

TEXAS COURT VOIDS RUBY'S CONVICTION IN OSWALD DEATH

Orders Retrial Outside Dallas — Cites the Publicity and Inadmissible Evidence

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Text of the presiding judge's opinion is on Page 31.

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AUSTIN, Tex., Oct. 5 — The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals reversed today the murder conviction of Jack Ruby, who was sentenced to death in 1964 for the slaying of Lee Harvey Oswald, assassin of President Kennedy.

In addition, the court ordered the case transferred out of Dallas County, where the shooting took place. Presiding Judge W. A. Morrison said Ruby should not have been tried there.

Separate opinions, all agreeing that Ruby's conviction should be set aside, were written by all three judges who reviewed the case.

Trial Judge Chided

The main opinion, written by Judge Morrison, said that the trial judge, Joe B. Brown, should not have allowed testimony that Ruby had told a Dallas police officer shortly after Oswald's shooting that he had planned to kill Oswald if the chance arose.

A nationwide television audience saw Ruby, a 55-year-old nightclub owner, step forward and fire one shot into Oswald's abdomen as the suspect was being transferred to the county jail on Sunday, Nov. 24, 1963.

Ruby's statement, which the court said tended to show that Oswald's slaying was premeditated, was made while he was in custody of the Dallas police and there was no testimony that Ruby made the statement spontaneously, the court said.

The introduction of it as evidence, therefore, was in violation of the Texas criminal code, which requires that confessions be voluntary and spontaneous, the judges held.

In his jail cell in Dallas, Ruby

greeted the news of the reversal of his conviction with a statement that he was "elated."

District Attorney Henry Wade, who prosecuted Ruby in 1964, said he would insist that Ruby be tried again and that he would ask for the death penalty once more.

Might Accept Plea

Mr. Wade said he might accept a plea of guilty if Ruby and his lawyers were willing to accept a sentence of life imprisonment.

Ruby's lawyers insisted at his first trial that he was insane at the time he shot Oswald, suffering from psychomotor epilepsy.

Phil Bursleson of Dallas, one of six attorneys handling Ruby's case, said an effort would be made to get all the attorneys together on a telephone conference call sometime later this week to plan future strategy.

Sam Houston Clinton Jr of Austin, one of Ruby's attorneys, said that the time Ruby has served in jail since his arrest "probably" could be counted if Ruby should be convicted of murder without malice.

Under Texas prison rules, convicts are given 20 days extra credit for every 30 days served without incident, and a five-year sentence can be com-

pleted in three years.

If Ruby should be convicted of murder without malice, and he should be given credit for the time already served, he would be a free man at the end of his next trial.

There was no indication as to when the Ruby case would come to court again.

District Attorney Wade said that he would ask the Court of Appeals for a rehearing on the decision.

"We do not think there was any error," he said. "We hope to get them to change their opinion."

Mr. Wade has two weeks in which to apply for a rehearing.

The court voided the de-

cision of Judge Brown to disqualify himself from any further participation in the Ruby case.

Judge Brown had been under criticism for preparing a book about the case during the trial, and with the handling of publicity about the trial itself. In its order today the court assigned the Ruby case to Judge Louis T. Holland of Mon-

hearing in which Ruby was ruled sane on June 13, 1966.

Judge Morrison said it was not necessary to detail the errors made in the trial in not transferring Ruby's case out of Dallas.

High Court Cited

United States Supreme Court decisions in the case of Billie Sol Estes, convicted of fraud in Texas, and Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard, convicted of murder in Ohio, are controlling, he ruled. Both of these cases were preceded by extensive newspaper and radio and television coverage.

The testimony that caused the court to reverse Ruby's conviction was given by Detective Sgt. Patrick T. Dean. Sergeant Dean was identified in Dallas as the plainclothes officer who was holding the handcuffed Oswald by the arm when Ruby darted out of a crowd of reporters and shot Oswald with a .38-caliber revolver.

Sergeant Dean testified during Ruby's trial that he had questioned Ruby about 40 minutes after the shooting and that Ruby told him he would be glad to answer questions after he was assured that his answers would not be made available to "magazines or publications."

The officer quoted Ruby as saying that he had seen Oswald in a police line-up on the night of the assassination and that when he saw the sarcastic sneer on Oswald's face he had decided that if he got a chance to do it, he would kill him.

"Obviously this statement constituted an oral confession of premeditation made while in police custody and therefore was not admissible," Judge Morrison wrote. "The admission of this testimony was clearly injurious and cause for a reversal of this conviction."

In a special concurring opinion today, Appeals Judge W. T. McDonald commented at length on the desirability of transferring Ruby's trial away from Dallas.

"It is apparent from the record that President Kennedy's assassination occurred at a site on a Dallas street so close to the Ruby trial courthouse that it could be seen daily by the jurors," he wrote.

"We assume that the citizenry of Dallas consciously and subconsciously felt that Dallas was on trial and the Dallas image was uppermost in their minds to such an extent that Ruby could not be tried there fairly while the street, nation and world judged Dallas for the tragic November events."

Judge McDonald, who was defeated in last spring's primary for a new term on the Court of Appeals, said 10 of the jurors who convicted Ruby had witnessed the shooting of Oswald on television.

"The Dallas County climate was one of such strong feeling that it was not humanly possible