

SPECIAL REPORT

The Story of Jack

Leon Ruby

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DALLAS, Tex., Nov. 30.—It would be hard to imagine a stranger instrument of vengeance than Jack Leon Ruby, the man who pulled a hammerless .38 caliber Smith & Wesson revolver from his pocket last Sunday morning and committed murder before the eyes of millions of Americans.

In that split second at 11:20 a.m. (CST) on November 24, 1963, the 52-year-old Dallas strip-joint operator catapulted himself from tinsel obscurity into a spotlight that will illuminate him as long as men remember their misdeeds.

Before he gunned down Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, last Sunday, Ruby might well have been considered the least likely man in all of Texas to commit such an act.

This was no lanky, hard-jawed westerner, enforcing the eye-for-an-eye code. Around the Dallas bars and girlie clubs, they called him the "Chicago cowboy" and regarded him



JACK LEON RUBY

as a back-slapping, garrulous pest with a yen for "class" and a great desire to hang around Dallas policemen.

To their lasting shame, they let him.

Today, Jack Ruby languishes alone in a cell of the county jail overlooking the spot, only a few feet away, where two bullets ended the President's life.

Waiting for the justice he denied to Oswald, Ruby spends his time worrying about whether his friends are mad at him and occasionally

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

- The Washington Post and Times Herald _____
- The Washington Daily News _____
- The Evening Star _____
- New York Herald Tribune _____
- New York Journal-American _____
- 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 _____
- Date 12-1-63

Ruby: From the West Side of Chicago to Dallas

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calling his night clubs to check up on business.

Ruby was born Jack Rubenstein, one of eight children of immigrant Polish parents, on March 25, 1911, in a tough west side section of Chicago. His father, a hard-working carpenter and an orthodox Jew, died five years ago at the age of 88 and his mother died in an institution in Illinois.

What little is known of his childhood comes from his short, gray-haired sister, Mrs. Eva Grant, 54, of 3929 Rawlins street, in Dallas. Mrs. Grant, a divorcee, recently underwent major surgery and is now in a highly nervous state.

She earns her living as manager of one of Ruby's two Dallas night clubs, the Vegas, at 3508 Oaklawn street. But she has been seen little in public since last Sunday night when she went tearfully to police headquarters, wearing a white veil, to see her brother in the cell-block just vacated by Oswald.

Her description is that of a large

family in poor circumstances which spawned in Jack a fierce desire for social acceptance.

Ruby's education was limited and he learned more of how to survive among the Irish and Polish rough-necks of his milieu than he did of books and more conventional means of advancement.

Early in life, he learned to use his fists and he grew up to be a man who was proud of his physique even after his paunch had thickened and his hair grew thin. They called him "Sparky" around the ghetto of Roosevelt avenue and Peoria streets because of his prowess at street-fighting.

Eva Grant said it was her brother's great pride as a teen-ager to protect her, his older sister, from the neighborhood thugs and ogles. Of the eight Rubenstein children, five managed to acquire college educations and escape the environment of their youth. One brother, Earl, changed his name to Rubln and moved to Detroit.

Jack was not one of the five to

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whom schooling appealed, Eva said.

Instead, when he was 16, he became known as "champion gate crasher" at Chicago Stadium, Soldier Field and the Cubs' ballpark. It was his boast that in 1926, he went to Soldier Field with 11 other kids on a bet that he could get all 12 into the game without tickets. He pulled the stunt off, and earned \$20 hawking hot dogs and pop while watching the game. He also often has boasted that he gate-crashed the Dempsey-Tunney fight.

He has no known police record in Chicago, either as Rubenstein or Ruby, but police there recall him as a gambler, ticket scapier, labor organizer and a man on the fringe of mob activities. A police captain remembers him as a loiterer in the notorious Maxwell district, but said he also liked to hang around policemen.

He frequented cheap night-clubs and gymnasiums, where he watched fighters working out.

In 1937, Ruby teamed up with a close friend and neighbor, a lawyer named Leon R. Cooke. The two organized a union of scrap iron dealers and junk handlers.

Partner Murdered

This association came to an abrupt end when Cooke was shot to death in the union office. John Martin, the union president and one-time associate of bootlegger Terry Druggan, was accused, but claimed self-defense and was acquitted. Much of the information police received about the shooting came from the young union secretary, Ruby. Ruby was held in jail overnight but was not charged.

Early in 1940, the union dropped Ruby on the grounds that he was "too temperamental and not good for the union."

Little is known about his life from then until May 21, 1943, when Ruby was inducted into the Army and sent to Camp Grant, Ill. The records indicate only that he served in the Army Air Corps, rose to the rank of private first class and received an honorable discharge at Fort Sheridan, Ill. on February 21, 1946.

Ruby returned to Chicago and for a time frequented gambling spots with a man named Nathan Gumbin until Gumbin was killed in a gangland assassination.

A friend said it was around this time that Ruby changed his name from Rubenstein. District Court records show the new name was authorized on December 30, 1947, by Judge William Cramer. Ruby said the name was shorter and everyone called him that anyway.

Cowboy Attire

As near as can be determined, Ruby took up residence in Dallas about 14 years ago. From the first, he was much taken by life in the West. He wore immaculate cowboy clothes, almost as incongruous in Dallas as they would be in Washington, but later he returned to his favorite wide-brimmed hats and high collars.

He was a flashy dresser, with a sapphire ring on one hand, and a fondness for loud vests. Tony Zoppi, a Dallas night club writer, says Ruby acted like a frustrated Ziegfeld when he first came here, hanging around the old Plantation Club, and often dashing on stage to take over the mike.

With borrowed investment capital, he soon gravitated into the night-club business with the emphasis on fleshy floor-shows catering to the Dallas convention trade. He acquired the Vegas, in an outlying section, and the Carousel, at 1312 1/2 Commerce street and ran them with an iron hand often acting as his own bouncer.

To hear Dallas policemen tell it, he became something of a pest to them, but some perhaps brought it on themselves by pausing overlong when they had to check his premises or clientele. The records show that Ruby was called up to explain certain violations of the dance hall ordinance and the ban on Sunday drinking.

Carried Pistol

He was twice apprehended for carrying a concealed weapon, although Ruby never made much of a secret of the fact he often carried a pistol to protect his bankroll, he said it was a hammerless model.

Ruby, who never married so far as is known, prospered in the night-club business. He acquired a four-room apartment in the Marcella, at 223 Ewing street, and furnished it with rather garish Italian provincial pieces.

"I've suffered enough and skimped all my life," he told an associate recently. "I want to live a little."

When the President died in 1958, according to his sister Eva, Ruby was terribly broken up and observed a period of mourning lasting a year, in accordance with the ancient Jewish ritual called the Kad-dish.

"He was the only one of the sons who did it," said Eva.

In recent months, the 5-foot-9, 210-pound Ruby took to swimming and working out on the punching bag and weights at the YMCA. He kept a pair of bar bells beside his bed.

Fond of Dogs

He is fond of dogs and kept two of those he owned in a backroom of the Carousel. Gruff-speaking, gregarious, yearning for acceptance, quick

to fight or take offense, Ruby seemed to have no active interest in politics except to be noisily in the corner of whoever was President.

A brunette strip-tease entertainer known as "Cindy Embers" said he banned Kennedy jokes in his night spot and tried to attack her husband one night for a relatively mild sally.

Another stripper, Janet Conforto, known on the runway as "Jada," swore out a peace bond on November 1 before Justice of the Peace W. L. Richburg against Ruby. The proprietor of the Carousel, she said, had threatened to burn up \$10,000 worth of her costumes in a salary dispute.

He has a quick temper, she says, but also could be kind and generous.

George Senator, 50, a friend for eight years, who moved into Ruby's apartment a month ago, probably knows more than anyone else about Ruby's movements in the hours before and after the death of President Kennedy.

Visits Newspaper

Like everyone else in Dallas, Ruby knew that the President was coming to town around noon on Friday. An hour before that time, Ruby turned up at the offices of the Dallas News, in which he advertised and had breakfast in the newspaper cafeteria. The building is four blocks from the corner of Elm and Houston.

At 12:10 p.m., Ruby entered the News display advertising department in search of John Newnam, who handled his account. Adman Donald Campbell remembered the time because noon was the ad deadline and he automatically looked at the clock.

Ruby: News employes believe, was helping to lay out his ad while Campbell went out to watch the presidential motorcade between 12:20 p.m. and 12:40 p.m. Ruby apparently did not watch. Mr. Newnam turned up at 12:45 p.m. and found Ruby still at the desk.

At 1 p.m., another adman burst in with the tragic news that the President had been shot. From all accounts, Ruby reacted, like everyone else, with shock and disbelief. With others, he rushed to the nearest TV set and a little later canceled his ad and decided to close his nightclubs for three days.

Mrs. Grant says her brother called her from the News office and cried into the phone. He did the same in a long-distance call to the brother in Detroit—Earl Rubin.

Kept Talking

"That night he wouldn't eat anything," his sister said. "He kept talking about Jackie. He said the President could have had anything but had to end up like this."

George Senator said, "He kept telling me over and over again about those poor children."

Ruby went to his Synagogue, Sherith Israel, at 9401 Douglas street and prayed for the President's family, said Mr. Senator.

When the word spread that Lee Harvey Oswald had been captured after killing Dallas Police Pvt. J. D. Tippit, Ruby made a bee-line for police headquarters.

This reporter saw Ruby there that night in the hall outside the third floor homicide squad where Capt. Will Fritz was trying to get some answers out of Oswald. There was indescribable confusion and no one among the hundreds of reporters, television men and police paid much attention to Ruby.

I saw him hand one of his cards reading, "Jack Ruby—Carousel," to some out-of-town newsmen. He also handed cards to District Attorney Herry Wade, the county prosecutor, who came to draw up the murder charges against Oswald, and to Justice of the Peace David Johnson, who was

there to conduct the preliminary hearing.

Paid Little Heed

He introduced himself to one reporter as a translator for the Jewish press. To others he acted as if he were Dallas' official greeter. It seems clear that police paid him little heed because his face was familiar. One officer says he asked Ruby what he was doing there and Ruby replied, "Oh, I brought the sandwiches."

On four separate occasions that Friday night, Oswald was brought out of the homicide squad and passed within inches of the shouting, crowding press—and, presumably, Ruby.

On Saturday, the questioning of Oswald continued and the press corps multiplied. Ruby was back again with more cards and some sandwiches for the men at the station. He busied himself in other ways until Oswald was brought forth for an 11 p.m. confrontation with the press in the basement lineup room and then taken back to his cell.

Then when prosecutor Wade took the microphone and began detailing the evidence against the prisoner and said that Oswald belonged to a committee dedicated to freeing Cuba, Ruby interrupted. He said Mr. Wade was wrong, that Oswald "belongs to that Communist

outfit (the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.)"

Eva Grant recalls that her brother telephoned her six times during the day, the last time at 12:40 a.m. before leaving police headquarters.

When Oswald was put in the top-floor cell-block for the night, Police Chief Jesse E. Curry was asked by newsmen to give them advance notice of when the prisoner would be moved to the county jail next day. The announcement was made that the transfer would be accomplished at 10 a.m. Sunday.

Told of Threat

At 7 a.m. Sunday, Chief Curry got word from the FBI that a phone call had been received saying Oswald would be killed that day, that the prisoner would not reach the county jail alive. Chief Curry ordered special police guard details and directed that an armored car be used for Oswald's 10-block ride. It was decided to check all press credentials and allow no one else near the scene.

Ruby got up Sunday morning and took a swim at the apartment pool. A neighbor said, "I saw him coming up the stairs with a handful of laundry, I said 'hello' but he didn't answer me."

Mr. Senator said he had some scrambled eggs for breakfast and then put his dach-

shund, into his car to go down to the Carousel.

Ruby's attorney, Tom Howard, said Ruby had set out to send a \$25 money order to a Carousel girl who needed the money to pay for rent in Fort Worth. He carried his pistol in his pocket because he had several thousand dollars in the car, according to Mr. Howard.

While Ruby was on this errand, Chief Curry called the press into his office and disclosed news of the threats against Oswald's life. He would have moved Oswald during the night, he said, "but I didn't want to double-cross you people."

He said Oswald would be taken by elevator to the basement and there put into the armored car. With this notice, photographers, TV cameramen, radiomen and reporters raced for the basement and set up a double line flanking the path Oswald and his guards would take.

Gets on Elevator

At about 11:16 a.m., Oswald emerged from his cell manacled to two big detectives. Capt. Fritz led the way and the entourage got on the elevator to descend.

At that moment, according to attorney Howard, Ruby had been to Western Union and had driven out of his way to pass where President Kennedy was killed. Later, he had planned to place flowers at the scene, as hundreds have done.

As Oswald was getting on the elevator, Jack Ruby arrived at the Main street entrance to police headquarters where a ramp goes into the garage. Ruby told Mr. Howard the policeman on guard there was distracted by a

squad car. "I walked past them and I guess they didn't notice," he said.

This reporter was standing in the garage with the others watching as Capt. Fritz emerged and several voices shouted, "Here he comes." Ruby has told his lawyer he walked up to the line of newsmen from behind at that exact moment. It was 11:20 a.m.

From my vantage point five feet to Ruby's left, I saw a squat figure in a dark suit and a brown hat dart across the intervening space, crushing his body against Oswald and heard rather than saw the shot.

I saw the stricken look of pain and disbelief on Oswald's face as he jack-knifed forward with open mouth and goggling eyes.

Bedlam

Ruby and Oswald went down in a heap together, swarmed under by a shouting cluster of police. It was a bedlam of confusion, rage and fear and many a run was drawn in reflex by the white-faced police cordon while Oswald was rushed into an ambulance and Ruby to a cell.

At Parkland Hospital, physicians quickly saw that Os-

wald ~~was~~ doing. Ruby had jammed the muzzle of his pistol so tightly into his abdomen that a two-inch powder burn had scared his sweater. The bullet had pierced his liver and several large arteries. Oswald never regained consciousness. At 1:07 p.m., he died in the room next to the one where the President breathed his last.

After Oswald had been taken to the hospital, this reporter by happenstance was the first one to run upstairs to Chief Curry's office. He did not know until then what had happened below.

The chief, grayfaced and in a trembling voice, called newsmen in at 1:27 p.m. and announced that Oswald was dead. He said Ruby would be charged with murder.

Outside, a black-clad woman said, "He deserved to die but he should have been tried."

Her husband murmured, "When is this all going to end?"

Reactions

Assistant District Attorney Bill Alexander said Ruby

"thought he'd be the idol of America in two seconds but he misjudged things."

Mr. Howard was called to quarters, accepted the case and pronounced Ruby a "fine man."

Mr. Senator said his friend had been put in a state of shock by the President's assassination.

Mrs. Grant said her brother was a "good American" who had gotten upset by the President's death.

Herbert Kelly, chef at the Carousel, said, "Patriotic he wasn't, a police buff he was. If he did kill Oswald for revenge, I believe it was more over Pvt. Tippit than over President Kennedy."

Given Hearing

In his first statement to police, Ruby did it because he "couldn't stand the thought of Jackie (Mrs. Kennedy) undergoing the torment of attending Oswald's trial."

After Ruby was given a preliminary hearing that afternoon on a charge of murder,

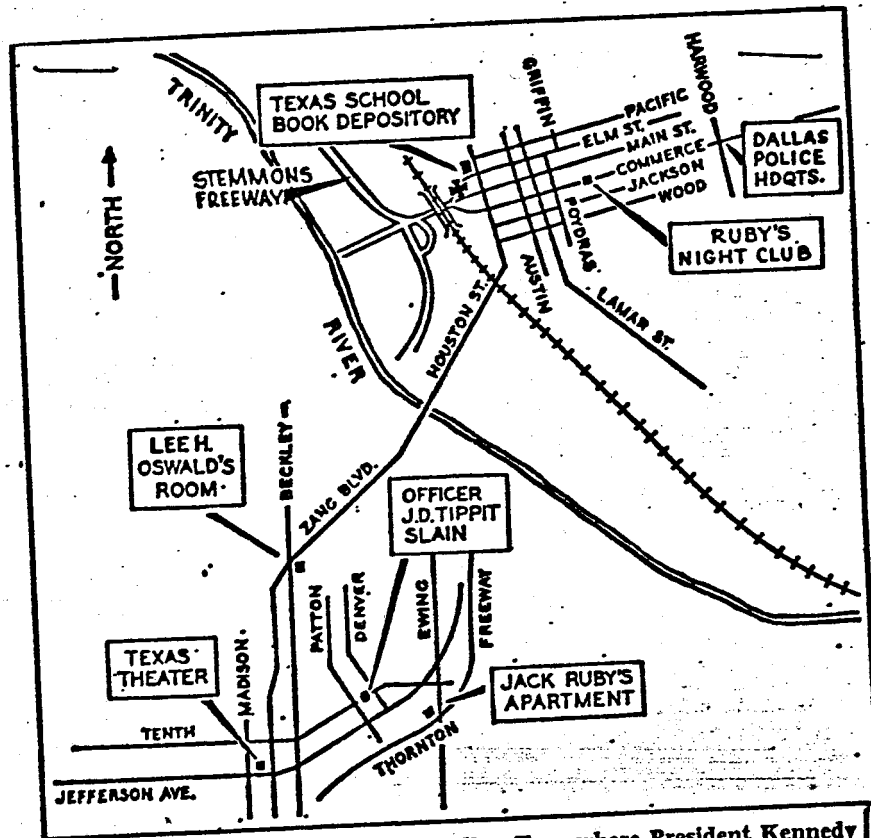
Attorney Howard ~~quoted~~ him as saying:

"He (Oswald) was smirking and so cocky and acted so proud of what he had done I couldn't get it out of my mind. I could not forget the Communists had sent him to kill our President. I could not forget how Jackie had suffered and that Caroline and John wouldn't have a daddy any more."

Mr. Howard brought a psychiatrist, Dr. John T. Holbrook of Beverly Hills Sanitarium, to examine Ruby. Next day, without prior announcement, Ruby was spirited from headquarters to the jail. Sheriff Decker got him into a cell alone with dispatch and there he remains today.

Prosecutor Wade, 47, who was wounded Gov. John Connally's room-mate at the University of Texas, said he would ask for the electric chair for Ruby.

Mr. Howard is considering two moves: a request for a sanity hearing and a request for a change of venue. He said he is not sure Ruby could get a fair trial in this part of Texas.



This is the section of downtown Dallas, Tex., where President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, setting loose a chain of events that led to the deaths of a Dallas policeman and the President's accused murderer. The focal points are designated above with the black cross marking the spot where President Kennedy was killed. The map covers an area of only four miles.—Star Staff Map.