

# JOHN THOMAS MASEN – A PICTURE AT LAST

By Mark Bridger

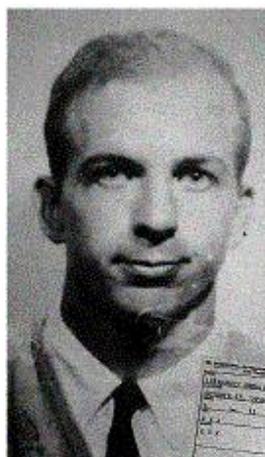
The photographs printed herein are confirmed pictures of John Thomas Masen. Masen's status as a Lee Harvey Oswald lookalike materialised when ATF Agent Frank Ellsworth was confronted with Oswald, who was under arrest in Dallas City Hall on the afternoon of November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963. Ellsworth instantly believed he was looking at John Thomas Masen.

Ellsworth's heart skipped a beat when he assumed Masen, who he had recently released from custody, had then gone out and murdered the President. We can now see why Ellsworth made such a mistake. Masen is undoubtedly a close match for Lee Harvey Oswald. I am not convinced yet, however, that Masen was the witting Oswald impersonator used in the conspiracy. He was though involved in events surrounding the assassination in 1963, including but not limited to arming Cuban exiles, and the possession and sale of Mannlicher-Carcano ammunition. His arrest(s) on the assassination weekend are still of much interest to researchers.

Masen was born on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1940, in Dallas. America was still 16 months from entering World War 2, while across the Atlantic the Battle of Britain was about to start in earnest. In New Orleans Lee Oswald was approaching his first birthday.



John Thomas Masen - 1958,  
aged 18 (Woodrow Wilson  
High School)



Lee Harvey Oswald -  
1962, aged 22  
(Mexico City)

## MASEN'S ACADEMIC CAREER

Into The 1950's, and Masen's schooling is worth a look at, at this point. In 1956 he was a sophomore at Woodrow Wilson High School, 100 S.Glasgow, East Dallas. With a high school being a fairly good indicator of where a pupil lives, it is safe to assume Masen lived in the vicinity of Woodrow Wilson. The 1958 Dallas City Directory has Bettie A.Masen (widow) and John A.Masen and Betty Masen all living at 2714 Crest Ridge Drive, about 3 miles north east of the school. This may have been Masen's home address, though he left Dallas sometime in 1958 to attend college elsewhere in Texas. The Crest Ridge Drive address was much nearer to Bryan

Adams High School, but this didn't open until 1957, by which time Masen was already at Woodrow Wilson. In November 1963 Masen lived at 3023 Mayhew Drive – a stones throw from Crest Ridge Drive. Was he staying close to his East Dallas roots?



Masen, third from left in the back row, as a sophomore at Woodrow Wilson High School, Dallas in 1956

Woodrow Wilson High School, built in 1928 close to Randall Park (and since 1989 a Texas Historical Landmark) saw the teenage Masen flourish. He graduated (in 1958) passing English and Maths, he was a captain and received ribbons galore, school efficiency ribbons, commendation ribbons and an assortment of red, white and blue ribbons as well as an honour wreath. He was also a Woodrow Wilson Ranger for two years and attended Camp Dallas for three years. In amongst these achievements was the award of “sharpshooter.” Twenty years earlier another Woodrow Wilson student had graduated who many believe was one of the sharpshooters in Dealey Plaza, one Malcolm Wallace. Wallace was a convicted murderer with ties to Lyndon Johnson, and a man who may have left his fingerprints on boxes in the Texas School Book Depository during the assassination.

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963 the sharpshooting Oswald lookalike John Masen, who worked with guns on a daily basis in Dallas, would find himself under arrest in Dallas City Hall, held for “investigation.” It is not known whether Woodrow Wilson High School Hall of Fame makes mention of these two famous ex-students?

After leaving High school Masen had a chequered college and University career, entering and leaving a number of establishments while seeming to accomplish very little. Whether his educational sojourns were a cover for something else, or that he was just a student with little commitment we don't know, but within three years he would be in business running his own gun store. Ample evidence shows that in Miami the University there provided cover (if only transparently so) for CIA operations against Cuba and in Louisiana Guy Banister among others had college and University students spying on each other hunting down the “Red menace.” This use of southern campuses in the “war” against communism would no doubt have found favour with Masen's political sympathies.

Masen travelled south to the University of Houston in 1958, and this is where the discrepancies start. The Archivist there told me, after consulting University yearbooks and student directories from 1957-1966 that they had no record of John Thomas Masen, in fact of no “Masen” at all. This is interesting as two other Texas Universities say Masen transferred to them from the University of Houston, on separate occasions. A Warren Commission document also quotes Masen telling the F.B.I. he attended this University.

The discrepancy, as regards the first of the other Texas Universities might be explained by the fact Masen enrolled at Sul Ross University in Alpine Texas, in the fall of 1958. Having left Woodrow Wilson in June 1958 he could not have been at University of Houston very long before the Sul Ross enrolment. Sul Ross state he joined them “in the fall of 1958 as a transfer student from the University of Houston and that he also enrolled for the spring semesters in 1959 and 1960.” Masen again is nowhere to be found in Sul Ross yearbooks for 1958 or 1959, and his camera shyness stayed with him for the rest of his academic life.

Why did Masen travel the 250 miles to Houston, stay a matter of weeks, then travel a further 500 miles from Houston to Sul Ross in West Texas? He appears to have settled in Alpine, possibly for a couple of years, but why there? Alpine is over 400 miles from Dallas, close to Van Horn and less than an hours drive from the Mexico border. Did Masen utilise his time at Sul Ross to go in and out of Mexico? A.T.F. agent Frank Ellsworth told author Dick Russell that Masen said to him he had been smuggling in and out of Mexico prior to Ellsworth’s dealings with him in late 1963. When was this smuggling, sometime between 1958 and 1960? Masen also claimed to speak fluent Spanish, and had connections in Mexico into the summer of 1963.

His enrolment at Sul Ross in 1958, ’59 and ’60 didn’t include the fall term of 1959 it seems, and there is no record of him graduating from Sul Ross. The Archivist told me “I also consulted the faculty member who taught political science and was sponsor for the student government group at the time and he has no recollection of this person.” This suggests Masen took Political Science whilst there, a serious subject for someone who achieved very little in his three year connection to this University. Alpine was also a long way to go for nothing, assuming he went all that way to study?

<b>1958</b>	<b>WOODROW WILSON</b>
<b>JUNE</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON</b>
<b>AUTUMN 1959</b>	<b>SUL ROSS</b>
<b>SPRING</b>	<b>SUL ROSS</b>
<b>AUTUMN 1960</b>	<b>???</b>
<b>SPRING</b>	<b>SUL ROSS</b>
<b>AUTUMN 1961</b>	<b>???</b>
<b>AUTUMN 1962</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON</b>
<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>U.T.A.</b>
<b>1963</b>	<b>MONTERREY???</b>

Masen married his wife Claudia on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1960, by which time he was leaving student life behind, presumably with a mind to start a business, which he did in Dallas in 1961 - "Masen's Gun shop."

His interest in further education was not over though, in CE 2694 (p14) according to the FBI Masen put himself through four different colleges/Universities whilst working as a gunsmith. The University of Texas at Arlington say Masen enrolled with them in January 1962, completing 6 hours. As with Sul Ross they too stated he transferred to them from University of Houston (with 16 hours.) The University of Houston again could find no record of Masen or this transfer.

He did not appear in U.T.A. student yearbook *The Reveille*, as he was apparently allowed to opt out of this. From 1958 onwards Masen became camera shy, a trait often associated with those with something to hide. He was not shy per se though; an acquaintance would later call him an opportunist and a loudmouth! His transfer to U.T.A from University of Houston in January 1962 places him in Houston at the end of 1961. Masen was married and running a gun shop in Dallas in 1961, so what was the reason for joining University 250 miles away? This is more intriguing when we take note of the seemingly pointless number of hours Masen completed. The transfer to the nearer U.T.A yielded no improvement, and he didn't graduate from any of the three Texas establishments. Was his presence at them, particularly Sul Ross and Houston more connected to outside ventures than to the actual curriculum?

The late 1950's/ early 1960's saw southern campuses awash with intrigue, coping with the concept of integration and the Castro revolution. With Masen opening his Gun shop in 1961, did his fledgling smuggling career "in and out of Mexico" coincide with his enrolment into Universities closer to the border? This would prove more lucrative and exciting than going to lessons. University of Houston's lack of records on him though is still a mystery. He may have only attended there briefly, in mid 1958 and late 1961, but for two places to state he transferred to them from Houston is compelling evidence he went there. The University of Houston archivist could find no listing for Masen in yearbooks or student directories from 1957 to 1966, so records exist, just none of Masen. A request to Rice University in Houston confirmed he did not attend there either between 1958 and 1961. Obviously no photos of Masen could be found.

The final University he claimed to attend was Monterrey University in Mexico. My attempts to get information from them have fallen on stony ground unfortunately, failing to even get a reply. Unlike Masen I don't speak fluent Spanish. On a separate issue, where did he learn to speak Spanish, in Dallas as a child? Or in his three years at Sul Ross – the names in their yearbooks read like a part American/part Latin school. Spanish I assume would have been easy to pick up or improve if he had the inclination to do so?

Monterrey, a hundred miles or so south of the Nuevo Laredo border point was another choice that raises more questions of Masen. What could he study there that he could not at a dozen nearer places in Texas, and when did he study there, if at all? It is unclear whether the FBI corroborated Masen's attendance at Monterrey, but he seems to have been honest about the other three Texas Universities, albeit circumstantial in the University of Houston's case. We can assume he did attend Monterrey therefore. This would again have been ideal for improving Spanish of course, an ability of much use in his dealings with Mexican Arms manufacturers and Cuban exiles. Indeed the choice of this Mexican University makes more sense when Masen is

viewed as the gun dealer prepared to sail close to the wind in dodgy arms transactions, than it does with Masen the “A” student. His claim of making an “extensive vacation trip to Mexico” during 1963 to visit friends in various places, including the “Mendoza brothers” may have coincided with joining, possibly on paper only, the University of Monterrey? The University is keeping quiet, but a careful look at his studies chronologically discounts his attendance there pre-1960. The only gap at that time was the autumn (fall) 1959 term, between his spring 1959 and spring 1960 enrolments at Sul Ross. They would have mentioned such a move to Mexico, and makes little sense anyway.

Between leaving Sul Ross (summer 1960) and his second stint at University of Houston (late 1961, presumably autumn 1961) is a gap of just over a year, and the first possibility. He was newly married then however, and embarking on family life, which would produce two children before October 1963; and sometime in 1961, he would open his gun store. This business which he ran single handed most of the time, could not be set up from over 500 miles away in Monterrey, and this tends to exclude late 1960/ early 1961 as a timeframe for his Monterrey venture.

From late 1961 at University of Houston through to leaving U.T.A in May 1962, gives us another, more probable window thereafter. U.T.A. makes no mention of Masen transferring to Monterrey, nor was he likely to do so before the summer break, so autumn 1962 onwards may be the best bet as to his time at Monterrey University. If he were there between then and the assassination a year or so later, he was a long way from his business, unless his sojourn to Mexico was business? None of his college life was very fruitful on the academic side, so if he was there for only a short while, was the pretext of learning actually shielding his true aim of furthering contacts in the arms industry? Or was he just a poor student? No photo is available from University of Monterrey either.

### **MASEN, MEXICO & MENDOZAS**

The shadow of Mexico looms large over the Kennedy assassination, primarily as an area where attempts were made by the C.I.A to link Oswald to the Communist Governments of Cuba and the Soviet Union. The shadow games conducted in Mexico City in autumn 1963 helped the Warren Commission, initially at least; place Oswald at the Cuban and Soviet Embassies/Consulates trying to get a visa back to the Communist bloc. Careful scrutiny of the story though soon posed more problems than solutions, and lookalike John Masen’s probable presence in Mexico City in the summer of 1963 has largely been overlooked.

CE 2694 (pp13-14) shows Masen was interviewed by the FBI on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1964 regarding Mannlicher Carcano ammunition and the assassination. During this interview “Mr Masen stated that during the summer of 1963 he made an extensive vacation trip to Mexico, visiting friends in various places, including the “Mendoza Brothers,” Guadalajara, Mexico, who owned an arms manufacturing plant.”

So Masen was in Mexico for a number of weeks in the summer of 1963, presumably some time between June and September? The exact dates were never divulged by the ever vigilant FBI, nor were the names of the places he visited or the names of his “friends.” These may have been a

couple or many, the FBI either didn't enquire, or failed to report who and where. It may be that he only visited the "Mendoza Brothers" of Guadalajara, owners of an arms plant? As a gun dealer he would have had fair reason to visit such a place, though how legitimate any dealings they may have had is open to question. Mexican law would prevent them from exporting weapons to America.

The FBI record Masan's visit as being in Guadalajara, and in common with other post assassination FBI investigations, they ignored, deliberately we assume, the fact the Mendoza Company was actually in Mexico City. They had to be aware of this fact. The FBI make such "mistakes" when it is prudent for them to do so, and we have to ask why they wanted to place Masen not in Mexico City in mid-1963, but 200 miles away in Guadalajara? And who exactly were the "Mendoza Brothers?"

In 1883 Rafael Mendoza was born in Santo Tomas in Northern Mexico, one of three brothers and three sisters. His father ran a small shop that designed metal parts for the agricultural industry. Rafael later worked for his father showing a natural gift for mechanical design, and in 1906 was granted two Mexican patents for agricultural seed planting machines. When the political situation boiled over in 1910 Mendoza joined the Anti-Reelectionists fighting President Diaz's forces, Mendoza being an infantryman under the legendary Pancho Villa. He was soon invited to join the "Dorados de Villa" - Villa's bodyguards. During this time he designed his first gun, a hand operated, air cooled belt-fed "machine gun" with two barrels. His only prototype was demonstrated on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1911.

Fighting continued following revolution and counter-revolution, Mendoza staying with Villa and designing for him a portable cannon used to fire captured 35mm and 37mm ammunition. Seventy five such cannons were made, the first on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1915. At this time he was also developing a 7x57mm Mauser calibre bolt-action rifle called the "Fusil Mexico," an ingenious design still recognised as a milestone in bolt-action rifle development.

Following the revolution Mendoza went to Mexico City in 1922, to work as a machinist at the National Arsenal. In 1926 he perfected a cup-launched grenade that was adopted for military use. Two years later he was ordered to develop an improved machine gun for the Mexican Army which was officially adopted in 1934. The Mexican Government placed an order for 10,000 Model 1934 machine guns that went by the correct title of "Fusil Ametrellador Sistema Mendoza Model 1934." United States patents for several features of the new gun were obtained by the Mexican Govt. in Mendoza's name. The gun served the Mexican Army for twenty five years.

In 1938 he founded his own company – Productos Mendoza in Mexico City. It manufactured metal stampings, buttons; and magazines for the Model 1934 machine gun. In 1943 Mendoza and his son Hector travelled to America to sign an agreement with Maury Maverick, of U.S. Bureau of Government Requirements (Maverick's 1935 campaign for Congress was led by LBJ.) An agreement was signed for 5,000 Mendoza 30.06 light machine guns and 3,000 Mendoza 0.50 Calibre machine guns. Hector studied drafting at University of Detroit while Rafael toured America making arrangements to manufacture the guns. Unfortunately the end of the war in 1945 saw most of the U.S. arms contracts cancelled, including Mendoza's, before any guns could

be delivered. Rafael did use his design work though to convert his Model 1934 to 30.06 calibre, renamed the RM-2 in 1947. Although fifty of these guns were tested by the Mexican Marine Corps, they were not commissioned. The Mexican constitution forbids the export of “instruments of war” so Mendoza was restricted to one potential customer – his own Government.

In the late 1940’s Mendoza designed and patented other guns and sub-machine guns, but none were adopted by the Government. In the 1950’s he designed his last gun, the 30.06 calibre Fusil de Asalto assault rifle, but this too was not adopted. At this point Rafael was diagnosed with leukaemia and Hector took over a fuller role in the company, taking full control in 1962. Rafael Mendoza died on Christmas day 1966.

The “Mendoza brothers of Guadalajara” therefore were actually Hector Mendoza and his father Rafael of Mexico City. What exactly the Mendozas could benefit out of any dealings with Masen is difficult to see unless Masen was representing others? The FBI or Warren Commission never corroborated Masen’s claims as far as we know, but they did obscure the fact the Mendozas were based in Mexico City. They had to know this fact, not least because the Mendozas had dealt with the U.S. Government twenty years earlier.

A thorough FBI investigation of Masen could have ascertained what he did in Mexico in the summer of 1963, exactly who he visited, where and when, what dates he entered Mexico, when he met the Mendozas, what business he had with them, and what date he re-entered the United States. If the FBI did any of this they kept it to themselves. They were equally nonchalant over Masen’s possession and sale of ammunition, and his company records thereof.

Instead the FBI reported the Mendoza Brothers as being in Guadalajara, was this to distance Masen from Mexico City, and if so why? If he was there the last week of September 1963 a whole flood of embarrassing questions might have ensued. During that time Lee Harvey Oswald was almost certainly impersonated in Mexico City. The events there from 27<sup>th</sup> September 1963 onwards involved alleged visits by Oswald to the Soviet and Cuban Embassies/Consulates, and false statements/documents emanating from the Mexico City CIA station after the assassination suggest a phoney trail of evidence was laid to implicate Castro in the murder of Kennedy. Some of this was done prior to the assassination and tends to incriminate certain CIA agents, David Attlee Philips in particular, in the murder itself. Who the Mexico City “Oswald imposter” was has never been determined.

At 10.30am on the morning of 27<sup>th</sup> September 1963 an unidentified man called the Soviet Military Attaché requesting a visa to Odessa, Russia. He was referred to the Soviet Consulate. The conversation was in Spanish, a language Masen claimed to speak, but Oswald did not. Seven minutes later the man phoned the Soviet Consulate but was told to call back at 11.30am. This call was also in Spanish. At 11am a man calling himself Lee Harvey Oswald entered the Cuban Consulate and spoke in English to Sylvia Duran. He was told he would need photographs for a visa request, and left to obtain them.

At 12.30pm “Oswald” allegedly visited the Soviet Embassy, though unlike the historic Oswald, spoke bad Russian. He was described as 25-27 years old, European or American, medium height with a longish face, narrow chin and high forehead that tended toward baldness. His hair was

coloured brunette. This description fits Masen as much as it does Oswald, Masen did not speak Russian as far as we know? At 1pm the man returned to the Cuban Consulate with four photographs, which were then stapled by Sylvia Duran to his visa application. The visa photo (and application) later released, of the Dallas Oswald, looks very much like Masen. If Ellsworth was later fooled, was Duran?? Duran's (and Consul Azcue's) description of the "Oswald" at the Consulate however says he was blonde, 5'6" and over 30 – not a description of Oswald or Masen. Duran accepted the photo as a valid likeness however. The Cubans told "Oswald" he would still require a Soviet visa which may take weeks. At 1.25pm he phoned the Soviet Consulate, speaking Spanish, but was told the Consul was unavailable.

At 4pm he visited the Cuban Consulate for a third time, and was told the visa could take 4-5 months. At this point he got angry and started shouting at the staff, forcing them to ask him to leave. Consul Alfredo Mirabal later said he believed the whole visit had been "a provocation" – a staged incident. On 28<sup>th</sup> September similar incidents occurred, with a 10am visit to the Soviet Embassy by a "thin subject, medium height, 25-27 years old with pale features" and a possible 11.51am visit (according to CIA transcripts) to the Cuban Consulate where he spoke to Sylvia Duran again, then phoned the Soviets in terrible Russian. Duran denies this visit ever took place though.

Finally on 1<sup>st</sup> October at 10.31am a man phoned the Soviet Military Attaché and at 10.45am the Soviet Consulate, speaking in English. This conversation was recorded by the CIA, and became the subject of disinformation in the following months. The indication an imposter was at some or all of these visits is strengthened by the CIA's own surveillance apparatus in Mexico City in 1963. On 27<sup>th</sup> September "Oswald's" three visits to the Cuban Consulate, his conversations would have been picked up by hidden microphones in the building, and photos of him entering AND leaving Cuban and Soviet compounds would also have been taken. The CIA said the cameras weren't working, station chief Win Scott later wrote however that Oswald was filmed as he entered and left each one.

HSCA investigator Dan Hardway told Chairman Stokes that ten feet of film had been removed from one of the CIA surveillance cameras of 27<sup>th</sup> September. This film was developed and then disappeared. No film of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City has ever been produced. Was this because a lookalike was filmed in his place? Surveillance film of the real Oswald would have been released quickly had he been there. The tape, in English, of the imposter telling the Soviets on 1<sup>st</sup> October he was "Lee Oswald" was withheld also. The CIA said the tape had been destroyed prior to 22<sup>nd</sup> November, but on 23<sup>rd</sup> November the FBI in Dallas had the tape, and knew the voice on it wasn't the man in DPD custody. Two Warren Commission members also heard the tape in Mexico City in April 1964, courtesy of Win Scott. All knew the tape was not of Oswald, and a later CIA transcript produced for the HSCA was a fabrication. The imposter tape disappeared though, probably into Win Scott's safe. James Angleton is suspected of taking it on Scott's death.

The authorities buried the case; the imposture was blatant evidence of a conspiracy to frame Oswald, perpetrated by some of those involved in the murder of Kennedy. If a lookalike was used in the deception, as is very likely, who was he? Masen's presence in Mexico City in the summer of 1963 is a tenuous link, but the fact remains the FBI could and should have

investigated this Spanish speaking Oswald lookalike far more thoroughly than they did in 1964. That they obscured his activities is no surprise though. The FBI shut off many such good leads, and together with the CIA led a grateful Warren Commission down a one-way street – Oswald Street. Masen is still alive and could be asked about what really happened in Mexico, his dealings with the Mendozas etc. Was he scouting for the machine guns Ellsworth said he wanted? And when exactly was he in Mexico City?

### **MASEN THE MIDDLEMAN (NONTE, ELLSWORTH & THE EXILES)**

The events that led to Masen being incarcerated on the assassination weekend were covered in depth in my Echo article of March 2000. ATF Agent Frank Ellsworth was monitoring Masen, who had been approached by Cuban exiles looking for weapons and explosives. Manuel Rodriguez Orcarberrio, of Dallas Alpha 66 and Joaquin Martinez De Pinillos, DRE member from University of Miami (J/M WAVE base) were among those exiles eager for Masen to supply them arms.

Posing as a bent cop Ellsworth approached Masen for automatic weapons, thus by late October he had requests for “hooky” ordnance coming out of his ears! In addition to any legitimate business he may have been doing, illegal orders had come in from the ATF and the exiles. Masen turned to George Nonte, Army Ordnance Captain at Fort Hood, Killeen Texas, for help. Nonte however reported back to Military Intelligence and the FBI all of Masen’s activities, a fact unbeknownst to Ellsworth. This game of cat and mouse led to a 23<sup>rd</sup> October phone call from Masen to Nonte’s home, asking if he “knew of anyone who might be interested in buying military information regarding a large scale Caribbean manoeuvre or exercise.” Nonte was given instructions by the authorities to make a “discrete enquiry” of Masen and his information, and this he did the next day. The night of 24<sup>th</sup> October Masen, Leroy Baker and James Melton visited Nonte at his home in Killeen. This was to collect several Spanish-American guns Nonte had re-barrelled for Masen; to exchange a quantity of British-Israeli surplus ammunition which Nonte converted for use in sporting weapons, and to test chemical compounds. Nonte, Masen, Baker and Melton were forming a company Black Hawk Chemicals Co, to market firearm lubricants, preservatives and de-rusting compounds. Masen also told Nonte the information he had pertaining to the Caribbean operation came from “Martinez” – the Cuban weapons buyer from Miami.

When Nonte visited Masen’s home and shop on 31<sup>st</sup> October Masen explained the extent of his knowledge of the forthcoming “Cuban operation.” He stated an extended series of small sized commando raids would begin the last week of November 1963! Insurgents would move into the mountains to reinforce and organise existing forces, and bring in new weapons, specifically C3 and C4 explosives. Masen was later arrested for possession of explosives. Following this there would be a large scale amphibious assault against the Cuban mainland. Masen said he would know the exact date and target within a 24 hour period. He was still scouting for a market in which to sell this information. Nonte’s regard for Masen at this point was less than flattering, calling him an opportunist and adding that Masen once stated the only things he wouldn’t do were white slavery or narcotics.

Masen continued to press Nonte for arms, presumably “on the cheap” from his stores? He wrote to Nonte on 7<sup>th</sup> November requesting prices for 75mm recoilless rifles and tripods, 20mm automatic guns and 0.50 calibre machine guns, saying “this is some stuff for our friends. Let’s get on your horse and get things done.” Nonte did not deliver; instead he offered details of commercial dealers – no good to Masen of course. Didn’t the Mendozas design 0.50 calibre machine guns during the war?

With Nonte and Fort Hood failing to deliver Masen turned to a couple of small time thieves it seems. On the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> November nine weapons were stolen from the National Guard Armoury at Terrell, east of Dallas. Five nights later Donnell Whitter 43, and Lawrence Miller 33, were arrested in Dallas with five of the guns – two automatic rifles, two .30 calibre machine guns and a .45 calibre submachine gun. Interestingly four .30 calibre rifles were not recovered in the arrest. (Imagine how tight the cover up would be if these had been used on JFK.) Whitter and Miller were in a Thunderbird that hit a pole, suspiciously though a Dodge sedan also involved, escaped. Five law enforcement officers present all failed to get the Dodge’s number plate, and no-one gave chase. Ellsworth was waiting for delivery of these guns, and the arrest stymied his sting operation against Masen. Was this done deliberately? Whitter was Jack Ruby’s mechanic. On the 19<sup>th</sup> November a Samuel Baker of the Terrell armoury visited Ruby’s Carousel Club. Masen’s attorney Pete White just happened to “run into” his friend Jack Ruby at the Dallas court on 20<sup>th</sup> November, the day of Masen’s arrest. Was Ruby also involved in the Terrell theft? And with both Masen and Ruby involved to some degree in local gunrunning deals, were the two men connected in any way in late 1963?

## **MASEN’S ARREST**

The arrest of Whitter and Miller forced Ellsworth’s hand, and he had Masen arrested on 20<sup>th</sup> November. The DPD arrest case report shows it occurred at his Gunshop at 11.30am by Dallas Officers Homer Burris and Tommy Taylor. Three witnesses listed were ATF agents William Fuller, Frank Ellsworth and Archie Kirkpatrick. The charge was Violation of the National Firearms Act – illegal possession of explosives. This lesser charge only warranted a small fine, and was the first of three arrests that week, culminating in a 22<sup>nd</sup> November arrest for “investigation purposes.” Probe magazine in 1996 printed his 22.11.63 fingerprint card. No mug shots taken by DPD have ever surfaced. My June 2004 request to LT.Wesson, the DPD custodian of mugshot record books, for information on Masen’s missing arrest photos was ignored. The DPD are still happy 40 years on then, to obstruct and ignore any research into this matter.

During the actual assassination Ellsworth was discussing the Masen case with FBI agent James Hosty and Army Intelligence agent Ed Coyle. Soon afterwards he saw Oswald at City Hall and mistook him for Masen. Recent speculation suggests inmate John Elrod made the same mistake in the Dallas jail. Elrod’s talkative cellmate, who according to authors Ray and Mary La Fontaine was the taciturn Lee Harvey Oswald, was probably the extrovert John Thomas Masen. If Elrod made the same mistake on the same day at close proximity, it reinforces Ellsworth’s claim of similarity.

## **WARREN COMMISSION**

After the Warren Commission “investigation” the military focus seemed to shift from Cuba to Vietnam, with official U.S. involvement starting in earnest in a war 8,000 miles away. Masen was investigated by the FBI and was found to be one of two stockists in Dallas/Fort Worth with 6.5mm Western cartridge ammunition, the type allegedly used in the assassination. CE 2694 shows however the FBI investigation consisted of phoning businesses listed in the telephone directory and asking them “Did you ever handle this type of ammunition?” – No wonder only a couple of months after the assassination only two businesses put their hands up, so much for exhaustive enquiries!

Masen was shown a picture of Oswald by the FBI and asked if he had ever sold ammunition to him. Whether they noticed a resemblance or not is not stated in their report. He denied any contact with Oswald, and in their usual fashion the FBI failed to obtain his sales records for confirmation. So who did he sell 6.5mm ammunition to? He obtained it from fellow gunsmith Johnny Brinegar, who had purchased a caseload in 1962, from the Century Arms Company, West Virginia. Brinegar had moved to his new Harry Hines Boulevard address only on 1<sup>st</sup> November – could any of his stock “got lost” in the move, and ended up in the wrong hands? As Carol Hewett observes, Masen was aware the 6.5mm ammunition was presumably U.S. made for a European nation, and as such should not be imported back into the States. Did the possible use of “illegal” ammunition against JFK secure silence from the military?

### **THE LOVELL PENN INCIDENT**

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October Mrs Penn heard firing on her land close to Cedar Hill a dozen or so miles south west of downtown Dallas. Two men were standing in her field by a 1957 black and white Chevrolet (similar to the car photographed in General Walker’s drive in April; since linked to Cuban exile Felipe Vidal Santiago) with a third man a distance away with a rifle. When Mrs Penn asked them to leave or she would call the police, the man with the rifle became angry and made several nasty comments. Mrs Penn thought this man “might have been Oswald” and that one of the others was a Latin or a Cuban. Mrs Penn also retrieved a cartridge case from her field which she gave to the FBI. Later examination showed this to be a 6.5mm Mannlicher- Carcano ammunition case that could not be linked to Oswald’s rifle. No such ammunition was ever found in Oswald’s possession, nor was he ever linked to any. Masen sold this unusual ammunition in his shop. Oswald’s demeanour was not antagonistic either, unlike the gunman in Mrs Penn’s field. Masen was described as more boorish than introverted by Nonte and Ellsworth. Was Mrs Penn’s “Oswald” therefore more likely John Masen demonstrating firearms to prospective buyers or friends? Were guns and ammunition being tested for a Cuban buyer later connected to the assassination??

The exact nature of Masen’s involvement, if any, in the manipulation and framing of Oswald prior to the assassination is now forty years in the past. His facial likeness is confirmed (notice also his “backyard chin”) vindicating Frank Ellsworth. Masen’s November 1963 mug shot photos are the next item to be found, this will be done, we just don’t know when?

Today Masen is a 64 year old father of five, a busy owner of a survival weaponry parts business in Grand Prairie. When I contacted him with some questions on the assassination he said there

were two or three John Masan's in the gun business, and I had the wrong one. I didn't believe him!!

## FOOTNOTES

1. Woodrow Wilson High School Yearbook 1958.
2. "The Men on the Sixth Floor" Sample & Collom, pp98-99.
3. Letter to author 19<sup>th</sup> October 1999.
4. Letter to author 28<sup>th</sup> September 1999.
5. "The Man who knew Too Much" Dick Russell, p543.
6. See note 4.
7. Letter to author 17<sup>th</sup> November 1999.
8. Email to author 12<sup>th</sup> April 2004.
9. Internet sources.
10. Lopez report pp73-74.
11. "Passport to assassination" Oleg Nechiporenko, p68.
12. Lopez report pp186, 194 & 205.
13. Lopez report p74.
14. Lopez report p205.
15. Nechiporenko p75.
16. Lopez report pp76-77.
17. Lopez report p78.
18. Lopez report pp24-25.
19. Lopez report p23.
20. "Harvey and Lee" John Armstrong, p637.
21. Lopez report p81.
22. Memo Hoover to Rowley 23/11/63: Armstrong pp651-653.
23. "Last Investigation" Gaeton Fonzi, pp286-287; Armstrong pp652-653.
24. Armstrong p652; Lopez report p22.
25. FBI report San Antonio office 29/10/63, "Someone Would Have Talked" Larry Hancock, Exhibits.
26. Ibid.
27. FBI memo San Antonio to Director 7/11/63, Hancock Exhibits.
28. Military Police Report 9/1/64, Hancock Exhibits; Dallas Times Herald 1/12/63.
29. HSCA memo, Hancock Exhibits.
30. Dallas PD Case Report 16/12/63.
31. "Oswald Talked" Ray & Mary La Fontaine.
32. "Should Oswald talked be titled Masen talked?" Carol Hewett, Probe July/August 1996.
33. "Bloody Treason" Noel Twyman, p660.
34. 25H 588; 26H 406; "Cover Up" Gary Shaw/Larry Harris, p111.
35. CD 205, p182.
36. Email to author 17<sup>th</sup> February 2003.

