

Philadelphia Quakers - With Oswald in Mexico City

by Bill Kelly

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Of the many Philadelphia connections to the assassination of President Kennedy, few stand out as more interesting or suspicious as Lee Harvey Oswald's Quaker connection in Mexico City.

As the story filtered back to the FBI, it was alleged that Oswald was seen at a restaurant in Mexico City with an American who also wanted to go to Cuba. This source further related later that this same American may have given Oswald a ride to the Cuban and Russian embassies on the back of a motorcycle. This American was later identified as a Philadelphia Quaker student, possibly named "Steve Kennan or Keenan."

The first part of this story came to the FBI's attention thru the fiance of Homobono Alcaraz Aragon, a friend of an informant for the FBI's San Francisco office and led back to Mexico City. The trail of information contained in FBI reports is somewhat confusing, so I defer to Professor Jerry Rose, as he published the first part of the story in the Fourth Decade [Volume 5 #4, May, 1998].

Rose wrote about the FBI's investigation of The Casa De Los Amigos, a Quaker camp or hostel in Mexico City whose residents apparently had knowledge of Lee Harvey Oswald's activities. Prof. Rose wrote: "Given the Bureau's propensity to try to associate Oswald with Friends [Quaker] groups like the New Orleans Council for Peaceful Alternatives, this 'information' aroused the intense interest of headquarters, which conveyed this information along with directives to interview [Alcaraz] and give the appropriate attention to the matter in view of the fact that, 'Mrs. Ruth Paine of Irving Texas, who has befriended Oswald and wife, has been prominently associated with the activities of the Friend's organization.'"

The Mexico City Quaker connection was first developed by the San Francisco Bureau of the FBI, whose undercover informant Judith Gordon, notified them on January 15, 1964 that Barrie Milliman, a female student at the University of California (Berkeley), learned of some of Oswald's movements and contacts while visiting her fiance Homobono Amo Alcaraz in Mexico City.

Before they got to Alcaraz however, the FBI interviewed the Acting Director of the Casa del Los Amigos, Von Peacock, who speculated that the "unknown American" may have been Robert Kaffke of San Francisco, who had been one of 58 students who made an illegal trip to Cuba in the summer of 1963. While it was determined that Kaffke was not registered at the Casa De Los Amigos until Oct. 25, 1963, weeks after Oswald had left, he was familiar to the FBI since he was also an undercover informant of the San Francisco FBI office. He was not now suspected as being the "unknown American" seen with Oswald in Mexico City.

Kaffke told the FBI that when he stayed at the Casa de Los Amigos in late October 1963 the residents were still talking about Oswald's visit. When Oswald was there he had "a lot of money" and "persons at Casa de Los Amigos are really scared when the name of Oswald is mentioned." [B.K. -- Note that they were scared in October, 1963 -- Before the assassination].

When the FBI caught up with Alcaraz, he verified much of what had been reported by Barrie Milliman, thru her friend Judith Gordon, which was that he had seen Oswald with an unknown American at Sanford's restaurant and that they were "working together to get visas for travel to Cuba and that they planned to go there together."

According to the FBI report, Alcaraz mentioned that Oswald may have been associated with 'Steve Kennan', identified as a "pro-communist American," who had been in Mexico in 1962 and 1963, although he "stated emphatically," that he had never seen Oswald with "Kennan".

Then, according to Rose, there is the reference in the FBI reports to an "Arnold," who "begins to assume human shape and identity as 'Steve Kennan' moves into limbo."

Arnold Kessler of Detroit had also been at the Casa de Los Amigos (in February), and like Barrie Millman, had attended the University of California at Berkeley. He worked temporarily as a journalist in Mexico City before moving on to Brazil, where the FBI found him. Kessler denied meeting Oswald, but stated that it was Alcaraz who told him that he -- Alcaraz had met Oswald.

As a former student radical who dropped out of college, and was not an FBI informant, Kessler's draft board was subsequently informed of his circumstances so he could be inducted into the military.

The FBI Legal Attache in Mexico then concluded there was "no real basis for inquiry" and "no further investigation is being conducted."

But others did investigate, and found out more about the mysterious American Quaker from Philadelphia, "Steve Kennan".

In *Live By The Sword*, Gus Russo (Bancroft Press, Baltimore, MD., 1998) gives an historically deceiving perspective of Kennedy's murder that still tries to sell the original cover-story for the operation -- that Fidel Castro was behind the assassination. There is however, an interesting footnote under the allegation that there are no photos of Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico City because, as Russo would like us to believe, Oswald was possibly accompanied by Cuban agents. The note (from Chapter 19 - 8, p. 579) reads:

"In 1994, . . . [Anthony and Robbyn] Summers also interviewed Homer Bono, who told them that he met Oswald at Sanborn's Restaurant outside Mexico City in 1963. Oswald left in the company of a Quaker from Philadelphia named Steve Kennan [sic?]. Oswald was a passenger on Kennan's motorbike as the two drove off to the Cuban Embassy to try to secure a visa for Oswald. Kennan has never been found or interviewed."

The idea that Oswald could have been ferried about Mexico City on a motorbike by "a Quaker from Philadelphia" is certainly an interesting possibility, especially since the Warren Report makes note of the fact (p. 735):

"Although the Soviet and Cuban Embassies are within two blocks of each other, they are some distance from Oswald's hotel. He must, therefore, have traversed a substantial portion of the city on more than one occasion." So, "A Quaker from Philadelphia" with a motorbike would have done very nicely, and he could be a valuable witness to Oswald's activities there.

Anthony Summers, in *Not In Your Lifetime* (Marlowe & Co., N.Y., 1998 p.441), wrote in a footnote:

"In 1994, in Mexico City, the author interviewed Homobono Alcaraz Aragon, a lawyer. His name featured in reports indicating that he claimed he had met Oswald in Mexico City before the assassination. In the 1994 interview, Alcaraz said he had encountered Oswald at Sanborn's restaurant, in the company of two or three other American students -- all Quakers, like Alcaraz himself. The talk centered on efforts to get to Cuba, and Alcaraz said 'Oswald' eventually left with one of the Americans -- whom Alcaraz recalls as being named either Steve Kennan (or Keenan) from Philadelphia. As Alcaraz recalled it, Keenan drove Oswald on his motorcycle to go to the Cuban consulate. Alcaraz seemed sincere, and abhorred publicity. He named a friend, Hector Gastelo (now a farmer in Sanoro State) as probably having been present during the encounter with Oswald. (Interview with Alcaraz, 1993; CE 2121; and multiple FBI reports -- available at the Assassinations Archive and Research Center, Washington D.C.; Miraba: HSCA III.177)."

In a footnote to the footnote, Summers also makes note that, "As this book went to press, the author became aware of information that the CIA ran an agent in Mexico, code named LICOZY -- 3, who was a student from Philadelphia (Philip Agee, *Inside the Company*, Stonehill, 1975, p. 530).

The plot thickens as Agee reported (*Inside the Company*):

"The [Mexico City] station double-agent cases against the Soviets, LICOZY-1, LICOZY-3 and LICOZY-5, are all being wound up for lack of productivity or problems of control. One of these agents, LICOZY-3, is an American living in Philadelphia who was recruited by the Soviets while a student in Mexico City, but who reported the recruitment and worked for the Mexico City station. He worked for the FBI after returning to the US -- the Soviet case officer was a UN official at one time -- but recently Soviet interest in him has fallen off and the FBI turned the case back over to the Agency for termination." [Emphasis added -- where?].

Sanborn's Restaurant, where Alcaraz and Kennan reportedly met Oswald, is also mentioned by Richard Case Nagell, who according to Dick Russell (in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, Carroll & Graf, 1992, p. 354), wrote a letter to his friend Arthur Greenstein referring to Sandborn's restaurant as a meeting place. While Sandborn's Restaurant is reported in one reference (Russo) to be "just outside" Mexico City, Mary Ferrell's index notes that, (Steve) "Kennan was seen several times in Sanborn's Restaurant next to the American Embassy bldg. in Mexico City."

[B.K. Note: If Sanborn's Restaurant is next to the American Embassy, Larry Happanen questions whether Oswald visited the American Embassy as well as the Cuban and Russian Embassies while he was there.]

It seems quite possible, even probable, as Summers' suspects, that "Steve Kennan -- or Keenan" -- a "Quaker from Philadelphia," who gave Oswald a ride around Mexico City on his motorbike, could be LICOZY-3, a "student from Philadelphia who was recruited by the Soviets while a student in Mexico City."

The whole "Quaker" connection to the assassination reaches right to the heart of the matter of who was behind Oswald's movements and how he was being directed in his clandestine operations -- his advocacy of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans, his mission to the Cuban and Russian Embassies in Mexico City, his intention to move to Philadelphia, his relocation back to Dallas and his job at the Texas School Book Depository.

Central to everything is Ruth Avery Hyde Paine.

According to Priscilla Johnson McMillan, in Marina and Lee (Harper and Row, N.Y., 1977, p. 314):

"Ruth Avery Hyde grew up in the Middle West, the daughter of parents who felt strongly about the value of education and good works. When she was only thirteen, Ruth spent a summer on a truck farm in Ohio as her way of contributing to the effort to win World War II. The next summer she was with a traveling Bible school, teaching in Ohio and Indiana. At nineteen, as a student at Antioch College in Ohio, she became a Quaker, a convinced Quaker, often the most dedicated kind. She wanted to be a teacher, and by the time she graduated had an astonishing array of jobs. She had taught in elementary schools in the East and Middle West and had been a recreation leader at Jewish community centers in Ohio and Indiana, at a club for elderly immigrants in Philadelphia, and at a Friends' work camp in South Dakota. Whatever the job, Ruth was liked and respected, and was always asked to come back. . . . She was later a teacher, aged twenty-five, at the Germantown Friends' School in Philadelphia when she met and married Michael Paine . . . They moved to Texas, and in September 1962, they separated . . ."

Not mentioned in this biography is the fact that Ruth Hyde Paine's father and sister both worked in various capacities for federal agencies that have provided cover for the CIA. Another anomaly is Maria Hyde, an elderly American lady whom Oswald met in both Moscow and Minsk, and whose photo of Oswald in Minsk turned up in CIA files, reportedly from the files of the Domestic Contacts Division of the CIA, which routinely debriefs American tourists and business people who travel abroad. [It has never been determined if the Marie Hyde that Oswald met in Russia is in any way related to Ruth Hyde Paine or the international Quaker community. It however, seems to be a question that could be reasonably answered].

Ruth Avery Hyde Paine is a pacifist who harbors Quaker beliefs, studied the Russian language, wrote letters to pen-pals in the Soviet Union, helped arrange east-west exchange students and became Marina Oswald's guardian. She first took Marina into her home as a guest while Oswald went to New Orleans to obtain work and an apartment.

Ruth H. Paine then drove Marina from Texas to the Magazine Street apartment in New Orleans and then notified a local Quaker, Mrs. Ruth Kloepfer, of the Oswald's presence in New Orleans. She requested Kloepfer contact and assist the Oswalds, and Mrs. Kloepfer and her two college age daughters, who were also learning the Russian language, then visited Lee and Marina at the apartment.

According to the Warren Report (p. 726):

"Ruth Kloepfer was a clerk of the Quaker Meeting in New Orleans whom Ruth Paine had written in the hope that she might know some Russian-speaking people who could visit Marina. Mrs. Kloepfer herself visited the Oswalds but made no attempt to direct any Russian-speaking people to them." [Other than her daughters, who were never interviewed].

Oswald then embarked upon his trip to Clinton, LA., and pro and anti-Castro Cuban operations in New Orleans, which continued until September 22, 1963, when Ruth H. Paine arrived in New Orleans from Philadelphia. Arriving after a long summer trip that took her to visit relatives in Massachusetts and Philadelphia Ruth Hyde Paine had spent some time with her husband's mother, Ruth Forbes Paine Young and her husband Arthur Young, the inventor of the Bell Helicopter. Both Ruth F. P. Young (Michael Paine's mother) and Arthur Young were pacifists, professed Quaker beliefs and were associated with the Philadelphia Friends community.

Oswald had told a few acquaintances, including Ruth H. Paine, that he intended to relocate to Philadelphia, and in his notebook are five Philadelphia addresses and the notations:

Philidelphia (sic)

Russ-Amer. citizenship club 2730 Snyder Av.

Russ. Lan. school 1212 Spruce

Russian Daliy (sic) Paper Jefferson Bldg.

Russian Lan. Trn. 216 S. 20 / Russ. _____ -- Ho__ Organ. 1733 Spring Grdn. [WC Exhibit 18].

Philadelphia is the headquarters of the world Quaker community, which maintains close ties to nearby Main Line colleges Swathmore College and Haverford. Michael Paine attended Swathmore after leaving Harvard, and journalist Priscilla Johnson McMillan matriculated at Haverford. Both Priscilla Johnson and Ruth Forbes Paine were active in support of the World Federalists, the organization founded by Cord Meyer, who later became head of the CIA's International Organizaitons and Domestic Contacts Divisions.

Also in downtown Philadelphia is the headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which operates Casa de los Amigos, the "camp" or youth hostel for America students studying the Spanish language in Mexico City, where the "unknown American," Philadelphia Quaker student "Steve Kennen -- or Keenan" is alledged to have stayed.

Instead of going to Philadelphia however, Oswald went to Mexico City, while Mrs. Ruth H. Paine took Marina, the kids and all of the Oswald's belongings -- including his rifle -- to Texas.

It is possible that "Steve Kennan -- Keenan" and his Quaker friends knew Oswald in Mexico City and were associated with Casa de los Amigos, which is still operational today.

In response to an email query, Ruth Hyde Paine said that while she received a newsletter from the Casa de los Amigos, the Quaker hostel in Mexico City, she has never been there, and was not familiar with a Philadelphia Quaker student named "Steve Kennan or Keenan."

Identifying and locating a "Philadelphia Quaker student" who was in Mexico City in the summer of 1963 named "Steve Kennan or Keenan," should not be such a difficult task for any good researcher worth his salt, and I put out a challenge to others interested in this subject to help try to find this guy.

Among those who assisted in the search, Stu Wexler, myself and others looked in the extensive Quaker records at all the various Quaker institutions in Philadelphia, but came up empty for any "Steve Kennan," or "Steve Keenan."

Australian researcher Greg Parker however, noticed a smilar name in Priscialla Johnson McMillan's book *Lee & Marina* (p. 68), in which she notes, on October 31, 1959, former U.S. Marine Corps defector Lee Harvey Oswald left the Hotel Metropole in Moscow and took a taxi to the American Embassy. There he told a receptionist he wanted to "dissolve his citizenship."

In the office of U.S. consul Richard E. Snyder, Oswald "slapped his passport down on Snyder's desk and demanded to take the oath renouncing his American citizenship that very moment. And he handed Snyder a letter formally requesting that his American citizenship be revoked and affirming his allegiance

to the U.S.S.R. He added that he had been a radar technician in the Marine Corps and would make available to the Soviet government such knowledge as he had acquired."

According to PJM, "Richard Snyder was in a dilemma, for Lee Oswald appeared to be sane and he was within his own rights . . . glancing at Oswald's passport and noting that he was still a minor, the boy ought to have time to think it over . . . The exchange lasted less than an hour, but it had so nasty a tone that it was remembered long afterward by three Americans, besides Snyder and Oswald, who were present during parts of it -- John McVicker, the vice-consul, Marie Cheatham, the receptionist, and Edward L. Keenan, a graduate exchange student down for the weekend from Leningrad."

Could "Edward L. Keenan," the graduate exchange student in Leningrad and Moscow be the mysterious, "unknown American" Philadelphia Quaker student who also rode Oswald around Mexico City on the back of his motorcycle in the fall of 1963?

Parker took his hunch to the internet and came up with one Edward L. Keenan, professor of linguistics at the University of the City of Los Angeles (UCLA), whose Curriculum Vitae includes a BA degree in Philosophy and Religion from Swarthmore College in Philadelphia in 1959 and the Sorbonne (1962), as well as work as an "Escort Interpreter" (French-English) for the U.S. Department of State in 1962-64 (summers).

A Quaker student from Philadelphia named Edward L. Keenan!

Is this the guy? If so, it is even more remarkable that he would meet Oswald at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow on the day he defects in 1959 and then hooks up with him again in Mexico City in the fall of 1963, a few months before he is accused of being the assassin of the President of the United States.

[BK Notes: I have initiated an internet email query with all major Quaker organizations and am getting a good response from librarians who are very helpful.]

It is also possible Oswald learned of this Quaker "camp" before he went to Mexico City from either Ruth H. Paine or Ruth Kloepfer, although both would later deny that they knew of Oswald's intention to visit Mexico.

It has long been speculated that any CIA photographs of Oswald entering or leaving the Cuban or Russian embassies, on any of ten known occasions, were not made public because of other persons who are in the photographs, which would expose on-going covert operations.

In his book Gus Russo speculates that any person photographed with Oswald in Mexico City was possibly Cuban, or at least a Communist agent, but if LICOVEY-3 ferried Oswald around, he was being transported about by a KGB-CIA double agent under the control of the CIA Counter-intelligence unit (James J. Angleton -- Win Scott), the same ones who kept the CIA files on Oswald "very close to their vests." (paraphrase of John Newman -- Oswald & the CIA).

With the Quaker connection, there seems to be an underlying thread of detached financial and administrative assistance from a number of "non-profit" religious oriented charity organizations such as the American Friends Service Committee, the "Red Cross" that subsidized Oswald's sojourn in Minsk, the Russian Orthodox Church in America and the Catholic Cuban Welfare and Refugee Relief organizations.

Some of them were supported financially by the Catherwood Fund, a non-profit foundation established the same month in 1948 as the CIA, and located in Paoli, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia on the Main Line, in the same small town as Michael Paine's mother, Ruth Forbes Young and her husband Arthur Young.

The CIA funding of such organizations has long been established and the roles of CIA officials Tom Braden and Cord Meyer have been widely published, and in light of the Quaker connections, should be reviewed to see if there are any more concrete connections.

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