

SEALD, Lee Harvey
Charge: TruancyCase #6996
Adm: 4/16/55

YOUTH HOUSE

INTERVIEW WITH BOY:

This is a seriously detached withdrawn youngster who has preserved some ability to relate but is very hard to reach. He is laconic and taciturn and while he answered questions he volunteered almost nothing about himself. Toward the end of the interview he occasionally made a few comments gratuitously without my asking him but on the whole everything had to be pulled from him. What is really surprising is that this boy has not lost entirely his ability to communicate with other people because he has been leading such a detached, solitary existence for most of his life.

He told me that he was at Youth House for truancy and his truancy is caused because he feels that he would prefer to do other things which are more important. Questioning at this elicited "Oh, just things" but what I finally learned from him is that he spends all of his time looking at television, leafing over various magazines or just sleeping. Apparently his truancy really became serious when he moved up here from Fort Worth with his mother about five or six months ago, but he never did like school and apparently never formed relationships with other people.

The story that I got from him condensed is very much as follows: His father died he believed before he was born and he doesn't know a thing about him. He evinces absolutely no curiosity about him, says that he never missed having one and never thought to ask about him. His mother was left with three children, John who is 21 and in the Coast Guard and who has been stationed in New York for the last two years, Robert who is 18 and is a pilot in the Air Force Marines and Lee who is 15. The mother apparently supported these children by working as an Insurance Broker and he was on the go all day long. He does not remember anyone else ever having taken care of him and apparently when he was an infant she either left him in the care of his older brothers or he shifted for himself. She would leave early in the morning and come home around seven or eight at night after a hard day's work in which she was driving the car around all day trying to sell insurance. Occasionally she took Lee with her on these trips but he wrinkled his nose and said it was very boring because she was always making stops, going into houses and trying to sell people things. Lee ate lunch in school and often made his own meals. It was interesting that occasionally when his mother did make meals he was dissatisfied with them, and would complain to her because she had just thrown things together. Her answer always was that she was so tired after a hard work that she hadn't felt like fussing. Lee saw little of his brothers because of the age difference, partially, and also because John was working when they were living at Fort Worth. Robert was always going out with his own friends and neither of the older boys wanted Lee tagging after them. It was already during this period that he was experiencing difficulty in school, not he said because he couldn't do the work but because he just never really felt like it nor thought that it was very important. He learned to read very adequately and denied any feelings of inferiority in relation to other kids his own age in school but he said he used to have trouble with English Grammar and with Arithmetic. He spent very little time with the boys in his neighborhood preferring to be alone and when he came home from school, would simply sit in the house, listen to the radio, or read different magazines.

After both boys entered the service and John was stationed in New York, his mother decided to come to New York in order to be near John. They arrived here about five or six months ago and moved into John's apartment on East 92nd St., in Manhattan. In response to questioning Lee told me that while John seemed glad to see him, his sister in law, Margie, apparently was very unhappy at the fact that Lee and his mother shared the apartment for a while until they could find a place of their own. Lee said that she seemed like a rather cold person who wanted to be alone with John and did not make his mother and him feel welcome. Although there were five rooms

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In the apartment, Lee was given a place to sleep in the living room and admitted that this was very much in line with what he had always been led to expect from grown-ups - nobody ever had any room for him. His face lighted up however from his usual impassive expression when he talked about the three months old baby and he admitted that he had found a good deal of enjoyment in playing with it.

After they stayed with John for a couple of months, his mother finally found an apartment on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx. It is a small apartment with one large room and again of course Lee does not have his own room and sleeps in the living room. His mother had found work as an assistant manager in a women's wear shop and she is away again all day. He mostly makes his own meals and spends his time alone in the apartment because he doesn't enjoy association with the boys in the neighborhood.

Questioning about Lee's mother elicited the response that in a way she was very much like him. She didn't talk to people at all very much and while she had a few friends who occasionally came to visit she was equally silent with them. Lee and she are home alone together he is not uncomfortable with her but they never have anything to say to each other. She never punishes him because she doesn't know of person who just lets things ride. For instance, he volunteered that she had started to play hooky she told him to go to school "but she never let him do it". When I had wondered if he had wished that she had done something more, he nodded and what finally emerged was that he just felt that his mother was a damn for him. He always felt like a burden that she simply just had to take care of and while she took care of his material needs he never felt that she was really with him in any way or cared very much what happened to him. It was hard for him to say whether she acted the same toward his brothers because he had never seen them but his general feeling was that adults were not to be trusted, that if you asked you anything they always seemed to want something in return and that if you couldn't look to adults for anything. He is much more prone to trust his own age but admits he is not successful in making relationships with them because he doesn't want to. He really prefers to be alone. He doesn't really care if anybody in this world cares for him and he doesn't really care about his brothers. Although his brothers were not so detached as his mother apparently he was treated some rejection from them too and that they always pushed him away when he tried to accompany them and they never could really meet any of his needs. He said that he had to be his own father because there was just no one there who could take care of his needs were met by his mother who would give him an occasional gift or take him out on a week end to go to a movie down at Fort Worth. As far as his brothers and other stuff was concerned he said he never bought very much of them but she did him very much. She would buy his clothes without consulting him and he never said he didn't resent this because he usually liked what she brought home. He was apparently completely detached from his mother and they had absolutely no communication with each other. She always left him to shift pretty much on his own and showed no concern about him whatsoever.

As a result he withdrew completely into a detached and solitary world where he could just do as he wanted to and didn't have to live with any restrictions or have to come in contact with people. He would stay in bed till eleven or twelve, get up and make himself a hot and then sit and look at a magazine or look at a television program. He slept a good deal if he were able to although he says that he never fell asleep in the day.

When they first came to New York, his mother entered him in a private school because she thought that he would like that but after two months he said he didn't want it anymore and started truanting because he just didn't find it very interesting or important. He was then transferred to a public school.

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Brooklyn and quit going altogether.

Lee was able to respond to expressions of understanding and sympathy for his lonely situation which I offered, although he denied that he really ever felt lonely. Questioning revealed that he feels almost as if there is a veil between him and other people through which they cannot reach him but he prefers this veil to remain intact. When I questioned whether it were painful or disturbing for him to be today since in a sense I was tearing away the veil, he let me know that it was not as bad as he might have anticipated. He was not too comfortable in talking with me but he was not as disturbed in talking about his feelings as he thought he might be. This gave an opening for me to inquire into his fantasy life and what I got was a complete rejection of any probing and a reminder that "this is my own business." I let him know that I respected this but there were some things I had to know. Supposed I asked him questions and he wanted to be would answer. He agreed to this and actually answered every question that I asked. He acknowledged fantasies about being all powerful and being able to do anything that he wanted. When I asked this ever involved hurting or killing people, he said that it did sometimes but refused to elaborate. None of these fantasies incidentally ever involved his mother. He did admit to dream material which he said was entirely pleasant in nature and which was really a fulfillment of fantasies that he might have had when he was awake. He refused however to talk about these at all although he did mention that these dreams as sometimes contained violence. He denied any hallucinatory or delusional experiences whatsoever and denied any distorted body images. His developmental history was essentially negative except for a mastoid operation and a tonsillectomy when he was 7. He remembers being frightened but remembers nothing else about the experience.

When we talked about future planning for him Lee said that he wanted to return home and he was adamant in his feeling that if he were placed in any kind of a boarding school he would run away. He regards this as a loss of his freedom and privacy and confided that the worse thing about Youth House was the fact that he had to be with other boys all the time, was disturbed about drooping in front of them, taking showers with them etc. He has been away to Camp a couple of times in his life when he was a kid and had enjoyed those experiences and mingled with other boys but it was different from the experience he had had here at Youth House. He doesn't fight with anyone here, he just detaches himself completely. He was willing to acknowledge with me that home offers him very little but he wants it this way. Actually if he could have his wish he would like to be out on his own and maybe join the service. He acknowledged the fact that in the service he would have to live very close to other people and obey orders and follow a routine which he finds extremely distasteful but he said he would seal himself to that and make himself do it. In the meantime if he had his way he would prefer to be on his own and he said that if he were placed in a school and ran away he wouldn't go home again he would just start out for himself. We talked about these feelings at some length in terms of the fact that no boy of 13 was ready to do this, plus the fact that these feelings that no one cared about him and that he was all alone in the world were really very painful and that maybe he needed the experience that there were grown ups who were interested in him and cared about what happened to him. He didn't care however and thought that he just preferred to be alone. I pointed that what happened to him eventually was really the court's decision but we discussed the alternatives on which the court might decide. Placement he rejected. When I broached the possibility of talking with a case worker if he were returned home, he wanted to know for how long and I told him it would be an indeterminate period. He finally decided that although he didn't really want this and would prefer to remain as solitary as he has always been if it came to a choice between placement and going to a case worker, he would choose going to a case worker. He also thought that if it were an alternative

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SIEGEL EXHIBIT No. 2—Continued

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between placement and going back to school, he would make an effort to go back to school and to attend regularly.

My own feeling is that it might not be as difficult as at first it seemed to establish a relationship with the boy and that he might possibly be drawn into therapy. Just how successful such a planning would be cannot be determined of course until I have had an opportunity to interview his mother. Interestingly enough when I asked questions about what they talked about when she came down here to visit him, he said that actually she didn't say very much. She just brought him some candy and asked how things were going and they sat pretty much in silence throughout the whole visiting period.

VP

Interview with Mother

Mrs. O. is a smartly dressed, gray haired woman, very self possessed and hard and while making a superficial appearance of affability I felt that essentially she was defensive, rigid, selfish and very much of a snob.

One of the first things she wanted to know was why Lee was at Youth House because she had no clear understanding of the purpose of the institution. Before I even had a chance to explain to her she went on to ask me if he had received a complete medical examination and in my answering in the affirmative, confided to me that she had noticed lately he had gotten very big "down there" and that while of course he was getting a little too big for her to look at him, she had been worried that something was the matter with his genitals. She went on to tell me that she had had him to a doctor six months ago for a head to toe examination and the doctor had examined the boy in her presence. He apparently did not examine the boy's genitals and Mrs. Oswald had insisted upon this so he asked her to step from the room. She said she wasn't gone but a few minutes when he called her back and said there was nothing the matter and she somehow felt very dissatisfied with the examination. She went on to explain to me that her excessive interest was caused by the fact that her middle son Robert, upon being examined for entry into the Marines was found to have a hydrocele and that she had wondered if perhaps this was the case with Lee too. When I indicated that we had found nothing the matter with his genitals she then looked at once relieved and I felt a little disappointed.

Mrs. O. gave her current "analysis" of the reasons for Lee's truancy. —The upset in moving from Ft. Worth, Texas. She went on to tell me that she herself had been very much disconcerted by the change and in my expressing interest I learned from her that she had found it very difficult to adjust to New York and is sorry she came here. She indicated that she has always been a manager of shops of one kind or another and made it a point never to mix with her help. She said they were always respectful to her at home but that here in New York, employees talk back to her etc. and she finds it extremely difficult to take, complaining of their arrogance. Furthermore she feels that life moves at a much faster pace here living conditions are unsatisfactory, etc. Later on in the interview, after I had gained her confidence somewhat she confided to me that she had come here from Ft. Worth because she thought that it might be better for Lee since he was suddenly left alone after Robert joined the Marines and she wants to be close to what family she has for his sake. With her eyes filled with tears at this point and she told me that she had come to New York to be close to her son, Jack. There had been an exchange of letters and long distance phone calls and she was very anxious to come.

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but she said that when she got home, she found an extremely cold room. Her daughter-in-law is only 17 and apparently went out of her way to let Mrs. G. know that she could not talk with John and herself permanently. Mrs. G. said that she has had no such intention. Although she had rather expected her daughter-in-law to get her up until she could find a job and get an apartment. She said she was made so uncomfortable there however that she moved just as soon as she could to an extremely inadequate one room basement apartment. The living conditions were extremely miserable and she felt that Lee was becoming very depressed but she could not help herself. Just as soon as she was able and had found another job, she took a three room apartment in the Bronx and said that Lee seemed to perk up considerably after this.

According to Mrs. G. she had never had any difficulty with Lee while they were living at Ft. Worth at all and disclaimed any knowledge of the fact that he had played hockey there. She felt that if he had said this it was really only to rationalize his playing hockey up here. She told me that he had always been an extremely quiet boy as was John and she felt both of these boys were like her. Even as a little kid Lee had never mixed freely with other children and she told me she felt this was in response to her teaching. She had always been a working woman who didn't have to worry about his wandering off or associating with other children in their houses so she instructed him to stay within the yard and he always did so. If other kids came to play in his place it was all right but he seemed never to go to other boys. She said that as a matter of fact when other boys did approach him to play he usually preferred to be by himself and she felt that this was in his nature and that one couldn't change people's natures very easily. She herself found nothing wrong with this and told me that Mr. C.erro Lee's Probation Officer had remarked to her that the boy seemed to be completely without feeling and that he withdrew from others. She herself did not see anything strange about this and told me that she herself was not a very gregarious person either and had never felt the need to make friends.

In response to questioning I learned from her that she had lost her husband when she was seven months pregnant with Lee. He died suddenly one morning at 6 A.M. of a heart attack. Near the end of the interview she confided to me in a burst of confidence that she had had a rupture with her husband's family at this time since when he died at 6 A.M. she wanted him buried the same day. Her thought had been for herself and the baby she was carrying since she felt that she could do her husband no good by having a wake and a funeral and she thought it would be just decent to get him out of the way as quickly as possible. His family had been completely agast, said that they never saw anything as cold in their whole life and had not spoken to her from that day to this. She had to rely upon her neighbors help when Lee was born and she has never had anything to do with her husband's family since that time. She justifies herself at great length to me said that she did not feel it was cold but only sensible and that her husband when he used to joke with her had always said "Mag, if anything happens to me just throw some dirt in my face and forget about it" and she felt she had acted according to his instructions.

When I offered that it must have been rather difficult for her to have to be both parents and bread earner at the same time, she told me very proudly that she had never found it so. She said she was always a very independent, self-reliant person who had never wanted any help from anyone, had always had "high tolerant" ideas, which she felt to a large measure she has accomplished, and she always was able to pull herself up by her own bootstraps. When I asked if there had been a good marriage, she said yes and went on as if I hadn't said anything but questioning revealed that she had come from a family where her mother had died when she was only two years old. The father raised six children with the help of housekeepers and she said she was brought up in an extremely poor neighborhood in New Orleans where she was forced to mix with Negroes and other people but even though she played with them and made friends with them she always had again "high tolerant" ideas and managed to make something of herself.

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but she said that when she got here, she found an extremely cold reception. Her daughter-in-law is only 17 and apparently went out of her way to let Mrs. O. know that she could not settle with John and herself permanently. Mrs. O. said that she had had no such intention although she had rather expected her daughter in law to put her up until she could find a job and get an apartment. She said she was made so uncomfortable there however that she moved just as soon as she could to an extremely inadequate one room basement apartment. The living conditions were extremely miserable and she felt that Lee was becoming very depressed but she could not help herself. Just as soon as she was able and had found another job, she took a three room apartment in the Bronx and said that Lee seemed to perk up considerably after this.

According to Mrs. O. she had never had any difficulty with Lee while they were living at Ft. Worth at all and disclaimed any knowledge of the fact that he had played hookey there. She felt that if he had said this it was really only to rationalize his playing hookey up here. She told me that he had always been an extremely quiet boy as was John and she felt both of these boys were like her. Even as a little kid Lee had never mixed freely with other children and she told me she felt this was in response to her teaching. She had always been a working woman who didn't have to worry about his wandering off or associating with other children in their houses so she instructed him to stay within the yard and he always did so. If other kids came to play in his place it was all right but he seemed never to go to other boys. She said that as a matter of fact when other boys did approach him to play he usually preferred to be by himself and she felt that this was in his nature and that one couldn't change people's natures very easily. She herself found nothing wrong with this and told me that Mr. Carro Lee's Probation Officer had remarked to her that the boy seemed to be completely without feeling and that he withdrew from others. She herself did not see anything strange about this and told me that she herself was not a very gregarious person either and had never felt the need to make friends.

In response to questioning I learned from her that she had lost her husband when she was seven months pregnant with Lee. He died suddenly one morning at 6 A.M. of a heart attack. Near the end of the interview she confided to me in a burst of confidence that she had had a rupture with her husband's family at this time since when he died at 6 A.M. she wanted him buried the same day. Her thought had been for herself and the baby she was carrying since she felt that she could do her husband no good by having a Wake and a funeral and she thought it would be just decent to get him out of the way as quickly as possible. His family had been completely agast, said that they never saw anything as cold in their whole life and had not spoken to her from that day to this. She had to rely upon her neighbors help when Lee was born and she has never had anything to do with her husband's family since that time. She justified herself at great length to me said that she did not feel it was cold but only sensible and that her husband when he used to joke with her had always said "Mag, if anything happens to me just throw some dirt in my face and forget about it" and she felt she had acted according to his instructions.

When I offered that it must have been rather difficult for her to half to be both parents and bread earner at the same time, she told me very proudly that she had never found it so. She said she was always a very independent, self-reliant person who had never wanted any help from anyone, had always had "high fulutent" ideas, which she felt to a large measure she had accomplished, and she always was able to pull herself up by her own bootstraps. When I asked if hers had been a good marriage, she said yes and went on as if I hadn't said anything but questioning revealed that she had come from a family where her mother had died when she was only two years old. The father raised six children with the help of housekeepers and she said she was brought up in an extremely poor neighborhood in New Orleans where she was forced to mix with Negroes and other people but even though she played with them and made friends with them she always had again "high fulutent" ideas and managed to make something of herself.

Mrs. O. said that after her husband died, she stayed at home for two years taking

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care of Lee and the other two children and living on insurance he left. When this was out and she found she had to get a job, she placed John and Robert in a boarding home for about six years from what I could gather and she moved in with Lee into her sister's house. Her sister cared for Lee while Mrs. O. went to work but when the sister began to object she had a large number of children herself, Mrs. O. also placed Lee in a home until she felt that all the kids were old enough so that she could take them home and go to work too. I pressed for information at this point and from what I could gather Lee was not in the home for more than 3 or 4 months. Preceding his placement in the home however, there was a period when Mrs. O. had moved out of her sister's house and taken a furnished room because she said she needed a clear mind to go to business and couldn't be bothered with a child. Apparently she left Lee to her sister for about a year or more while she lived apart from him.

When she finally reconstituted her family apparently she left the kids pretty much to their own devices since she was working all kinds of crazy hours and often did not get home until late at night. She tells me that when she was working in the insurance business however, she only worked two or three hours a day and was able to spend a good deal of time at home. Questioning revealed however, that all of her kids were extremely quiet, rather withdrawn infants who never made much demands on her and always played quietly by themselves. Of this she was very proud. Lee was a full term normally delivered baby what was bottle fed and toilet trained about one year. He walked and talked normally, as she put it and she never had any difficulty in raising him but she said that he was always a very stoic child who for instance, when the dentist offered to fill one tooth would insist that he fill all four at once. She told me that the boy had once had a terrific infection on his ankle which he didn't know anything about until she started bathing him and which the doctor had been very concerned about but Lee who was about five at this time had not even complained. When he was five he also underwent a mastoid operation but she said he was completely happy-go-lucky about it and it didn't seem to affect him at all. Mrs. O. incidentally bathed all her children herself until the time they were 11 or 12 and then said in an embarrassed manner that at that age they got a little too old for her to look at.

Mrs. O. railed and railed against NYC laws which she felt in a large measure were responsible for the way Lee acted. She said that when he first began to truant, the truant officer picked him up in a police car and took him back to school and she thought that was just atrocious. She felt that the boy had been given a criminal record for no good reason at all and told me that she felt that she had been allowed to handle things in her own way she felt she could have gotten around it. She said she had had a problem in truancy with John too and to a lesser extent with Robert and had been able to handle it with both these boys.

When John was 11 and began to truant Mrs. O. told him that if he wants to be a bum that was all right with her so he went out and got a job and held it for about six months. At the end of that time he told her that he was going back to school and continued there ever since. Robert only played hooky for about four times and she was able to handle this by talking to him. Mrs. O. was not aware of whether or not Texas had a law that kids under 16 had to be in school but apparently they didn't bother John during the period he was out. She said she felt Lee could be stubborn and defiant just as she would be if someone kept stressing with him the way the truant officer had with Lee that he had to go to school because the NYC law said so. She said she was not aware at first the boy was truanting although he told her he didn't want to go to school, but he did used to go up every day and get dressed and get out and so she assumed he was there. After she found out he was truanting, she started to talk with him made several visits to the schools etc, but apparently got no where. In the meantime he was truanting from November through March and she warned him that they could take him and put him away if he didn't go to school but Lee did not believe her. She felt however, that the biggest mistake had been

SIEGEL EXHIBIT No. 2—Continued

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the way they approached the boy and in a way she agreed it had now gone so far that she didn't know if she could handle it or not. When I wondered what it was that she wanted, she felt she wanted to be able to raise her own child the way she saw fit. She agreed that truancy if carried to a certain extent could be considered a problem. She was not so willing to consider it a problem that Lee did not make friends and associates but when I discussed with her a little the extent to which the boy had withdrawn and the fact he was really alone all day she agreed that there was something not quite right about this. She said she wouldn't be so concerned if he was in school all day and associated with other boys and then wanted to be alone but the fact that he was alone all day long and half the night too apparently since she didn't get home till late, didn't look so good to her.

I now explained to her the purpose of Lee's being at Youth Homes in terms of a diagnostic study and the fact that while our psychiatrist here was free to make recommendations actually it was the court's decision. We now discussed together the two alternatives on which the Court might decide one being probation with psychotherapy and the other placement in a school. She listened extremely intently and when I discussed school placement with her seemed not to avert to the fact that if Lee were sent off to a school, it might be good for him. The thing that made her exceedingly angry was that she felt if the boy were given another chance and sent home it should be what she called a real chance and should not involve having to report to a P.O. or "talk to a stranger" which was the way she felt about his going to adolescent worker. She was adamant however, in her feeling that she really did want him to have one more chance with the knowledge that if he played hooky for even one day he would have to be put away in a home. I had the feeling that the basis of this was a need to assert her own volition as it were against the authority represented by the court, rather than any real understanding of Lee's welfare or his needs.

I honestly don't think that she sees him as a person at all but simply as an extension of herself. Interestingly enough by the way although Lee was a planned for baby because her husband her self wanted a girl, I take it that she was rather disappointed at having a third boy.

I discussed with her what actually would change for Lee if he went home again and the truancy started. To her way of thinking she could not see the truancy as symptomatic of anything and apparently thinks of it as an act of defiance which in a sense of course is really true but she doesn't mean this. I have some real question at this point about just how much Mrs. O. could offer Lee since I feel that her own attitude about social worker's probation, etc. would inevitably communicate itself to the boy and that if he started showing improvement in therapy I have the feeling she is one of those mother's would have to break it up. On the other hand Lee himself is so averse to placement at this time that I have some question too as to what would be accomplished by sending him away. He has withdrawn completely here at Youth Homes. I have spent some time watching him with other boys and he doesn't participate or mingle in any way but keeps himself completely aloof.

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