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Seven Months Ago, Ruby Told Newsmen Time Running Out

By JIM FEATHERSTON
Staff Writer

"My time is running out."

Jack Ruby blurted out the words seven months ago during a courtroom appearance. Today, Ruby is at Parkland Hospital dangerously ill with spreading cancer.

Did Ruby have a premonition of serious illness?

More likely, he had become resigned to the possibility he might die in the electric chair for killing presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

For he later said:

"I am breathing toward my last breath. I was all set and tried the moment I walked down that ramp (in City Hall basement where Oswald was shot)."

But only Ruby knows what he meant. Since his arrest, he sometimes has made vague and puzzling statements, refusing to explain them.

THIS PARTICULAR statement was made to reporters during a hearing before Dist. Judge Louis Holland last March 31. The hearing was to question defense lawyers on the reason for their delay in appealing a habeas corpus action.

Ruby, pasty-faced, appeared bored at the hearing. At one point, he appeared as if he might doze off during the legal arguments.

He told reporters he considered the hearing a "farce." Ruby added that he has regretted gunning down Oswald ever since it happened.

Ruby's last appearance was for a sanity hearing last June 13. He seemed quiet and subdued. This time, Judge Holland ruled that reporters could not interview Ruby.

At the hearing, four jail guards and the jail physician testified that Ruby appeared sane.

ONE JAIL GUARD, Archie Watson, testified he sat with Ruby in his cell for a three-month period and often played checkers, dominoes and cards with him.

He said Ruby was an avid newspaper reader who read "the papers from front to back." Watson said Ruby seemed well oriented.

Another guard, W. S. Elliott, described Ruby as having a "fine mind."

"He has good memory and good recall. He is able to converse intelligently on many subjects," Elliott said.

But Ruby's physical health wasn't discussed.