fast forward and then turn over the tape when you want to listen to the other side's programming. — PAUL TERRY SHEA



## Oswald

[Cont. from 25]

STILL, THE QUESTION REMAINS: did Lee Harvey Oswald drop acid? The assistant DA of New Orleans suggests yes. The FBI says no. By 1963, Oswald had had several opportunities to acquaint himself with psychedelics: through the CIA at Atsugi or through his contacts with intelligence and underworld types.

Indeed, one could argue that Oswald's life had been a psychedelic mine field, almost impossible to pass through without tripping. His alleged murder of the president, on the other hand, was a shot through the trees at a moving target—a feat that has never been duplicated. Had Oswald lived to tell his story, we could have learned if he had really done either. But such was not his fate, as a stunned TV audience witnessed Oswald's execution at the hands of a gangster.

Years later, when an entire generation of young people seemed to be turning on, George De Mohrenschildt eulogized his friend: "No matter what they say, Lee Harvey Oswald was a delightful guy. They make him out to be a moron, but he was smart as hell. Ahead of his time, really. A kind of hippie of those days. . . . And I will tell you this—I am *sure* he did not shoot the president." ○

## Mitchum

[Cont. from 33] maaan, we know where this basteeeeeerd leeeves. You geeve us the word, maaan, and weee go "top" heeeem for you. You deeeeg, man. We top heeeem!"

"Top him?"

"Cut off his fucking head, Jack," Mitchum says, looking like the *Night of the Hunter* preacher. "You know what I mean?"

"It's the mystery of Mitchum as well as his charm," says actor Paul Sorvino, at a press conference for *That Championship Season*. "When I met him, I was in awe of him. And I think you're only in awe of someone who is mysterious, whom you can't read easily. In fact, we used that awe, all of us, in the movie, because the team members are supposed to have awe for the coach. Naturally, as you get to know Bob, some of that Screen Legend stuff diminishes, but I didn't want to let it go too easily

his face like two broken blinds in a flophouse.

"You know what a Mitchum movie is," he says, as a woman reporter from *Newsweek* breaks into that sexual motherly smile. "It starts with a shot of a girl running across a beautiful open field. On the other side she sees this big gorilla. He waves to her. She runs toward him, smiling, with open arms. Then twelve guys come out and beat the gorilla over the head. He collapses on the grass. Scene Two: the girl meets the gorilla in cabin. He's locked inside. She tries to get to him, but just as she opens the door, he's beaten over the head by twenty guys. Scene Three: a castle somewhere. The girl sees the gorilla in a turret. She climbs up, gets there, but again there're fifty guys beating him over the head. She finally takes his head in her arms and looks directly into the camera and says, 'He stinks and he's ugly, but I like him.'"

Mitchum has told this story, oh, maybe 50,000 times over the past forty years, but each time he gets a great laugh and a look of worship and admiration from whoever is around. Mitchum is, of course, the gorilla, and in his tale, he's being saved by the girl, who can't quite get to him in time. It perfectly illustrates the combination of bravado, real toughness and a kind of lost-little-boy appeal that he has with women. Every woman who hears the story gets that look in her eyes. "If I were there, I'd save the big, helpless gorilla from the mobsters."

By the same token, it's quite possible to misconstrue the "sensitive heart within the gorilla body" angle. One evening, Mitchum invites me up to his room at the Waldorf. Both of us are having difficulty maneuvering down the flower-covered hallway, and Mitchum pretends to pick the flowers and eat them as he heads toward his room, laughing and staggering, cursing and picking imaginary flowers all at the same time.

When we get into his suite, he collapses on the couch and begins drinking tequila again.

"Still haven't eaten," he says. "No time to feed the gorilla. He's been on the chain gang."

"Hey," I say. "Let's call room service and get some hamburgers sent up, and some milk, okay?"

"Nah," Mitchum says, looking down at his slightly bulging belly. "It's too late. Hell, I don't even need to eat."