

## Oswald's Shooting skills

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*Larry Hancock introduction: In The Oswald Puzzle we point out issues such as his rapid deterioration in shooting skill tests while in the Marines, as well as his embarrassing performance after joining a factory shooting club while in Russia. We also note that the Department of Justice advisor to the Warren Commission actually encouraged them not to deal with his shooting abilities in the report; he felt it would be a weak point in the case against Oswald. What we were not aware of was an incident in Dallas during the fall of 1963 which raised further questions on his shooting skill – something actually reported to the FBI. I've asked researcher Greg Doudna to share his research on this story – the following is a synopsis he provided; I hope you find it as interesting as I did:*

It has been questioned whether Lee Harvey Oswald had the skill to have accurately fired the shots which killed Kennedy in the presidential limousine on Elm Street from the 6<sup>th</sup> floor window. There is no evidence Oswald was a good shot with a rifle and significant evidence he was not.

In addition to known and familiar accounts regarding Oswald's poor marksmanship scores and reputation for being a poor shot among his fellow Marines, there is another item which has received no attention despite its potential significance.

Laura Kittrell, a long-time counselor with the Texas Employment Commission [TEC] of Dallas, tried to tell that, in the course of her job duties when Oswald was referred to her office as part of his seeking employment in October 1963, she had had a General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) administered to Oswald at the Employment Commission, following which Kittrell counseled Oswald going over the results.

Kittrell reported that whereas Oswald scored well in the parts of the GATB dealing with intelligence and verbal abilities, Oswald had received a poor, below-average score in the physical-motor coordination part of that test.

In Kittrell's experience with other men clients, poor scores in motor coordination, on the GATB, correlated with being a poor shot with a rifle. Kittrell believed there was a causal relationship between the two.

In the course of discussing that poor test result with Oswald, Kittrell had told Oswald that, and Oswald had told Kittrell that it was true he was a poor shot with a rifle, and explained his marksmanship tests and ratings in the Marines for her.

On December 26, 1963 Kittrell sent a letter with that information to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Attorney General Kennedy's office forwarded the letter to the FBI. A few days later Kittrell received written acknowledgement from the FBI in the name of the Director confirming the FBI had her information. Then, she heard nothing further.

Kittrell believed that because of her information and personal dealings with Oswald she would be contacted by the Warren Commission. But no one contacted her.

In April 1964, upon learning Warren Commission staff were in Dallas interviewing witnesses, Kittrell visited U.S. Attorney Barefoot Sanders in his office in Dallas whom she knew. Kittrell asked Sanders to convey her information to the Warren Commission staff then in Dallas, with whom Sanders was in contact, before the Commission staff left to return to Washington, D.C. Sanders said he would do so and had Secret Service agents stop by Kittrell's office to obtain Kittrell's document and bring it to him.

But the Warren Commission staff left Dallas and returned to D.C. and Kittrell was not contacted. When Kittrell inquired, U.S. Attorney Sanders told her he had mailed her document to the Warren Commission.

When the Warren Commission's Final Report was published in September 1964, Kittrell was dismayed to see no hint of her information reflected in the Report, causing her to believe the Warren Commission either had ignored or had never received her information.

On June 4, 1965, Kittrell sent another letter with her information, and detailing her earlier unsuccessful attempts to bring it to the attention of the proper authorities, to now-U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy in New York (pp. 10-11 of <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/sightings-of-lho-oct.-1963-laurel-kittrall/687524?item=687539>, and pp. 44-49 of <https://digitalcollections-baylor.quartexcollections.com/Documents/Detail/sightings-of-lho-oct.-1963-laurel->

[kittral/687524?item=687630](#)). The office of Senator Kennedy forwarded Kittrell's letter to the FBI and asked the FBI to investigate and report back to the Senator's office.

Internal FBI documents show FBI headquarters in D.C. suggesting to the Dallas FBI office that Kittrell was emotionally disturbed and suggesting a letterhead answer be prepared suitable for dissemination to Senator Kennedy's office around those lines, which was done.

In the Dallas FBI field office's response forwarded to Senator Kennedy's office, the Dallas FBI neither disputed what Kittrell reported of Oswald's aptitude test nor did any investigation of its substance.

Instead, the FBI informed Senator Kennedy's office that the FBI found a blanket no "information of value" in Kittrell's submission meriting investigation. Instead of investigating and determining the facts of the Oct 1963 GATB test results of Oswald told by Kittrell—the FBI did not do that, and today no paper documentation is known for that test—the FBI obtained and cited a derogatory comment concerning Kittrell's emotional behavior from a male supervisor, who called the unmarried Kittrell a "frustrated old maid" who overdramatized, despite the supervisor acknowledging that long-time counselor Kittrell was "a good worker in many respects", with no claim on any record that Kittrell had acted improperly on her job or had a medical diagnosis of anything amiss with her mental state. But the FBI reporting had the effect of discrediting Kittrell on a personal level.

Kittrell's story was complicated in that in her account Kittrell confused two distinct persons in her memory and account as if they were one, the one being her client, Oswald, the other being another TEC client served in her same office by a different, named, counselor whom Kittrell had also assisted, a client named Curtis Craford who went then by the name Larry Craford. This does not appear to have been an impersonation of Oswald but rather a confusion by mistake in the two men's identities on Kittrell's part

From the beginning Kittrell had expressed suspicion that two persons may have been involved in her recounted memories of Oswald, which in fact was correct, with one of the two men of her memories having been Oswald, and the other having been Craford mistakenly confused by Kittrell with Oswald.

When the Warren Commission's 26 volumes of documents and exhibits were published in November 1964, and Kittrell saw photos of Carousel Club handyman Curtis Craford therein, she recognized and positively identified Craford as the second man with whom she had dealt at the TEC offices, the other counselor's client who was not Oswald. Kittrell then checked and found

in her TEC office an inactive file for Craford, confirming that Craford had been physically in and out of that same office in addition to Oswald.

The FBI deflected attention from, did not investigate, and, in the way it responded, buried the significant fact in Kittrell's information of a claimed significantly-below-average Oct 1963 GATB test result of Oswald in motor coordination and the question of its possible bearing on Oswald's self-confessed deficiency in shooting ability (FBI, 8/17/65, <https://www.maryferrell.org/showDoc.html?docId=60400#relPageId=194>).

How might the public perception of the investigation of the JFK assassination have been affected if this story had become known to the press and reported at the time?"

***The following are three additional comments from me that followed Larry Hancock's blog post of my synopsis above--gd***

The motor coordination ("K") part of the GATB is one of nine abilities tested. It is not pass-fail but a numerical score based on 100 being the statistical mean, like IQ scoring. The test scores of the GATB Oswald took from Kittrell are unknown other than Kittrell's memory that Oswald scored poorly in motor coordination, but the answer to your question would be he wasn't terribly bad, only below-average but enough to be in the Marines.

Oswald actually took a GATB from the Texas Employment Commission the previous year, fall 1962, and those results are published in the Warren Commission Exhibits. In that test Oswald scored 97 on the K motor coordination. Laura Kittrell through a paperwork misunderstanding wasn't supposed to have given Oswald a duplicate second test but did not realize it until after she had had him tested. She tells of that and receiving a little scolding over that at work. Kittrell said in cases when that happened the scores would usually be close to each other within a few points. For example Oswald in 1962 scored 109 in overall intelligence (I'm not sure whether that is identical to IQ or not but it's the GATB intelligence score.)

But Kittrell said she did remember Oswald's number on that from her test and it was higher, 116 or 117 I think. Varying by a few but not a large amount. Therefore although Kittrell did not remember his exact K score for motor coordination, she did remember it stood out as poor, yet it cannot have been "terrible" in the sense of more than a few points below 97 (which is already below average) of the 1962.

Laura Kittrell was gone from work on Friday Nov 22 by permission to see the JFK parade. When she returned to work on Monday Nov 25 she tried to find the files on Oswald but they were all

gone (presumably taken by management maybe at FBI's request or whatever). Kittrell then from late November through December set about writing from memory alone, with no paper records, everything she could remember of her Oswald interactions which had taken place in October.

Like Larry, what stands out to me is the suppression of her story and lack of investigation of the records she reported by the FBI and especially her account of the below-average motor coordination test score and its meaning, plus what she recounted of her discussion with Oswald in which he told her it was true, he was a poor shot. Yet Oswald still was passable by the minimal Marines standard.

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The interesting thing is the testable and intuitively interesting research question: whether a poor motor coordination score (considered an aptitude necessary for e.g. a welder to hold a piece of metal steady at the right distance to be a good welder) correlates to rifle shooting accuracy skill. I have not found published research on this question though I have found published research testing other variables on rifle shooting accuracy such as focused concentration ability (correlates to better shooting accuracy) and good recommended posture while shooting (no correlation found).

But I have not found a published study relevant to Laura Kittrell's anecdotal claim from her experience of noticing men who had poor motor coordination also were poor rifle shooters. But I have not done an exhaustive literature search. Maybe there is research data on this question somewhere?

I see in the new book by you and Boylan on Oswald, an interesting discussion of Oswald and the JFK shooting, raising questions of how Oswald with no practice and no sighting-in of a supposedly re-assembled rifle from broken-down condition the morning of Nov 22, could have shot accurately in the conventional Oswald reconstruction. When the only real evidence claimed to have Oswald as the shooter was the argument connecting him to the rifle, and yet his rifle could have been obtained from him on Nov 11 (per research I have on my website) and then brought into the TSBD without his knowledge.

Even without the unconscionable coverup of the Kittrell report of an Oct 1963 poor GATB motor coordination test result for Oswald, there was the previous year's on-the-record below-average motor coordination score of 97 (below 100 at 50th percentile of all men), for Oswald. That never received any notice or attention. Would that known, 1962, below-average score for Oswald be suggestive of skill level implications for Oswald's accuracy with a rifle on

Nov 22, 1963 (and without prior practice)? Unknown. Because the question was never looked into. Great blog by the way, many riches in your archives, thanks for your labors.

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And yet it was not just Kittrell's anecdotal claim of a correlation between a low motor coordination score and poor rifle shooting accuracy, but missing paperwork of an Oct 1963 entire Oswald GATB test battery in TEC records that the FBI refused to try to find, and therefore not surprisingly, did not find.

The documentation and numbers of those nine categories of aptitudes of that second Oswald GATB would have become a matter of record irrespective of any discrediting of Kittrell on personal grounds analogous to the Silvia Odio situation. Furthermore, no matter how discredited Kittrell could have been made out to be, it would have put the question on the map requiring an evidence-based response: was there significance in an Oswald poor motor coordination test score bearing on the already sensitive questions raised concerning his rifle shooting accuracy ability. It is also part of the surprise of this story that even from the Warren Commission critics' side this story was missed. This publication on your blog in early 2025 I believe is the first formal publication of this story in history, some 62 years later.