

- Tolson
- Belmont
- Mohr
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- DeLoach
- Evans
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

ON THE LINE:

The Good Little People

By BOB CONSIDINE

DALLAS: Of what we've heard from the first three panel people who tried for and missed making the jury in the Jack Ruby case, Dallas is no different from any other town whose burghers are asked to pass on a prisoner's life or death.

Melvin Bell, head of the defense, is of the opinion Ruby cannot possibly get a fair shake in Dallas; that consciously or unconsciously any jury selected here would hope to send him to the electric chair to "avenge" the city's fair name. Bell is not alone in this belief.



CONSIDINE

But the first three who took the stand might have come from Any Town, U.S.A. If they harbored any hatred for the pasty little man with the eyes of a blackbird, nothing in their voice or manner betrayed them. They approached their duties as citizens subject to jury duty with dignity, answered scores of legalistic questions as best they could, and went their way. Watching them, I couldn't tell whether they were relieved or distressed.

There is awe in jury work, when the death penalty is going to be asked by the state. Ordinary people who might hesitate to step on an ant or swat a fly are called upon by the law to decide a man's fate. It is an experience that will live with them the rest of their days, and many of their nights.

Yet there is an attraction to the jury box, too, difficult to define but certainly there. The first panelman called in this case, a forthright man in his 30s named Hilliard Stone, who works for a local aerospace firm, clearly welcomed the opportunity that was dangled before him.

"We're going to ask for the electric chair in this case," tough-minded District Attorney Hank Wade, ex-FBI man who has sent a parade of convicted

killers to death, said quietly to Stone. "Any scruples about capital punishment? Any religious objections?"

"Every intelligent man has thought about such things, I guess," Stone answered thoughtfully. "I can't give you a terse yes or no. Whether society has the right to take a man's life is a pretty big issue. I'd have to hear the testimony before I could make up my mind one way, to acquit, or decide that in this case society can no longer tolerate the situation... like a surgeon amputating a gangrenous thing..."

The Ruby trial's panel-questioning period has produced the inevitable. It happens in every trial. One of the dear ladies who was called to the stand—she was a gentle soul who reminded us a bit of the late, great Zasu Pitts—seemed never to have heard of Jack Ruby, Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassination, the murder, the frenzy of headlines, the endless hours of radio and TV reporting.

Oh, no, she gasped every now and then, helplessly, she hadn't formed even one tennie-weenie bit of prejudice, or even impression. Ruby's tawdry striptease joint? Well, if the law allowed it, she sighed, she guessed it was every bit as respectable as—say—a men's store.

It seemed like a good simile.

Now, Mr. Stone, what do you remember about what you said to your wife when you saw the replay of the actual killing on TV, and what did she say to you? He shrugged. Who remembers what married people say to each other, he wanted to know.

Mostly, the good people sat there, doing their duty as best they knew it, and watching with fascination as the great rival bulls of the law growled at each other over the balding head of the man who clouded history's understanding of the reason behind the death of a beloved President.

Little people would decide about him. Good little people.

- The Washington Post and Times Herald _____
- The Washington Daily News _____
- The Evening Star _____
- New York Herald Tribune _____
- New York Journal-American 19
- New York Mirror _____
- New York Daily News _____
- New York Post _____
- The New York Times _____
- The Worker _____
- The New Leader _____
- The Wall Street Journal _____
- The National Observer _____
- People's World _____
- Date _____

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