



Marina and Lee

Priscilla Johnson McMillan

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"When John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas on 11/22/1963, it marked not only a terrible moment in history but also the climax of a turbulent relationship between two young people, Russian-born Marina Prusakova & her husband, the President's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. *Marina & Lee* is a fascinating & richly detailed portrait of a man who was driven to kill & a woman who was determined to survive. Thirteen years in preparation, it's been written with Marina's complete & exclusive cooperation by the one person who knew Kennedy when he was a young Senator & who also met & interviewed Oswald when he defected to the Soviet Union in 1959." Illustrated & indexed.

Marina and Lee Details

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Author : Priscilla Johnson McMillan

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From Reader Review Marina and Lee for online ebook

Pete daPixie says

I was not looking forward to reading this book, it has been at the bottom of my 'to-read' list for a while. Being aware that this author was a Warren Commission apologist was what kept 'Marina and Lee' off my 'currently reading' selections.

Eventually, having bit the magic bullet, strained my old eyes reading the rather small type, I found myself enjoying Priscilla Johnson McMillan's dual biography. Particularly the first half of this work, which is throughout very well written, reads like some old Russian fictional novel. I pondered my rating of two stars, perhaps it was deserving of three.

Where my admiration for this book fell away was in the latter half. As this author held interviews with Marina Oswald in 1964, and finally published in 1978, she remained steadfastly committed to the guilty verdict proclaimed by the President's Commission, as is evident from her Notes that refer exclusively to W.C. exhibits, hearings and testimonies. Nowhere is there mention of Jim Garrison's investigations relating to Oswald's known New Orleans exploits with such as Banister, Ferrie, Shaw and Andrews. Harold Weisberg's 'Oswald in New Orleans' was published a decade before 'Marina and Lee' went to press. Rather than confront the copious Oswald mysteries, P.J.M. remains wedded to Earl Warren.

Instead of providing the reader with indisputable factual evidence to convict the alleged assassin, we are fed a psychological profile that strains belief even more than the official government verdicts. Please spare me the parricidal overtones of the Walker shooting as Edwin A. Walker had the same first name and initial as Oswald's stepfather Edwin A. Ekdahl. Whoever shot and missed the general, a witness saw a getaway car and the recovered ordinance was not a 6.5 bullet.

While this book tells us how much of a liar Oswald was, if anyone has read the sworn testimony of Marina Oswald in 1964, they would know that Marina was also very adept at that art.

On balance, two stars are about right.

Roger Dier says

Have been looking around for this book for a long time and I found it while furniture shopping in Appleton, Wisconsin. That's another story.

This is a terrific telling of a truly dysfunctional courtship and marriage. Two lost souls, Marina the Russian kicked-around orphan and Lee, the American defector shaped by a severely bent mother. Marina's early life in Soviet Russia is interesting, and the author's accounts of the people and culture that shaped Marina's growing life are fascinating. Lee, meanwhile, has his formative years fleshed out, and one can only wonder if Oswald's mother was any other than abrasive Marguerite Oswald would he have stuck a gun out of a window in the moment the President of the United States passed beneath it.

Viewed from the 21st Century, the emotional and physical punishment Lee dished out on Marina is shocking. She was a battered wife who did not speak the language of the country she was living in. Oswald kept her ignorant of the English language and dependent on him. Marina's husband was emotionally arid and mentally sick, drifting in and out of reality, and treated people in his world, in Ms. Johnson McMillan's words, "like cardboard cutouts." This book is about 550 pages long, and while the length is daunting, I found myself looking forward to the book every day I picked it up; it took me about 20 days to nibble my way through it. The author is probably the only person on earth who knew and interviewed Lee Oswald before he

slid into permanent infamy. Ms. Johnson McMillan also worked for Senator John F. Kennedy for a time. She spent seven months interviewing freshly widowed Marina Oswald in 1964, and Marina's post-assassination life, including her wilder times, are included.

The author splices the narrative together with three or four chapters which felt like an intermission from the main course, but I found those analytical detours refreshing and insightful. Ms. Johnson McMillan tried a little too hard to connect the dots near the end of the book, when she went on about the why Oswald killed President Kennedy. To try to understand the mind of a mad man is a maddening exercise, and I was exhausted by what she asked us to consider to believe. Ruth Paine, the woman who took Marina in in the late summer of 1963, comes off as the kind of person you'd like to have as a friend. I've always admired Ms. Paine, and this book reminded me why I always have. Still, if Ruth Paine had not been living in Dallas in 1963, we might have never heard of Lee Harvey Oswald.

I confess to being a little torn at the outset to read a book about a twisted slug who used two bullets to graft his meaningless life onto John F. Kennedy's. From the moment I learned of John Kennedy's death as a third grader at Chappell Grade School in Green Bay, Wisconsin, it has been President Kennedy who has been missed. It has been John Kennedy's life that is worth remembering. To spend a part of my life reading about the life of small person who shot him in the back like a coward took some inner coaxing...but I'm glad I made the effort. It doesn't change what happened, nor does it excuse it, but it helped me understand why. Maybe.

Joseph Finder says

This is the book you need to read in order to understand Lee Harvey Oswald. I had the privilege of writing a new foreword for its re-issue earlier this year, which you can read here, but *Marina and Lee* documents the unlikely series of events that had to occur exactly as they did for Oswald to take those fatal shots, in a way that defuses even the most explosive conspiracy theories. A classic.

Dave Thompson says

Fascinating book about the relationship between Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife Marina, as told by Priscilla Johnson McMillan. This is interesting and credible because McMillan was a journalist, as well as the Oswald's neighbor, and probably Marina's best friend from 1961 onwards.

If you commit to reading this book, you need to be prepared for a LOT of detail on the life of both characters. I mean a LOT. Their life in Dallas doesn't even come up until the last 150 pages. Still, this is a riveting story about Lee's personality flaws - and worse.

But if for no other reason, this book should be an important addition to the historical record for the detailed accounting of Oswald's state of mind in the months leading up to November 22, 1963, as witnessed by his reporter friend and neighbor. I read this book around the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination in November 2013, so there was plenty of media attention on this event, especially the conspiracy theories.

I've never been a big fan of JFK conspiracies, but over time they do make you wonder. So maybe the most important conclusion I took from this book was how the idea of the CIA, or the mob, or Castro, or ANYONE

taking Oswald serious seems incredibly unrealistic. Oswald was a jerk, a creep, a sociopath and a wifebeater. After this book, I don't think he was any more clever than we thought.

Michelle says

Interesting but a bit too dry. Read like a high school history text

Jack Dermody says

I've just started this book and am riveted. Can't give 5 stars because writing style seems awkward at times, but the content is riveting. This is a re-release of the 1977 book about the Oswalds -- a subject most people don't like to explore since JFK's assassination. I suggest reading it -- if only to understand that a creepy, deluded guy can really do damage to history without being part of a conspiracy. What's most amazing to me to learn so far is that the author, Priscilla Johnson McMillan, is the only person to have known both JFK and Lee Harvey Oswald. I look forward to reading the entire book.

Terri says

This book is certainly an eye opener. Another way of thinking about Oswald.

Erik Graff says

This is a joint biography of Marina Prusakova and her husband, alleged killer of President Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald, told from the perspective of Ms. Prusakova-Oswald. Unfortunately, given Marina's familial connection to the KGB, Lee's professional connections to the FBI and (probably) other governmental agencies and the author's connections with the CIA (note the link in the book's description), McMillan's general support of the Warren Commission's conclusions is suspect.

I found this book up at grandmother's cottage in Michigan and read it for want of anything better.

Carole says

Excellent biography; thoroughly researched and beautifully written.

Dawn Fontaine says

I believe I've just found my new all-time favorite book. It's disappointing that this (albeit 40 year old) book is

out of print. It's a very intimate description of Lee Harvey Oswald's life with his wife Marina. It goes into detail on both of their childhoods and backgrounds as well as daily life during their courtship and marriage up to the day of the assassination. The book also discusses the various friendships and family relationships both had and how that fed into their relationship. You also learn a lot about what Lee was reading and what he may have been thinking on that fateful day. It would be hard to believe in conspiracy theories after reading this book. He was a really troubled guy (no surprise there). I found it interesting to read the day to day and know how it all turns out in the end. I never thought I'd be sad to finish a 2" thick book with small type -- I didn't want it to end.

Coleen (The Book Ramblings) says

At first, I was intimated by this novel because of the length, and my lack of knowledge on Lee, even the assassination of JFK that shocked not only the entire country, but world. However, upon reading, this compelling, revealing novel was difficult to put down. I appreciated the amount of facts and details that went into this because it shows how Lee and Marina lived, the people in their lives, and how it all unfolded. I found it very important because backgrounds contribute to decisions people make throughout their life, and it honestly made an impact on both Lee and Marina, which should not be looked over. Lee was an intelligent, but very dangerous and disturbed man. There is statistics, sources, psychological insight. This novel provides rich details —raw truth— that can help with understanding, and gaining another perspective.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this novel, and gained knowledge on history. This book is the one that should be read rather than people listening to the many theories and skepticism surrounding Lee and what happened on November 22, 1968. It is remarkable, well-written, comprehensive, and had solid sources of information about life, upbringing, and the assassination of Kennedy. Anyone interested in learning the truth and depth of Lee Harvey Oswald's life, and the assassination, would find this novel fascinating and intimate.

I would like to thank Steerforth Press for the review copy.

Jim Bailey says

Good

Of all of the books I have read about the assassination of President Kennedy, this comes the closest to explaining Oswald's motive for killing the president.

Brenda says

I really enjoyed reading this book and finding out what I didn't know about Lee H. Oswald and Marina and about LO himself. The book got really detailed (even to the point on how he liked his eggs), but at the end it was rushed. I realize the author doesn't know much about the exact details of the actual shooting but I felt as though at the end it sped up. It was sort of disconcerting, but, overall it was good.

Louise says

This narrative tells of the respective childhoods of Marina Nikolayevna Prusakova and Lee Harvey Oswald and gives a very detailed (at some points a day by day account) of their marriage. While it is a re-issue of a 1977 publication, nothing, including the epilogue is brought up to date. The author feels that Oswald was acting alone, but the book is not about the assassination, it's about the lives of Marina and Lee.

Marina had such a horrible childhood it is hard to tell if her marriage, which had some moments of peace and fun, was better or not. One of the byproducts of the author's telling of Marina's early life is the wonderful description of the social life of teens in Russia during the "Khrushchev thaw". As a good looking, but physically and emotionally abused girl, she became a flirt to get love and acceptance. She had lots of dates, and sadly, picked Lee, the exotic American with an apartment.

Lee's childhood wasn't much better but to Americans the story, unlike Marina's, is all too common. Lee's decisions, though, are not. After a checkered career in the Marines, Oswald's defection to Russia was dramatic, particularly for 1959. His means to get Russia to accept him was even more astonishing. At this point in life he met the author, Priscilla Johnson McMillan, the only journalist to have ever interviewed Oswald, who was in Moscow as a correspondent for "The Progressive Magazine."

The detailed accounts of the Oswald marriage include dialog and speculation on the thoughts, feelings and motives of the two. The dialog is so specific you know that license has been taken. Some speculations on their feelings and motives are helpful in understanding the couple's dynamics. Others are thought provoking, but questionable: that Anatoly, one of Mariana's beaux in Minsk aroused jealousy in Oswald because he looked like JFK; or that Oswald welcomed the FBI's attention because the agency was a father figure inspiring love and fear; or that in an off-hand remark about wanting 9 children - a football team - was a Kennedy reference.

The book puts the characters associated with the Oswald's in context. Now I better understand the principal people in Oswald's life besides Marina Oswald such as his mother, Marguerite, brother Robert and friends such as Ruth Paine and George di Mohrenschildt.

The author believes Lee, the loner, would never "join" a conspiracy. Her view is heavily influenced by the interviews with Marina, who was clearly over her head at the time, still reeling from her childhood, her relocation to a country where her own country is despised, being a new mother, coping her husband's emotional and physical abuse, living with strangers and having no opportunity to learn English. Marina felt Lee would never cooperate with or take orders from anyone so he could not be part of a conspiracy. Marina, reportedly, has since changed her mind.

Nothing McMillan writes, or Marina thinks, as reported here, invalidates the conspiracy theories; in fact, some of her reportage strengthens them.

McMillan shows a lot of private time for Lee in Dallas and New Orleans. How would Marina know if Oswald knew (for instance) Jack Ruby or David Ferrie? These associations, and others, have since been documented. If you re-cast George di Mohrenschildt, whom McMillan calls a "friend", as a CIA minder, the association makes more sense; particularly on p. 552 when McMillan calls him the "person for whose approval, above all else, Oswald had done the deed." McMillan writes of the Fair Play for Cuba leaflets, but

doesn't discuss the suspicious address on the forms. Even information presented in footnotes squares with some conspiracy theories, such as the plight of FBI Agent Hosty, the one agent who had the foresight to look into Oswald, and was order to destroy the evidence he had gathered.

It is a serious omission that the footnotes cite sources for a chapter or groups of chapters but do not pinpoint the source of the individual facts or quotes. Also, this re-issue should have updates, at a minimum covering Marina's post 1979 life, the lives of her children (OK to spare specifics for June and Rachel if they want privacy), the Paine's, Marina's family in Russia and why Marina no longer believes Lee did it. While most of these 500+ pages are page turners, the omissions are serious, so I'm giving what might have been a 4 star book in 1977, 2 stars.

Nancy says

Heard the author on the radio on the anniversary of Kennedy's assassination. The author happened to know both Kennedy and Oswald. Incredibly detailed account of their marriage--like an intense soap opera whose end you know.

You leave the book with the feeling that Oswald couldn't have been part of a conspiracy. You really get into his mind, but the author's psychological analysis seems slightly dated.
