

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 2/11/64

Copy to: 1-Legat, Mexico City

Report of: SA ERVIN B. BRUNINGA
Date: 2/11/64

Office: Birmingham

Field Office File #: BH 105-908

Bureau File #: 105-82555

Title: LEE HARVEY OSWALD

Character: INTERNAL SECURITY - R

Synopsis: JOHN HOWARD BOWEN states he rode on bus from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, to Mexico City, Mexico, 9/26-27/63, and sat next to unidentified young man whom he was unable to identify as subject OSWALD. BOWEN claims to be itinerant Baptist preacher for past 50 years, traveling extensively in the United States, and for past 20 years in Mexico. He claims he has never been to any other foreign countries, other than Bermuda. BOWEN acquainted with ALBERT OSBORNE, from Canada, who is about his same size and age, and who is also itinerant Baptist preacher or missionary who has traveled in Mexico, and who was reportedly in that country in December, 1963, and January, 1964.

- RUC -

DETAILS:

JOHN HOWARD BOWEN was interviewed February 8, 1964, and he furnished the following information:

BOWEN advised that he has been in the Russellville, Alabama, area, speaking at various rural Baptist churches, and has been residing at the residence of WYLIE UPTAIN, Rural Route, Russellville, Alabama. He stated he intended leaving the Russellville, Alabama, area February 11, 1964, en route back to Laredo, Texas, by way of New Orleans, Louisiana.

BOWEN stated to the best of his knowledge, he was born at Chester, Pennsylvania, on January 12, 1885, and his father's name was JAMES A. BOWEN, and his mother was EMILY BOWEN. He did not know his parents, but he was reared in an orphanage in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His grandmother, SARAH HALL, participated to a limited extent in giving him guidance and shelter during the early years of his life. His grandmother and relatives are all deceased, and he has no known relatives of any kind.

BOWEN attended elementary school intermittently in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, area, but took correspondence courses and has completed the equivalent of about two years of college. He also took a correspondence course in theology, which he completed in about 1914. About fifty years ago, he was ordained as a minister by the Plymouth Brethren Church, in Trenton, New Jersey, and about forty-five years ago, he was ordained as a minister by the Northern Baptist Convention at Binghamton, New York. He also is recognized as an ordained minister by the Missionary Baptist Convention and he currently considers himself associated with that church body.

BOWEN stated he considers himself an itinerant gardener and preacher. He was formerly a member of the First Baptist Church at Knoxville, Tennessee, and more recently was a member of the First Baptist Church at Laredo, Texas. He has visited and worshiped at the latter church intermittently for the past twenty years.

On 2/8/64 at Florence, Alabama File # BH 105-908

by SA ERVIN B. BRUNINGA:ela Date dictated 2/10/64

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About thirty years ago, BOWEN applied for a job as a juvenile counselor, with the Tennessee Valley Authority at Knoxville, Tennessee, and recalled that he was fingerprinted on that occasion. From about 1929 to about 1934, BOWEN worked with juvenile delinquents for the City of Knoxville, Tennessee. While doing this work, he became well acquainted with Dr. A. D. MUELLER, who is now associated with the Veterans Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, and lives at 4035 Tutwiler Road, Memphis, Tennessee. He also became well acquainted with Miss MARY ELLIOTT, who is a prominent social worker in the Knoxville, Tennessee, area.

BOWEN states since becoming ordained about fifty years ago, he has traveled extensively in the United States, particularly in the Stanton, Virginia, area, and in the Southern part of the United States, as an itinerant Baptist minister. During the past twenty years, he has also made numerous trips as an itinerant Baptist minister throughout Mexico. He stated he has never been to Canada or England or any other foreign country, except in about 1939, he once visited Bermuda. On these itinerant preaching tours, he resides in the homes of the host pastor, and he moves from place to place frequently. He considers his home to be the St. Anthony Hotel, Laredo, Texas, and he is well known there by the manager OSCAR FERRINA. He has been residing at that hotel intermittently for the past twenty years, and has made trips to Mexico for the past twenty years as an itinerant preacher.

BOWEN stated he has no passport, but carries for identification purposes, the following items:

Social Security Card in the name of JOHN HOWARD BOWEN, Social Security Number 449-36-9745.

Texaco Company Credit Card #T-11372, in the name of J. H. BOWEN, P. O. Box 3042, Knoxville, Tennessee.

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Gold Star Insurance Company Card, Policy Number K3176.

Card from Laredo National Bank, in the name of JOHN HOWARD BOWEN, 920 Salinas Avenue, Box 308, Laredo, Texas, Account Number 10-7400-1.

BOWEN stated that in 1956, he contacted an unrecalled attorney in Philadelphia to apply for Social Security. This attorney experienced great difficulty in obtaining a date of birth for him. The attorney was not able to completely verify his birth, but furnished him with a card reflecting the following data:

Name:	JOHN HOWARD BOWEN
Born:	January 14, 1880
Father:	JAMES A. BOWEN
Mother:	EDITH MONTGOMERY
Place of Birth:	Chester, Pennsylvania
File Number:	D-869-1880
Filed:	March 6, 1956

The above card bore the signature of a person which appeared to be DERWIN F. WATKINS, as the person who executed the birth data form. BOWEN stated he doubted if the above was exactly correct, but it was the best birth data which the attorney could obtain through unknown sources. He could not recall the name of this attorney, and was not certain if WATKINS was his name or not. BOWEN stated he had been unable to obtain Social Security benefits because of his inability to obtain correct birth data.

BOWEN states that in about 1958, he was residing at the Reece Hotel, Oaxaco, Mexico, and also residing in that same hotel was ALBERT OSBORNE, who was a retired itinerant Baptist minister from Canada. OSBORNE was about 70 years of age, 5'8" tall, 190 pounds, hair gray and balding, and had an English or Scottish accent. BOWEN acknowledged that OSBORNE was about his same size and age.

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A census of some type was then being taken by Mexican authorities, and BOWEN was unable to locate his identification papers. He therefore borrowed the identification papers of OSBORNE on that occasion, and exhibited them to the Mexican authorities. He thereafter returned those papers to OSBORNE. He later found his own identification papers, and states he has never before or since claimed to be anyone other than JOHN HOWARD BOWEN.

BOWEN stated he next saw OSBORNE in about the Spring of 1961 or 1962, at the Railway Express Company Office in Mexico City, Mexico. He pointed out he corresponds occasionally with OSBORNE, but has not seen him since the above occasion. He recalled having heard through friends in Mexico that OSBORNE was traveling in Mexico as an itinerant Baptist preacher in December, 1963, and January, 1964, but he was planning on returning to Canada, and possibly taking upon residence in the vicinity of Vancouver, Canada.

BOWEN observed a photograph of a man standing in front of a castle-like building, holding what appeared to be a camera, and he identified that person as being ALBERT OSBORNE. BOWEN explained that he has a copy of that same photograph, which was sent to him by OSBORNE, and it apparently was taken during a trip to England or Scotland.

BOWEN also observed a photograph of a man in a zippered jacket and a helmet, and identified that as being a photograph of himself, which had been taken about twenty years ago at Veracruz, Mexico. BOWEN stated that ALBERT OSBORNE has traveled in the same areas in Mexico as an itinerant Baptist preacher, and OSBORNE has stayed at the two independent churches in Texmelucan, Mexico, where the churches maintain a home for ministers. Those churches also distribute food for children from destitute families. He explained that it was entirely possible persons might confuse him with OSBORNE, because they are both itinerant Baptist preachers, are about the same size and age, and both travel extensively in Mexico.

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BOWEN stated he was not interviewed in Mexico at Texmelucan or anywhere else by the FBI, regarding OSBORNE or subject OSWALD. He pointed out when he came to Laredo, Texas, recently, he learned that the FBI had been making inquiries there regarding his recent trip to Mexico. He stated that he thereafter looked through his papers and files at Laredo, and learned that he had made a trip by bus from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, to Mexico City, on September 26-27, 1963.

BOWEN explained that at the bus station in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, at about 3:30 P.M., September 26, 1963, he boarded a bus en route to Mexico City, and signed his own name, JOHN HOWARD BOWEN, to the roster of passengers. He sat in the third seat from the front on the right side. A young man who apparently boarded the bus at the same time sat in the seat adjacent to him. He described this person as follows:

Sex:	Male
Race:	White
Age:	29
Height:	5'8"
Weight:	150 pounds
Hair:	Blond and thin
Complexion:	Dark

He explained this passenger had a small zipper bag which he placed in the rack above his feet. He did not talk to this person or hear him speak to anyone else on the bus. He presumed this person was Mexican or Puerto Rican, because he was dark complected and did not appear to be an American. He recalled that directly in front of him was a man and a woman who were about sixty years of age. The man was retired from the Bermuda Police Department, and he apparently had been traveling extensively since his retirement. BOWEN recalled that two Mexican women and a small child occupied the seat directly behind him. He could not recall who the other passengers might have been on the bus. He did recall that the bus was fully occupied when it left Nuevo Laredo.

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BOWEN stated the young man sitting next to him went to sleep shortly after getting on the bus, and did not converse with him or anyone else. At about 4:30 or 5:00 P.M. on September 26, 1964, the bus stopped for a lunch stop at Sabinas Hidalgo, Mexico. This young man went to the restroom and ate a lunch at the bus station. When he returned to the bus, he went to the rear of the bus where he reclined on a rear seat and went to sleep.

BOWEN stated he did not recall seeing the above person again during the trip to Mexico City, and has not seen him before or since that time. He did not know where the above person got off the bus. BOWEN stated he does not recall having specifically seen a particular photograph of subject LEE HARVEY OSWALD, but is rather certain he had seen some newspaper photographs of him. He stated he does not feel that the above person was identical to LEE HARVEY OSWALD, because the above person was quite dark complected and appeared to be a Mexican or Puerto Rican.

BOWEN stated he arrived in Mexico City on the above bus about 9:30 AM., September 27, 1963. He thereafter boarded another bus in Mexico City, and went to Puebla, Mexico, where he resided at the St. Augustine Hotel. The next day, he boarded a night train at Puebla and traveled to the Railroad Hotel in Jesus Carranga, which is north of Juchitan, Mexico. He remained in this area for about one week, contacting various native ministers, and delivering Bibles to them. He preached some in Juchitan, and Tehuantepec, area. He then returned to the area of Puebla, Mexico, where he resided with various persons connected with Baptist churches in that vicinity. He then traveled back to Laredo, Texas, in about the middle of November, 1963. While in Mexico City, he usually resides at the Canada Hotel Annex, which is on Cinco De Mayo Street. BOWEN stated at no time on this trip did he again see the above mentioned person who had been on the bus with him from Nuevo Laredo.

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BOWEN stated he intends to travel from the Russellville, Alabama, area, to Laredo, Texas, by way of New Orleans, and expects to be at the St. Anthony Hotel, Laredo, Texas, about February 15-17, 1964, where he will remain indefinitely. He stated that at Laredo, he could locate the bus ticket which would verify the date of the above mentioned trip into Mexico in September, 1963. He stated he may also have there correspondence from ALBERT OSBORNE.

BOWEN stated he has never taught school, has never been to any foreign countries, other than Mexico and Bermuda. He stated he has never written a book, knew nothing about the Lisbon earthquake of 1775. He could not recall seeing any American girls on instant bus, and knew of no one on the bus who might have talked to the young man sitting in the seat adjacent to him.

BOWEN stated he definitely is not identical to ALBERT OSBORNE, and with the one exception, he has never posed as ALBERT OSBORNE. BOWEN stated he would cooperate fully in this matter. He volunteered to have his photograph and fingerprints taken on this occasion.

BOWEN furnished the following descriptive data regarding himself:

Name:	JOHN HOWARD BOWEN
Sex:	Male
Race:	White
Date of Birth:	January 12, 1885
Place of Birth:	Chester, Pennsylvania
Height:	5'8"
Weight:	190 pounds
Hair:	Gray and thin
Eyes:	Blue
Build:	Heavy
Complexion:	Medium
Scars and Marks:	Small round sore or scar on right temple.

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