

TELLS OF JAIL LIFE

'Puzzle to Me,' Confides Ruby's Guard-Companion

By WARREN BOSWORTH
Staff Writer

The pallid, thin-haired man was double-slick playing double solitaire but fussy and finicky at mealtimes as an overweight schoolgirl.

He was a gabby talker. He was a fumbling brooder.

He was Jack Ruby, the man who killed the man who killed the president of the United States.

"He was a puzzle to me. I still don't understand him," Deputy Sheriff Ray Abner said Tuesday after learning of Ruby's death at Parkland Hospital.

The deputy was as close to Ruby as any man could be for a full year after the pudgy striptease joint boss gunned down Lee Harvey Oswald in the basement of the Dallas police station.

DEPUTY ABNER was one of four men handpicked by Sheriff Bill Decker and assigned to guard Ruby in his Dallas County jail cell.

The assignment lasted a year and a week.

The deputies spent eight-hour shifts in the cell with Ruby during the around-the-clock watch on the most infamous prisoner ever held in the Dallas County Jail.

"We passed many of the hours at first playing checkers," Deputy Abner recalls, "but then we started playing cards. Jack

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liked 'double sol' and he was good at it, believe me."

Ruby got a "kick" out of reading not only the scores of letters which poured in during those first few months in jail but also the newspapers.

"HE GAVE those newspapers a real reading," Deputy Abner said. "He'd grab a copy when we brought it in and begin ruffling through it like crazy to see if he could find any stories in it about him. I think he read everything in the papers."

Ruby was a bit on the heavy side when he was first imprisoned.

"He trimmed most of the fat by exercising," Deputy Abner

said. "He'd do all sorts of physical exercises in that cell. He stood on his head quite a bit. Said it was good exercise."

Any jail food not to Ruby's liking was pushed aside.

"HE WAS real finicky about what he ate. For the life of me I cannot remember now what he liked and what he disliked," the deputy said. "I just know he wouldn't touch if he didn't like it."

Deputy Abner said Ruby would eat candy bars instead of prepared jail food if he did not like what was on the menu.

"I ate the same thing they were serving Jack and I picked

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