

Couple Talks About Oswald and the CIA

by Warren Hinckle

The ex-CIA man poured his eighth cup of coffee and lit his 11th cigaret. He stared out the open window into the quiet blackness of a Concord Sunday night. The other ex-CIA person sat at the dining table and looked frail and nervous. She was his wife.

They were talking about what life is like for a CIA couple. It wasn't long before they got into the bad parts. He made a face as if all the dirty little secrets were a stinking rose opening in front of his nose.

He had been a CIA finance officer for nine years, she a secretary to spies. They served together in Tokyo, Washington, D.C., and Miami. Between them they saw enough to make them want out. They were told not to talk, but they knew that, someday, they would. They held their tongues for more than ten years. They were afraid. Now, the silence of a thousand sleepless nights is over.

Sunday, in their modest Concord home, they took the unsettling journey back through the looking glass into the never-never world of the CIA.

The place they described was a topsy-turvy land where old-fashioned values are destroyed in the name of saving them, a perverse place of sexual blackmail, betraying friends, unleashing psychopaths and hobnobbing with mobsters, of pseudonyms and cryptonyms, drunkards and ripoff artists, dirty money and dirty tricks and run-amok assassins, a place where error and folly were held sacred in the almighty name of secrecy. One assassin among those run amok was Lee Harvey Oswald who, according to the former CIA money man, was in the pay of the CIA.

"It was common knowledge in the Tokyo CIA station that Oswald worked for the agency," he said.

"That's true," his wife said. "Right after the President was killed, people in the Tokyo station were talking openly about Oswald having gone to Russia for the CIA. Everyone was wondering how the agency was going to be able to keep the lid on Oswald. But I guess they

did," she said.

The former CIA finance officer is Jim Wilcott. His wife's name is Elsie.

Wilcott testified behind closed doors before the House Select Committee on Assassinations last March.

He said the committee had asked him not to discuss his testimony, but it was learned from sources in Washington that he told the committee the CIA's role in Kennedy's assassination extended beyond covering up Oswald's employment to the involvement of other CIA employees in a conspiracy to kill the President.

He testified that he overheard CIA agents say "agency people" had Kennedy murdered because the President had reneged on a "secret agreement" with former CIA director Allen Dulles to militarily support the CIA-backed 1961 invasion of Cuba.

"CIA people killed Kennedy,"

Wilcott was reported by a committee source to have told the committee. Wilcott provided a list of names of CIA officials in Tokyo, at the time who he said could support his testimony.

CIA officials in Washington could not be reached last night to comment on their former employee's allegations.

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The Wilcotts were recruited by the CIA as a husband and wife team

in the late 1950s, shortly after they were married.

"We were a two-for-one deal," he says. There is weary bitterness in his voice.

"We didn't even know what CIA was all about when we went to work for them," he said. They found out soon enough. During her polygraph test for security clearance, the CIA interrogator asked Elsie, who had grown up on a farm, one of those standard polygraph



Jim Wilcott

'CIA people killed Kennedy,' he reportedly told the committee

questions: Had she had ever had sex with the animals. She was flabbergasted. "Why, we didn't even know any such thing was possible," she said. A friend of theirs who went through security clearance had once worked in a mortuary. The CIA strapped him into a lie detector and asked him if he had ever had intercourse with a corpse.

"I began to get the impression that there were a lot of weirdos in that organization," Jim Wilcott said.

That impression blossomed in Tokyo. There was, for instance, the matter of the Bulgarian ambassador's bed. One Saturday morning when Wilcott was holding down security duty in the Tokyo station, several CIA case officers came over to his desk to offer him a gin and tonic and let him in on the morning's fun. They had bluffed the bed

of the Bulgarian ambassador to Japan and amid the state secrets unfolded between the sheets the CIA had taped a particularly torrid exchange of conjugal privileges between the ambassador and his wife.

The tapes were being transcribed by a young American girl who was no Scarlett O'Hara, so she was manifestly humiliated by the sexual exuberance she was translating from the Bulgarian bedroom vernacular. The CIA men thought this great sport and had broken out drinks all around while they kept playing the steamy portions over and over as the young translator turned redder than wine. When Wilcott dared to wonder what this had to do with national security the case officers looked at him like he was some stick-in-the-mud accountant.

Wilcott's fiduciary duties in the Tokyo station — he was there from 1960 to 1964 — included handing out upward of \$4 million a month in unmarked bills of various currencies for the station's dirty tricks.

Wilcott said the CIA had a phobia about fresh currency — the physically dirtier the money the better, on the theory that used money was less traceable. If someone made the mistake of bringing new bills from the bank, Wilcott and his aides would scatter the cash on the floor and take off their shoes and jump up and down on it like button-down collared grape crushers.

The money Wilcott handed out was dirty in more ways than one. Wilcott said he learned from other CIA agents that some of his cash ended up in the hands of members of the Japanese version of the Mafia, who performed unmentionable services for the Tokyo station,

and to psychopathic personalities the CIA plotted to release from Vietnamese mental hospitals and outfit as Viet Cong to pillage South Vietnamese villages, thereby turning the sympathies of our allies against the insane V.C.

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Wilcott's terminal disillusionment with the CIA began when he was drafted into a "black operation" to entrap a friend into becoming a double agent. His friend, was Peter Dadijer, who he said was a nephew of Valdimir Dedyer, the Yugoslav patriot and biographer of Tito. Peter worked in the Yugoslavian embassy in Tokyo in a financial post. They met while taking Japanese lessons and would go out for a drink together after class. CIA regulations require that an employee report any such contacts with any foreign nationals and, when Wilcott did, the agency decided that he should "set up" his friend.

The operation took nine months and a considerable amount of CIA cash, which station higher-ups kept urging Wilcott to lavish on the Yugoslav. "The idea was to 'get him on the hook' — get him used to the high life," Wilcott said. At one point it was decided that Wilcott should "get him involved with women." The master plotter for this was Elsie Wilcott's boss, a spy named Dennis, who was head of the Tokyo station's Soviet Russia Satellite Division, where Elsie was a secretary. At one point Dennis called Mrs. Wilcott into his office and told her that her husband might end up in a compromising situation with another woman but that he would only be doing the deed for the good of her country. This did not serve to stir the fires of her patriotism.

"The CIA was always terrible to women — particularly the wives of agents," Elsie Wilcott said. "The agency was both snobbish and sexist."

Eventually Wilcott was told that he was being "phased out" and a person called a "recruitment agent" was being "cut in" to bribe or blackmail the Yugoslav into spying on his own country. Wilcott was told never to see his friend again. He doesn't know what happened then — he doesn't even know if he did a good enough job corrupting his friend American-style to make him turn traitor. Once, when he asked about Peter Dadijer, Wilcott was told that he had "no need to know."

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"CIA people drink like fish," Wilcott was saying, over his 16th coffee. The Tokyo station kept booze in supply the way most

offices keep paper clips. It was generally used — along with the dirty if untraceable cash Wilcott handed out — to coax Japanese journalists, labor leaders, intellectuals and other opinion molders to see things the CIA way. "The station controlled every aspect of Japanese society," Wilcott said. This CIA bounty of liquor was readily available to the agents, at prices amounting to nothing. A CIA employee could pick up a bottle of White Horse scotch selling for \$12 in Tokyo for 75 cents at the office. Double martinis at military clubs frequented by the CIA were a nickel. "At those prices you almost couldn't afford not to drink," he said.

It was during these after-hours drinking sessions with other CIA men that Wilcott became aware of the nature of many secret CIA operations normally hidden by cryptonyms. "The need to know principle often went to hell at a bar," he said. One of the CIA operations he learned about involved Lee Harvey Oswald.

The day Kennedy was shot there was rejoicing in the Tokyo CIA station, Wilcott recalls. Most of the agents were not, like himself, "Kennedy liberals," but rather despised the Camelot president for not sending the military in to rescue the CIA bunglers at the Bay of Pigs. The station was abuzz about Oswald and, when Wilcott expressed disbelief at the talk that Oswald was a CIA employee, a case officer told him: "Well, Jim, so and so, right over there, drew an advance from you for Oswald under a crypto."

In the months to come, he was to hear constant references to the station's earlier work on "the Oswald project." Wilcott said Oswald had been trained for his trip to Russia at Atsugi Naval Air Station, a plush supersecret cover base for the Tokyo CIA stations "special operations." Wilcott says he no longer recalls the names of the CIA agents involved. He also didn't take notes back then, he says. He wasn't planning on exposing the CIA. The details he remembers have the ring of the authentic.

The Cuban government invited Elsie and Jim Wilcott to Havana last month to testify before a "CIA tribunal" the Cubans had organized as the high point of a world youth festival. The former CIA couple went. It was the first time either of them had been to a socialist country.

The Cubans were understandably curious about the couple's experiences in the CIA's Miami station, which carried on a full-scale secret war against Cuba throughout the '60s. The CIA story

the Wilcotts told the Cubans was much the same as the story about Tokyo — bribes, blackmail, dirty cash for gangs of well-fed saboteurs, assassination plots against Castro and that old CIA standby, the Mafia.

The Wilcotts are not your classic whistleblowers. They are among that select handful of former CIA employees who have spoken on the record about company business, but they have not hustled a forum or written a book. They waited a decade to tell the House investigators what they knew about Oswald. They are not eager to be on television and Elsie Wilcott declined to have her picture taken. They prefer the anonymity of Concord, where they have lived for several years.

Jim Wilcott said he had lost several accounting jobs "under very strange circumstances" since he left the CIA in the late '60s. The agency is not beyond retribution, he says. He is still, frankly, nervous. The Wilcotts are the first former CIA couple to go public. They decided to tell what they know, if for no nobler reason, to sleep better nights.

Wilcott is going to do some work "developing information" with Philip Agee, the former CIA agent turned author and anti-CIA crusader. But Wilcott says he will not take a dime for anything he writes concerning the CIA.

"I don't want people to think I'm doing this for the money," said the man who used to write check for the CIA.