

CHAPTER ONE

LEE HARVEY OSWALD AND GUY BANISTER

*He didn't even have the satisfaction of being killed for civil rights . . .
it had to be some silly little Communist.*

—Jacqueline Kennedy

At least eleven people witnessed Lee Harvey Oswald, the presumed assassin of President Kennedy, with W. Guy Banister in New Orleans in the summer of 1963, just months prior to the November 22 assassination of the president. A relationship between the two men was extremely unlikely, since their avowed views on Communism were diametrically opposed. Guy Banister was a career FBI agent, and former head of the FBI's Chicago office, who dedicated his life to hunting Communists and preserving segregation of the races. Oswald, on the other hand, had spent three years in the Communist Soviet Union and publicly declared himself a Marxist. Several more people also saw Oswald with a number of close associates of Guy Banister. Unfortunately, the seven-member Warren Commission appointed by President Johnson to investigate the assassination—and headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren—had no knowledge of Banister or his association with Oswald. Accordingly, they did not investigate the matter.

The office of the District Attorney of New Orleans, headed by Jim Garrison, first uncovered Banister's ties to Oswald during the enigmatic investigation of the assassination that began in 1966. The House Select Committee on Assassinations took up the matter somewhat further in their re-investigation of the Kennedy assassination in 1977 and determined that Lee Harvey Oswald and Banister could have been associated. The paradox of why a fanatical anti-Communist like Banister and a declared, dedicated Communist like Lee Harvey Oswald were seen so many times together has never been adequately explained. District Attorney Jim Garrison claimed Oswald was not a true Communist but, rather, that he traveled to the Soviet Union and participated in anti-Castro demonstrations as an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Naval Intelligence, or some other federal government spy agency—claims which he failed dismally to substantiate. The assassination, therefore, he concluded, was the work of those federal spy agencies. Assassination writers took Garrison's claims further and offered various sophistical explanations claiming many of Oswald's activities were related to government intelligence.

Guy Banister maintained close contact with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover after his tenure with the agency. Although there is no evidence that the FBI was involved in the assassination, there is an abundance of evidence that Director J. Edgar Hoover deliberately concealed from the Warren Commission a plot to murder the president by the radical right wing and segregationist elements. Finally, the FBI's investigation of Oswald's activities in New Orleans was of poor quality, suggesting FBI malfeasance in failing to uncover Oswald's ties to the Banister operation.

The allegation of the eleven or more witness who saw Banister and Oswald together, and those who saw Oswald with close associates of Banister, will be presented in this chapter along with an examination of the Banister operation.

The Law Enforcement Career of Guy Banister

The life and times of these two strange bedfellows, Guy Banister and Lee Harvey Oswald, will be presented briefly here and expanded throughout this work. Guy Banister's career in law enforcement began when he served on the Monroe, Louisiana, Police Department from 1929 to 1934. On November 5, 1934, he became a special agent of the FBI, a post he held until 1938 when he was appointed Special Agent in Charge, SAC, in 1938. As a SAC, he served in Butte, Montana, from 1938 to 1941, when he was transferred to Oklahoma City. In 1943, he was transferred back to Butte. In 1953, he was transferred to the Minneapolis division, then to the Chicago, Illinois, division until 1954 when he retired.¹