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Judge at Ruby's Trial Charges TV Networks Broke Agreement

By Lawrence Laurent

Television cameras were present when Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald last November and they were in the courtroom yesterday when a jury pronounced Ruby guilty.

But the television medium didn't entirely suit Judge Joe B. Brown. In a televised, postverdict interview, Brown charged that the networks had violated an agreement. Brown said the cameras were supposed to be turned off after the verdict was announced.

Instead, cameras showed the milling reporters interviewing defense counsel Melvin Belli. He made references to a "kangaroo court."

Judge Brown told an obviously emorphissed television interviewer that he had gone to "an operator" (engineer) and told him to turn off the cameras.

Television executives have long fought against the American Bar Association's Canon 35. This is a recommendation that cameras and sound equipment not be permitted in courtrooms. Texas permits a judge to decide whether a trial can be broadcast.

Reporters on the scene did emphasize that Judge Brown had control of the audio equipment, from the bench. This control may have accounted for the networks' being unable to identify the yoice of Belli, just after the jury had confirmed its unanimous verdict by a show of hands.

Belli began that he wished to thank the jury for a verdict of "bigotry . . ." and the sound was lost.

Later, the CBS television network telecast a video tape recording of the scene and identified the speaker as Belli.

The networks, obviously, used a "pool" arrangement inside the courtroom. Outside, where District Attorney Henry M. Wade and Judge Brown were interviewed, the networks had individual coverage. The scenes showed reporters jostling and shoving for good microphone positions: 1

Announcement that a verdict had been reached brought all three networks into action, shifting from regular programs to coverage in Dallas. About an hour elapsed before Judge Brown took his place in court. One reporter wanted to know why Judge Brown had changed his mind about broadcasting his charge to the jury. The reporter suggested that the Judge had been influenced by the "Dallas oligarchy."

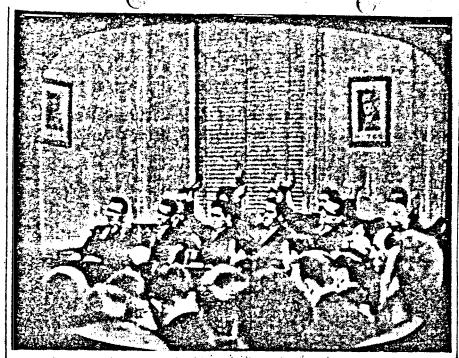
Judge Brown answered No. 18 1203 his mind, without advice from 18 1203

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This is how television viewers saw mem-bers of the Ruby jury raise their hands—ueath penalty for Lee Oswald's slayer.



Dallas Judge Joe B. Brown, as seen on CBS television, reads the Ruby jury's verdict.