

Jack Ruby, Boy Salesman in

His World Ended When Parents Separated, He Says—Tells of His

#2 By Jack Ruby

With William R. Woodfield SL-1/29

Second installment in the story of Jack Ruby as told in his jail cell in Dallas, where he awaits trial for killing Lee Oswald. His account was taped and transcribed by William R. Woodfield.

Chicago Slums

Army Service, Move to Dallas

MAXWELL STREET was a breeding ground of crime. Nightly the robberies and murders were as regular as the changing of the features at the movie house. A lot of the kids I grew up with and played ball with in Douglas Park later got into trouble with the law. I have been accused of "knowing gangsters" and mobsters. I grew up with a lot of kids who later became hoodlums. When I knew them, they were all right or, if they were doing anything wrong, they kept their mouths shut. Me, I was too busy to listen.

I became a candy butcher (peddler) in Chicago's Garrick Theater. "Candy kisses and a prize—two bits—buy one for your girl, Mister?" It was money. It all added up. Life was good—all but Ma and Pa's fighting. It got worse and worse. No hitting, but screaming and cursing. Pa drank more and more. Finally, Pa moved out and he and Ma went into court to separate. My world ended—I became an orphan.

The court broke up our family. We children were sent away to foster homes. Some were lucky enough to find homes that would take two children. My brothers Earl and Sam were sent to a nice farm. They liked the people, the food, and they were out of the ghetto.

Me, I liked the ghetto. It was home. I loved the family, even Pa's drinking. I loved his stories. I loved to tell him my adventures. Instead, I was sent—alone—to a farm, and I died there. Nothing to sell—no one to buy—no business to do. Just cows and fresh air. I was 14.

That went on for two years. Then my mother sent for us. She had rented an apartment and was bringing the family together again. Pa was sending her money, and with what we could make—well, we'd be a family again. Who asked to be rich, too?

We—all of us kids—started working together. We'd pool our money and buy articles wholesale to peddle door to door at retail prices. We worked as teams and canvassed blocks—selling bottle openers, salt-and-pepper shakers, God only knows what.

That was in the daytime. Nights we worked parking cars

at Chicago Stadium. Whenever we'd park a car, we'd ask if anyone had an extra ticket they couldn't use. We'd pick up five or 10 tickets a night this way and we'd sell them.

Earl—the baby of the boys—we dressed as a ragamuffin and put at the gate. He'd ask everyone for extra tickets, and could get more than anyone else. Sometimes, when there was a really big attraction, we'd pool a cou-

ple of weeks' profits, buy extra tickets and scalp them (sell them for higher prices).

Then, in 1933, came the Chicago World's Fair. I could really sell—banners saying "Welcome to Chicago," streamers, silk pillows, turtles. I was happy. I had novelties to sell and plenty of customers.

When the fair ended, I sold wooden hope chests from door to door and kitchen pots and pans to gas station attendants. That was ingenious. I drove from gas station to gas station with four or five sets of pots and pans in the back of my car. Of course, the trunk was full of sets, and I would tell the attendant a little fib—namely, from a selling trip my company allowed me to sell my samples at cost—\$9, I think it was. I picked gas stations because they always had cash and the attendant only had to glance in the back seat to see the merchandise.

I decided to go west to see California. I had just arrived there when I received word that my mother had had a breakdown. My brother was forced to commit her to the Elgin Hos-

pital as an insane person.

Mom was sick for about a year and then she came home. She lived with some member of the family until she died, in 1944, of a heart condition. My brother Earl and I were at her side when she died. We wept and wept. It was a great shock, and I felt the loss deeply.

In San Francisco, around 1936, I was 26. I first fell deeply in love. She was a beautiful girl. Her name was Virginia—. It was an unusual romance in many ways. She came from a very wealthy family—a famous family. She was rich and I—I just made a living. Nineteen thirty-six was the depression, you'll remember. Virginia didn't care, but I did. We were in love but I couldn't give her the things she had been used to. I was happy to make a living.

I was selling newspaper subscriptions from door to door, giving away premiums with each subscription. I made about \$40 or \$50 a week. I was helping to support my sister and her son. How could I ask a girl like this to give up her way of life and live like I lived? Obviously I couldn't, and the only thing I could do was run. And run I did. Back to Chicago.

An old friend, Leon Cooke, an attorney, had decided to start a scrap iron and junk handlers union, and asked me to help him. Now, this wasn't to be a racket. Leon's family owned iron and junk yards and were very rich people. Leon wanted to unionize the scrap handlers because he felt that they were getting a



Jack Ruby . . . He wanted to be in business for himself.

