

Jury Must Answer One Basic Question

Jurors in the Jack Ruby murder case, who heard 66 witnesses during the month-long trial, must answer one basic question:

Did Jack Ruby know right from wrong when he shot Lee Harvey Oswald while millions watched on television.

The jury's answer could determine whether Ruby lives or dies.

Ruby's lawyers admit the 52-year-old manager of a Dallas nightclub, which featured girlie shows fired a lethal bullet into Oswald after his arrest as the prime suspect in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The lawyers based their entire defense on an insanity plea.

If the eight men and four women on the jury agree that Ruby could distinguish between right and wrong, they must find him guilty of murder.

Then they would set his penalty. It could range from death in the electric chair to two years in prison.

If jurors assessed a prison term of five years or less, they could suspend the sentence and let Ruby walk out of the courtroom a free man. But even defense lawyers considered this possibility remote.

If jurors agree Ruby could not distinguish between right and wrong when he squeezed the trigger of his Colt Cobra revolver,

they would find him innocent of the murder charge since he would have been insane in the eyes of the law.

He would go to a state mental hospital for the criminally insane if the jury agreed he was still insane. On the otherhand, if he was ruled sane at this time, he would go free.

Prosecution psychiatrists said Ruby was sane.

Defense psychiatrists said he was insane.

Defense lawyers said Ruby "blacked out" when he saw Oswald with "a rat-like smirk" on his face. Then, the lawyers contended, Ruby pulled the trigger while in a trance, unaware of what he was doing.

Prosecutors said Ruby plotted the shooting and carried it out like a cold-blooded executioner in the belief it would bring him "fame and fortune."

They scoffed at the defense contention that he shot while in an epileptic seizure triggered by grief following the presidential assassination.