

MAFIA

Evidence Exists to Show Mob Was Behind Shooting

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Warren Commission investigators had enough evidence to make a strong case for a Mafia assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

They either overlooked the obvious or chose for their own reasons not to pursue the mob connections with the case.

Part of the obvious is Eugene Hale Brading, Mafia courier who was arrested in Dallas Dealey Plaza when Lee Harvey Oswald was supposed to have killed Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

The mob ties with the assassination went undetected and ignored during the whirlwind investigation in the months that followed the tragedy. It would be years before the various



EUGENE HAL BRADING, aka Jim Braden, is shown in an enlargement at top. Arrow points him out in crowd. This photograph was taken Nov. 22 in Dealey Plaza. Brading was arrested stepping off the elevator in the Dal-Tex Building. Ruby had ample opportunity to meet with Braden before the assassination.

roles organized crime played in the case would be revealed.

The tie-ins take on a new and important significance in light of recent disclosures of the strange and shadowy role the Mafia is playing in the intelligence operations of the United States government.

Mafia gungsels have been recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency to engage in plots to assassinate foreign leaders, with the CIA returning the favor in various ways.

And a Mafia motive in the Kennedy assassination is unquestionable. John's brother, Robert, then attorney general, had prosecuted more Mafia mobsters than any other federal prosecutor in history.

And President Kennedy had failed to provide air strafing to protect the invaders at the Bay of Pigs, a campaign to overthrow Fidel Castro's rebel government. The Mafia had a big stake in the Cuban invasion — had it been successful the mob could again take over its lucrative gambling operations that Castro's government shut down.

THE MAFIA'S BRADING slipped through authorities' hands after his arrest as a suspect in the Kennedy assassination, without the local lawmen knowing his mob ties. This is documented in reports filed by the Dallas County Sheriff's Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The reason, though inadequate, is simple:

Two months before the assassination, Brading had changed the name of his California driver's license to "Jim Braden."

Five years later, Jim Braden-Eugene Hale Brading, would turn up in Los Angeles at the same time that Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated at the Climax of his victory in winning the California Democratic presidential primary.

Braden, aka Eugene Hale Brading, told Dallas authorities he was in Dallas from Beverly Hills, Calif., on "oil business."

He was taken into custody after stepping off an elevator in the Dal-Tex Building, across Houston Street from the Texas School Book Depository, minutes after the assassination.

Braden-Brading gave Dallas County sheriff's deputies his new name, Jim Braden, and got away with it.

HE WAS GIVEN only a few brief paragraphs in one of the Warren Commission's 27-volume report, as were dozens of non-entities rounded up by authorities for questioning on Nov. 22.

Years later federal agents — then well aware of who Braden was — were investigating reports that he was a courier for laundering the mob's illegitimate money to Amsterdam and Zurich. Assassination buffs speculate his role in Dealey Plaza could have been one of the mob's observers, bag men, or participants.

While Braden waited two to three hours in the sheriff's office on Nov. 22 for questioning, his hotel roommates checked out and beat it at about 2 p.m., leaving Braden behind. This was 90 minutes after the assassination. Why



Earl Golz, an investigative reporter for The Dallas Morning News, is one of the nation's foremost experts on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Golz, who has frequently won top honors for excellence, in journalism, has devoted almost his full time to investigating the assassination for the last dozen years.

they left so abruptly is a mystery. When they had registered Nov. 21, the desk clerk noted in writing that they had planned to stay until Nov. 24.

Braden told Allan Sweatt, chief deputy sheriff, that he was walking down Elm Street in downtown Dallas, trying to flag a taxicab when he heard "people talking — saying, 'My God, the President has been shot.' "

He said he had gone to the third floor of the Dal-Tex Building and had unsuccessfully tried to telephone his family when he was arrested leaving the building. He said he wanted to call his family in California and tell them of the tragedy. Apparently authorities believed him.

Sweatt and C.L. ("Lummie") Lewis, the deputy who arrested Braden, identified him in an enlarged photograph of a man apparently picking up a bullet slug in the grass of Dealey Plaza. The photo, taken about 10 minutes after the assassination, showed a group of people about parallel with the spot where the bullets struck the President.

PHIL WILLIS, photographer from Dallas, said he thinks he may have snapped a photo of Jack Ruby wearing dark glasses in front of the Texas Book Depository about the same time Braden would have been in the building across the street. The man resembles Ruby but has never been positively identified.

Ruby, of course, was the Dallas nightclub owner who silenced Lee Harvey Oswald two days after Oswald was supposed to have assassinated Kennedy. He was given much more scrutiny by the Warren Commission than Braden.

Despite much evidence to the contrary, the commission concluded "the evidence does not establish a significant link between Ruby and organized crime."

"Ruby has disclaimed that he was associated with organized criminal activities," the commission report stated, "and law enforcement agencies have confirmed that denial."

The commission noted in the "underworld ties" section of the report about Ruby that one of his first friends when he came to Dallas from Chicago in 1947 was Paul Rowland Jones, a racketeer and trustee of a Teamsters Union local.

Jones, once called the "underworld czar of Dallas," often boasted that he was the Dallas organizer of the old Chicago Capone gang. Shortly after Ruby arrived in Dallas, Jones began serving a three-year prison sentence for trying to bribe former Dallas County Sheriff Steve Guthrie to let members of the Chicago syndicate move into Dallas and organize gambling operations.

Guthrie had said that the Chicago mobsters had intended to have Ruby as their front man heading up "a very fabulous restaurant" in downtown Dallas with the upper floor devoted to gambling.

JONES, WHO EARLIER had been sentenced to five years in a federal prison for smuggling \$1 million worth of opium into this country from Mexico, denied that Ruby would have been part of the proposed gambling operation in Dallas when questioned by FBI agents after the assassination.

Jones told the FBI he doubted Ruby would have become emotionally upset and killed Oswald "on the spur of the moment." He said Ruby might have killed Oswald "for money."

Jones said that if Ruby had been promised protection in connection with the killing of Oswald and had been given orders to shoot Oswald, Joe Civello "would know about it." Civello was Dallas' delegate to the 1957 organized crime meeting in Apalachin, N.Y., who reported back to New Orleans Mafia chieftain Carlos Marcello.

A part-time piano player in one of Ruby's nightclubs also told FBI agents that Ruby was a "frequent visitor and associate" of Civello after Ruby moved to Dallas. The FBI said Moore volunteered the information to refute a statement on a television interview several days after Ruby shot Oswald. A Ruby associate had said Ruby had no "gangster connections."

Moore, who said he also worked for Civello, lived in Dallas from 1952 to 1956 in a rooming house at the rear of a liquor and drug store he asserted was "a front for a bookie type operation where bets were taken on all types of athletic events and horse races." Moore said the place was "patronized by most of the gambling element in Dallas and Ruby was a frequent visitor," as were a Dallas police detective and a state highway patrolman.

THE FBI APPARENTLY did not check out Moore's story with Civello, who died four years ago, or the law officers. No reference to follow-up interviews with any of those named by Moore can be found in either the Warren Report or the National Archives. The FBI report of the interview with Moore ended by stating he "had no factual information."

Dallas gambler Sidney Siedband, arrested in Oklahoma City in 1959, had Rubby's name among a list of telephone numbers of gambling acquaintances. Also among the names was Lewis Joseph McWillie, described by Dallas police as a "gambler and murderer."

The Warren Report, describes McWillie as a "professional gambler" and noted that in 1959 Ruby "visited Cuba at the invitation and expense of" McWillie. McWillie was working at the Tropicana Hotel and Casino in Havana before Fidel Castro flushed out the Mafia hoodlums who had control of gambling and vice under former Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. McWillie worked in Havana until the break in diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, then left for Las Vegas to work at the Thunderbird Casino.

Ruby's sister, Eva Grant, said she recalls Ruby went to see McWillie about working out a "deal" on the sale of jeeps to Castro in 1959. The deal apparently fell through, she said.

Ruby was "interested in any way to make money and seemed to have good contacts with the police," Harry Hall, once an FBI informant, said. Hall, interviewed by the FBI a week after the assassination, said he "could not conceive of Ruby doing anything out of patriotism," but he recalled that Ruby once said he was going to Florida to "buy a load of 'contraband' to send to Israel."

Hall also told the FBI that he and Ruby once bet the late Dallas oil billionaire H.L. Hunt on the Cotton Bowl and Rose Bowl football games and won a large sum of money, which they split.

THERE IS NO evidence that Ruby and the man who changed his name to Jim Braden two months before the assassination knew each other. If they didn't meet the day before Kennedy was assassinated, they came close on two occasions.

On the morning of Nov. 21, 1963, Braden, the former Eugene Hale Brading, was scheduled to meet with Lamar Hunt and other oil speculators, according to a report filed by U.S. Probation Officer Roger Carroll. Braden was required to check with probation offices on interstate trips because he had been out of the penitentiary for less than four years.

Braden gave Carroll his real name, Brading, and not the "Jim Braden" he used after his arrest by deputy sheriffs 24 hours later. He claimed he had come to Dallas from Beverly Hills, Calif., to see the son of H.L. Hunt on an oil deal. Years later he reportedly told an official of the Los Angeles Police Department he didn't go with his companions to the Hunt offices because of his criminal record.

At about the same time Braden was scheduled to appear in the Hunt offices, Ruby was driving a young woman, Connie Trammell, to see Lamar Hunt about a job. Ruby drove Miss Trammell to the Hunt office building on Nov. 21, he said, and waited in the lobby for her to return from the interview.

When she did not return, he told the FBI, he left without her and went to his Carousel Club.

The Warren Report states that Ruby met the evening of Nov. 21 with friends from Chicago in the Bon Vivant Club of the same Cabana Hotel where Braden and another ex-convict

from California, Morgan H. Brown, were registered. Braden and Brown's third floor suite faced what would have been Kennedy's parade route up Stemmons Freeway the next day had not the President been killed.

One of the people Ruby met with in the hotel club the night before the assassination was Jean Aase, whose apartment house in Chicago had received a telephone call several weeks earlier from David Ferrie of New Orleans.

FERRIE WAS AN important figure in New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's ill-fated investigation of the Kennedy assassination four years later. When Ferrie apparently committed suicide in 1967, Garrison termed him "one of history's most important individuals."

The 1964 New Orleans city directory listed Ferrie's business address as room 1707 of the Pierre Marquette Building.

The same directory listed Vernon J. Main Jr.'s business address as room 1706 of the Pierre Marquette.

Main was the oil geologist involved in an oil deal in Louisiana that Braden had supposedly checked on during his visit to Texas in November of 1963. Main said he didn't know

Ferrie, but guessed he listed room 1707 as his address because he may have been employed by criminal lawyer G. Wray Gill as an investigator at the time.

"I don't know David Ferrie," Main said. "He never had an office next to me. He never had anything to do with Jim Braden and I don't know that Braden even knows this man Ferrie."

Ferrie had told Secret Service agents shortly after the assassination that he had made two plane trips to Guatemala for lawyer Gill in October, 1963. The Secret Service report said Ferrie acknowledged "the trips involved some investigative work having to do with the Carlos Marcello case."

Marcello was threatened with deportation by U.S. Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy's Justice Department at the time. The President's brother had launched the most intensive federal attack on organized crime in this country's history.

HE HAD SET IN motion plans for organized crime strike forces in most big cities in the early 1960s. Chicago Mafia boss Sam Giancana had felt Kennedy's wrath and went to jail for contempt of court. Joe Valachi had started telling federal authorities about the inner workings of the Cosa Nostra in 1963 while serving time in prison. And Marcello's friend, then Teamsters Union President James R. Hoffa, was on his way to prison, another Kennedy victim.

Ed Reid, in his book "The Grim Reapers," writes about a late 1962 meeting of Marcello and three associates on his Churchill Farms plantation near New Orleans.

Marcello, Reid wrote, complained about Robert Kennedy's harassment. Reid, regarded as one of the nation's top literary experts on the Mafia, quoted Marcello as shouting to his guests, "Take the stone out of my shoe." Later he reportedly said, "Don't worry about that little Bobby son-of-

bitch. He's going to be taken care of."

Marcello, however, knew that "to rid himself of Robert Kennedy he would first have to remove the President," Reid wrote. "Any killer of the attorney general would be hunted down by his brother; the death of the President would seal the fate of his attorney general."

Marcello had "already thought of using a 'nut' to do the job," Reid wrote.

Braden was not a nut. He was a natural born swindler who was accustomed to living high off the hog, thanks at least in part to the many rich women he and his partner, Victor Emanuel Pereira, married over the years. Some women whom they stung, however, later retaliated.

Braden complained that he and Pereira were being harassed when Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker refused to



STRIPJOINT OPERATOR Jack Ruby, who silenced Lee Harvey Oswald, with two of his girls.

release them on the vagrancy charges unless they both left the county in 48 hours.

"You're in my county now," said Decker who was known to give underworld characters until sunset to get out if they roamed into Dallas County.

The Decker ultimatum, which got front page in local papers with photographs, made Braden, or Brading as he was known then, a public figure in Dallas.

Yet 11 years later, Braden was to tell the FBI during his assassination interview that he was "not familiar with Dallas." He said he "had been in Dallas twice before, but that was over 10 years ago," the FBI report stated.

Fresh out of prison in 1960, Braden married the wealthy widow of a Teamsters Union official from Chicago whom authorities ruled accidentally shot himself with a .45 revolver — twice in the stomach.

In addition to his underworld associates on the west coast, Braden seems to have an affinity with the Teamsters Union during the past 15 years. Two months after the assassination, he became a charter member of the Teamsters-financed La

Costa Country Club about 20 miles from former President Richard Nixon's home at San Clemente, Calif. La Costa was where Nixon's aides — John Dean, John Ehrlichman and Bob Haldeman — met in February, 1973, to get their signals straight on Watergate.

ANOTHER LA COSTA regular is Allen Dorfman, the link between organized crime and the Teamsters Union Central States Pension Fund. Dorfman, close friend of Hoffa's and millionaire former financial adviser to the pension fund, was acquitted in April, 1975, of charges of defrauding the fund of \$1.4 million. Dorfman had been released from prison in December, 1973, following his conviction in another pension fraud case.

Robert Kennedy in his book "The Enemy Within," wrote in 1960, three years before his brother was assassinated, that Hoffa in 1949, "needed a powerful ally" in Chicago in his rise to the Teamsters presidency. Kennedy wrote that Hoffa "found his man in Paul Dorfman," Allen's father.

"Dorfman, our testimony showed," wrote Kennedy, "was a big operator — a major figure in the Chicago underworld who also knew his way around in certain labor and political circles."

Kennedy noted in his 1960 book that Paul Dorfman took over as head of the Chicago Waste Handlers Union in 1939 after its founder and secretary-treasurer, Leon Cooke, was murdered.

Secretary of the union at the time Cooke was shot to death in his office was Jack Ruby. One of Ruby's close Chicago

acquaintances, Mitch Wolcoff, told the FBI that when Cooke was killed, Ruby told him he "wanted very badly to take over that union."

In memory of Cooke, Ruby, or Rubenstein as he was called then, adopted "Leon" as his middle name.

THE FBI INTERVIEWED Paul Dorfman on Dec. 18, 1963, and asked him about Ruby. The FBI report states that Dorfman said Ruby "was not a successful organizer and finally voluntarily left his employment with the union in 1940, about two months after Dorfman was appointed to run it. Ruby probably left this employment because he was not making any money."

Telephone records show that someone called Irwin Weiner, former Chicago bail bondsman with crime syndicate ties, from Ruby's Carousel Club on Oct. 26, 1963, and talked for 12 minutes. Weiner was also acquitted with Allen Dorfman of charges of fraud in connection with the Teamsters' pension fund case in April, 1975.

Ruby at about the same time started calling Barney Baker of Chicago, an enforcer for the underworld and a thug used by the Teamsters Union. Baker, who had just been released from the penitentiary in June, 1963, was being contacted in connection with Ruby's problems with the strippers' union in Dallas, Ruby said.

On Nov. 21, 1963, the night before the assassination, Baker called Dave Yaras, Miami representative of the Chicago mob, and talked for three minutes. Mrs. Eva Grant, Ruby's sister, later told Warren Commission investigators that she and her brother had known the Yaras brothers from Chicago but "didn't have anything to do with them, yet we knew they turned out to be some pretty rough characters and I'm not going to deny that."

Ruby called another boyhood friend, Al Gruber, at Gruber's home in Los Angeles about 20 minutes after news of the assassination was on television. Gruber had seen Ruby only once in the previous 10 years, that occasion being in Ruby's Carousel Club about two weeks before the assassination.

THE FBI WAS TOLD by Gruber that he decided to visit his old Chicago friend Ruby while traveling from New York to Los Angeles in early November, 1963. Gruber told the FBI, and it was duly recorded in the FBI report, that he thought he would head south from Joplin, Mo., to Dallas because it was only "100 miles from Joplin." Dallas is about four times that distance from Joplin.

Gruber said he did not know why Ruby called him on Nov. 22 "and can only speculate that Ruby wanted to talk to a friend at a time when he was emotionally upset."

The FBI rap sheet on Gruber shows he had a number of aliases and a number of arrests, including a grand larceny conviction in 1929 and lesser problems since. A scrap metal dealer in Los Angeles, Gruber was a friend of Frank Matula, who was named a trustee of the International Teamsters Union by Hoffa shortly after he was released after serving 114 days in jail for perjury.

IN 1956 **THE** California State Legislative Investigating Committee charged that Matula was an enforcer for the rubbish industry in Southern California, a charge Matula denied.

Gruber in early 1974 was seen at the Los Angeles area funeral of Eli Lubin, a local hoodlum who was close to gangster Mickey Cohen.