

Ruby Tells ^{NY J.A. - 2/23} Kilgallen: 'Breaking

By DOROTHY KILGALLEN

DALLAS, Feb. 22.—Jack Ruby's eyes were as shiny brown-and-white bright as the glass eyes of a doll. He tried to smile but his smile was a failure. When we shook hands, his hand trembled in mine ever so slightly, like the heartbeat of a bird.

"I'm nervous and worried," he told me, "I feel I'm on the verge of something I don't understand—the breaking point, maybe."

It is an embarrassing experience to talk to a man on trial for his life. I tried to find cheerful words. I said:

"I thought you were holding up pretty well."

He shook his head ruefully.

"I'm fooling you, Dorothy," he said. "I'm really scared."

The scene was the sunlit courtroom of his trial for the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, alleged assassin of President Kennedy. The trial was in recess.

I had stayed behind because I had been told that Ruby would like to talk to me.

In a short while co-counsel Joe Tonahill beckoned to me, and I went up to the defense table.

"Jack would like to say hello to you," he said.

Jack rose politely to shake hands, his eyes glistening and his mouth smiling but the total effect inexpressibly sad.

"It's wonderful to see you, Dorothy," were his first words.

"How do you think you'll make out at the end of the trial?" I asked.

"I just don't know," Ruby said helplessly. His voice was almost inaudible. He let go of my hand and shrugged. "I try to hope for the best. I'd like to get a chance to go to a hospital and maybe get well. I'd like to be well enough some day to help people, to do something really worthwhile."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Anything but what I was doing—before this all happened," he said. "Maybe I could help bring people to God. I know now that I didn't make much of my life, but I've had a lot of time to think—when I could think—and I don't want to go back to what I was. I want to be something better, do you know what I mean, Dorothy?"

I nodded. It was hard to see how he could fail to be

'Point' Near

better than the Jack Ruby of the strip clubs, the boozy night life of Dallas. He has nowhere to go but up. If he lives.

Was he aware that almost certainly the prosecution, or perhaps his own defense, would seek to establish that he was a homosexual? I wanted to know.

"Yes, I'm ready for that," he said. "It's not true, but I expect it to come up; actually, I like girls. But I'm a bachelor, and they're going to wonder about that, and I've made some remarks that were just jokes to me, but might strike some people as sounding odd, like when I referred to one of my dachshunds as 'my wife.'"

I suggested that I had better go and let the lawyers confer.

Ruby clasped my hand again.

"I'm grateful to you for coming up to see me, Dorothy," he said.

He tried for another smile and almost made it.

"God bless you," he said.

"I said, 'Thank you, Jack,' and left the courtroom and went out into the almost empty lunchtime corridor wondering what I really believed about this man.