

Ruby role in guns studied

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Nightclub owner worried about gunrunner

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By EARL GOLZ

(Jack Ruby) was concerned that the name of a gunrunner for anti-Castro Cubans might come up during his 1964 trial here. The Dallas News has learned.

The name of the gunrunner, Thomas Eli Davis Jr., didn't surface during the trial, but Ruby's attorney, Tom Howard was prepared if it had, a friend of Howard's said. Howard, who was Ruby's first choice as an attorney, died in early 1965.

Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis said in Miami earlier this week arms purchases for Cuba was one of the topics Ruby and Fidel Castro discussed when they allegedly met in Havana 10 weeks before the assassination of President Kennedy Nov. 22, 1963.

Sturgis' story was corroborated Friday by a former master of ceremonies at Ruby's Dallas nightclub, Wally Weston, during an interview with a Miami television newsman.

Weston, who worked at Ruby's Carousel Club more than a year until about September of 1963, also told TV newsman Glenn Rinker he could establish that Ruby and accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald knew each other.

Three of Ruby's other attorneys in 1964 told The News they had never heard of Davis and had never seen any evidence Ruby traveled to Havana to meet with Castro.

Warren Commission records of Ruby's activities during the four months prior to the assassination show

Ruby in the Dallas area constantly except for trips to Houston, New Orleans, New York, Chicago and Edna, Texas, during the period Aug. 2 to 7, 1963.

Both Davis and Ruby said they had met several times before the assassination and discussed gunrunning as a lucrative business, but each of them denied ever engaging in the business together.

Ruby mentioned Davis to Howard when the attorney asked Ruby if any surprise names might come up during the trial. Ruby was convicted March 14, 1964, of the murder of Oswald in the basement of the Dallas police station Nov. 24, 1963.

Davis later in 1964, upon learning Ruby had mentioned his name to Howard, showed up in Dallas worrying about the possibility that he might be called before the Warren Commission.

However, his name didn't appear during the Warren Commission investigation. The Davis story apparently died with him when he was shocked fatally while working as a lineman for a power company in North Texas several years ago.

During the assassination investigation, FBI agents reportedly were looking for a "Davis" who was running guns from Beaumont but they didn't have his full name, a source said.

Davis, who was born Aug. 27, 1936, in McKinney, was operating his gunrunning business out of Beaumont much of the time and claimed to Howard's friend he was on such a mission in Algiers the day Kennedy was killed.

He was placed on five years probation July 10, 1958, on a federal offense of "attempted bank robbery by intimidation" in Detroit, according to the U.S. Probation Office.

Davis told Howard's friend he first met the anti-Castro Cubans for whom he ran guns when he was in Beaumont.

This would conflict with Sturgis' story that Ruby was talking to Castro about arms purchases.

One of Ruby's other attorneys, Phil Burleson of Dallas, said Ruby told him he had never met Castro but took "strictly a pleasure trip" to Havana to visit a friend, Lewis McWillie, in 1959 shortly after Castro took power in Cuba.

Burleson said he thought Sturgis' story that Castro also discussed with

Ruby the "removal of the President" gets "a little out of perspective because if you will recall that back in the early 1960s and late 1950s we were on very good terms with Castro."

Both Ruby attorney Melvin Belli of San Francisco told The News gun running "probably would be what Jack would have liked to do, but I don't think there was anything fulfilled in that regard. That I am pretty sure of."

"If he went over to see Castro and Castro saw him, Castro is nuttier than I think he is," Belli said. "I am satisfied there was no connection between Ruby and Castro or any covert organization in Cuba in which they importuned him to do anything against the president. Because the fellow deeply loved the president and was emotionally patriotic."

Another Ruby lawyer, Joe Tonahill of Jasper, told The News he "never heard of Ruby being interested in the gun business. And frankly, I don't think anybody would ever go into the gun business with him because he is so damn irresponsible. Nobody would trust him in anything that complicated."