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Conspiracy Talk Denied

'Believe Me,' Jack Ruby

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Jack Ruby denied it to the edge of death.

But even his family couldn't help asking, because so many other people seemed to be asking, whether he really acted alone and not as part of a conspiracy to kill the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy.

And so, near the end, Earl Ruby asked his brother again, as he had many times before:

"Are you sure, Jack, there was nothing else?"

And Jack Ruby answered, says his brother:

"I'm not hiding anything. I'm not protecting anybody. There is nothing to hide, no one to protect. Believe me."

As he lay in his guarded room in Parkland Hospital, stricken with cancer, Jack Ruby often seemed to be begging the world



—Dallas News Staff Photos.

Death Completes the Triangle

The death Tuesday of Jack Ruby, right, killer of Lee Harvey Oswald, left, wrote finis to one of the biggest stories of the decade, if not the

century. The pair flank President John F. Kennedy, victim of an assassin's bullet here Nov. 22, 1963. Oswald was accused.

to believe he would take no secrets to the grave.

He also was tormented by hallucinations in which he imagined that millions of American Jews were being slain because he, a Jew, silenced the alleged killer of a president.

Ruby could be rational on certain levels and wholly irrational on others, according to those closest to him.

Ruby insisted that he alone, without plan or prompting, shot Lee Harvey Oswald.

He swore also that rumor of secret meetings relating to the President's assassination, the killing of Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit and the slaying of Oswald, were lies invented by "momserem," a Yiddish epithet.

These details of Ruby's last days came from his brother, Earl, a Detroit businessman; El-

mer Gertz, a Chicago attorney prominent on the legal team which won reversal of the death sentence given to Ruby in 1964, and, through them, from other members of the family.

The Ruby murder trial and the Warren Commission report supported conclusions that Ruby acted alone in shooting Oswald.

But a roiling controversy about the Warren Report has produced various theories of conspiracies — some of which give Ruby a hidden role. However, Gertz said:

"He simply could not conceive that people could not see that he not only acted alone, but that they could take this and twist it into a premise for giving him

Begged

a role in a plot against the president, a man he worshipped."

Jack Ruby sought no forgiveness for shooting Oswald.

Gertz explained:

"I don't think Jack mentioned his name more than a few times in the many times I saw him, and then it was as if Oswald was a figure beyond his comprehension. Jack saw himself as a kind of instrument. He did not have the delusion that God told him to do it, or that he was an instrument of any people, but that it happened without his conscious will."

But Jack Ruby sought forgiveness from America's Jews. He was convinced that his crime had triggered a pogrom in which Jews were being transported to Dallas and tortured to death in the basement of the Dallas County Jail.

"That is not true, Jack. It is not true," Earl told him.

"Don't tell me! Don't tell me! I hear screaming from the basement every night."

Jack Ruby also complained that his cancer was induced secretly in jail. When it was thought that he had pneumonia, he took this as proof that mustard gas was seeped into his cell. When his condition was diagnosed as cancer, he was certain it had been injected into him.

However, his family praised the treatment Ruby received in Parkland, although they complained that his condition had been neglected or brushed off as "hamming it up" in jail.

Jack Ruby spent his last day in a large private room which had one wall dominated by a wide window. A nurse and two deputy sheriffs were always on duty. Ruby spent hours watching television.

On Saturday afternoon, Dec. 17, he felt so good, he motioned for his sister, Eileen Kaminski, to come to his side.

"Eileen, do me a favor," he asked.

He handed her a list for pastрами, corned beef, kosher dill pickles, rye bread, lox, cream cheese, green onions and bagels.

"The doctors didn't object," said Elmer Gertz. "Of course, Jack couldn't hold that food down, but to deny it to him would be like denying a condemned man his last meal."

Near the end, his mood—according to the family—changed to one of "black despair."

And he whispered that he didn't want to die far from home. Home, for Jack Ruby, was Chicago, the city of his birth.

To his brothers and sisters, Jack Ruby was to the end, a "fine, sympathetic, generous man." They were convinced his shooting of Oswald was an impulsive act and that Jack did it entirely alone.

Attorney Gertz and Earl Ruby said Jack was fully aware of the controversy about the Warren Report.

"He knew of the incredible constructions by various critics

in which it was hinted that there were secret meetings, that Jack might have had connections with Oswald or with J. D. Tippitt," Gertz said.

One day in December, Gertz asked Ruby:

"Jack, tell me, did you know Tippitt? People keep on saying you knew him."

"First of all," Ruby said, "there were three Tippitts in the police department. The one who was shot I never knew, never heard of. One of the other Tippitts I knew."

"What about Oswald? Was he ever in your nightclub, did you ever meet him or see him?"

"The first time I ever saw Oswald was in the jail after he was arrested. I never saw him in my club and I never met him before in my life," Ruby said.

A few weeks after the 55-year-old Ruby was found to have cancer, he expressed a wish to take a lie detector test to prove that all he said was true. His worsening condition precluded such a test.

He had received such a test from representatives of the Warren Commission on July 18, 1964. No interpretation of that test was made, on the ground that the results were questionable because of Ruby's emotional condition.

Ruby, who generally viewed accomplished and cultured people as inhabitants of a remote world, had an uncharacteristic reaction to a meeting with U.S. Chief Justice Earl Warren on June 7, 1964.

During the interview, according to attorney Gertz, Warren asked Ruby to read something.

"I can't. I don't have my glasses," Ruby replied.

Warren removed his spectacles and handed them over. Ruby then read the passage without difficulty.

Months later, Gertz asked Ruby what he thought of the chief justice.

"Oh, he's such a wonderful man," Ruby answered. And then he added confidentially, "But he's so naive."

Transcripts of the Warren interview show Ruby repeatedly saying he had more to tell, but that he would have to be taken from Dallas. He wanted to go to Washington.

The things he said to me in utmost secrecy were things that could be said anywhere, Dallas or Washington," Gertz said. "I could not enter his mind, but I am certain to my satisfaction that there was no more to tell. Jack confabulated. He tried to insinuate knowledge.

Did Ruby have appreciation of the calamity he caused history by shooting Oswald?

"As for the impact on history, that was much too sophisticated a concept for him," said Gertz. "It really did not register in any meaningful way with him."

Gertz, who like the other lawyers served without fee, was asked:

Was he satisfied that Ruby died telling the truth?

"Yes," he said.