

ONE VIEW OF RUBY

Ross Describes Paradoxical Acts

Jack Ruby would "steam up and turn almost purple" during temper tantrums touched off when friends disagreed with him while he was a youth growing up in a tough neighborhood in Chicago.

Then he would become so gentle that he "wouldn't step on a fly or a caterpillar."

That paradoxical portrait was sketched by Barney Ross, former welterweight champion of the world, from the witness stand in Criminal District Court No. 3 here Monday.

THE EX-CHAMP, who became a Marine hero during World War I and later whipped the drug habit, came here from New York to help his boyhood pal.

Ruby, who could get the electric chair if convicted of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald, showed his appreciation by reaching out and grabbing Ross' hand as he left the stand.

Ross smiled and whispered a word of encouragement before leaving the courtroom.

Attorney Melvin Belli called the former champ to the stand to bolster the defense contention that Ruby "blacked out" and became temporarily insane before he shot the Marxist accused of assassinating President Kennedy.

ROSS BEGAN sketching his portrait of Ruby by explaining that the two were members of "a group which ran around together" on Chicago's West Side.

Their friendship continued from boyhood "until I was 32 or 33," Ross continued, noting that he is a year older than Ruby, who is 52.

"Around the age of 14 and later, he was a good sports handicapper—an authority on handicapping," Ross told the jury of eight men and four women.

"Sometimes when we'd make a nickel wager on our own, he'd let out an angry scream and say 'Don't bet on this team. I know more about it than anybody.'"

"HE USED to turn almost purple and walk away from us without saying anything else . . . He would just take off when he got steamed up."

Ruby appeared entranced by the testimony.

Ross said Ruby became known as "Sparky" because he was a "hustler" who kept his eyes open for ways of making money.

"He used to come to me and say he needed 'X' amount of dollars to buy materials at a fire sale," Ross related. "Then he would sell it at a profit and repay me the next day and then he would do the same thing again, all over."

Ross said he didn't think Ruby could have held a steady job "because of his problem." The witness said he referred to the manner in which Ruby "got into a frenzy" when anyone disagreed with him, even if only trifling matters were involved.

"TELL US about his patriotism," Belli suggested.

"He was as patriotic as all of us—as patriotic as any red-blooded American could be," Ross said.

Ross said he did not use profanity and did not recall hearing Ruby use it.

"Did you ever hear Jack use the term 'son of a bitch'?" Belli asked, mindful that prosecution witnesses had testified Ruby used this phrase before and after shooting Oswald.

"Maybe I might have once or twice, but I'd say I probably didn't," Ross replied.

Ruby turned at the defense table and whispered something to Joe Tonahill, another lawyer who represents him.

FOLLOWING A suggestion from Belli, Ross described a San Francisco fight which he won although "out on his feet" for five rounds.

Ross said Ruby "blacked out" from excitement during the fight, but Judge Joe B. Brown ordered jurors not to consider the answer after prosecutors noted Ross was only repeating what he had been told.

Then Assistant Dist. Atty. William F. Alexander got his chance to question Ross.

Alexander showed that Ross could recall seeing Ruby only once after they went separate ways during World War II.

The prosecutor suggested also that the two were not close boyhood friends, but merely casual acquaintances.

Ross said that wasn't true.

ALEXANDER NOTED Ross gave a statement to FBI agents after Ruby shot Oswald. Ross said he recalled talking to the agents in New York "about the third or fourth day after the tragic thing happened."

Alexander said Ross' testimony conflicted with statements he gave the agents.

Q. You told them, did you not, that you didn't know how he got the nickname "Sparky?"

A. I don't recall telling them that.

Q. Also at that time, didn't you tell them that you had never given him any money?

A. No, sir.

Then Alexander asked, "Mr. Ross, isn't it a fact that, at the time the FBI questioned you, you didn't want to be connected with Jack Ruby in any way?"

Ross appeared indignant at the suggestion.

"I wanted it known that I was on his side all the way," the former champion replied firmly.



—Dallas News Staff Sketch by Glenn Moore.

Barney Ross helps an old pal.

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