There's new evidence that Oswald's killer was involved with some of America's most powerful mobsters—the same ones used by the CIA in several attempts to kill Fidel Castro

By William Scott Malone

THE SECRET LIFE OF JACK RUBY

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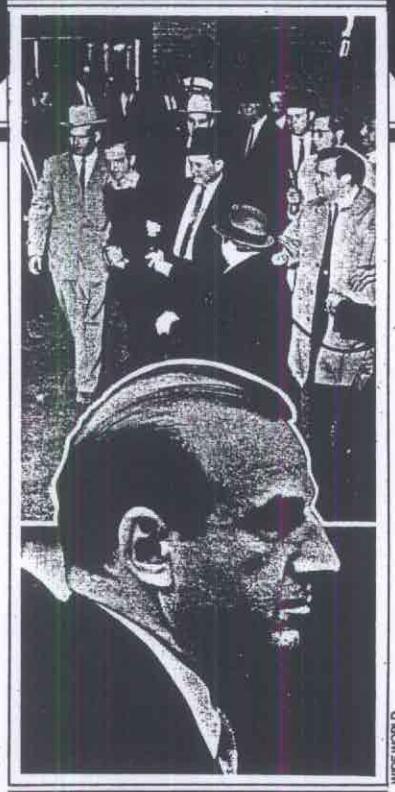
In January 1967 Jack Ruby, the man who killed Lee Harvey Oswald, sat in a Dallas jail cell, dying of cancer. But he was less troubled by his circumstances than by one consuming fear: that people would find out about him, because there was still much to learn. He told a visitor, "They're going to find out about my trips to Cuba . . . and the guns and everything." That's what worried Jack Ruby most in the months before he died: that they would *find out.*

In the decade since his death, the secrets Ruby guarded have remained well kept. But now it is possible to piece some of them together. And what emerges is an unavoidable conclusion: contrary to the findings of the Warren Commission, Jack Ruby was involved with some of the most prominent mobsters in America, the same ones used by the CIA in several unsuccessful attempts to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.



WIDE WORLD

Up from Anonymity: Jack Ruby (inset) makes his television debut

The House Select Committee on Assassinations has discovered new evidence about Jack Ruby's activities, portions of which have been made available to *New Times*. This evidence, together with a review of thousands of pages of FBI, CIA and federal court documents, and interviews with law-enforcement officials and others, also indicates:

- That Ruby met secretly with Johnny Roselli in Miami two months before President Kennedy was killed. Roselli was a powerful gangster and had been a major participant in the CIA plots to kill Castro;
- That Ruby was involved in smuggling guns to Castro before the Cuban Revolution;
- That Ruby helped secure the release of a top American mobster imprisoned by Castro, offering Cuba money and jeeps in exchange for a pardon;
- That in 1959, at the same time he was arranging shady deals in Cuba, Ruby was an FBI informant providing the Bureau with useless information;
- That Ruby may have made secret tape recordings of his dealings with members of the mob (See box on page 49).

Although the FBI has just released 40,000 pages of its Kennedy assassination file—with another 40,000 pages to come the middle of this month—officials say that more than 10 percent of the file will still be withheld from the public. But the most pertinent FBI documents uncovered by *New Times* were not in the assassination file and were not provided to the Warren Commission. Much of the new evidence about Ruby is to be found in the FBI's files on Cuba and on organized crime.

This new evidence does not reveal whether Ruby or his mobster friends played a role in the Kennedy assassination. But that possibility so intrigued the House committee that last March it called mob leader Santos Trafficante to Washington for public testimony. He was the mobster whose freedom from a Cuban jail had apparently been arranged by Ruby. The committee's questioning of Trafficante was pointed:

"Mr. Trafficante, did you ever discuss with any individuals plans to assassinate President Kennedy prior to his assassination?"

"Prior to November 22, 1963, did you know Jack Ruby?"

"While you were in prison in Cuba, were you visited by Jack Ruby?"

The grandfatherly Trafficante, accompanied by his lawyer, had only one response to everything he was asked: "I respectfully refuse to answer that question pursuant to my constitutional rights under the First, Fourth, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments."

Jack Ruby's story, as it is now emerging, is the story of a man who tried all his life to ingratiate himself to men like Santos Trafficante—and who, to some extent, succeeded. Ruby bore absolutely no resemblance to the picture of a patriotic nightclub owner painted by the Warren Commission. He was born and raised on Chicago's tough West Side, where he became known to police as a brawler, a seller of hot merchandise and a general troublemaker. As a teenager he ran numbers for Al Capone. The Warren Commission knew this about Jack Ruby, but thought it little more than an adolescent flirtation. The commission knew, as well, that Ruby continued to associate with criminals, but believed that these associations were with low-level gamblers. "Based on its evaluation of the record," said the Warren Report, "the commission believes that the evidence does not establish a significant link between Ruby and organized crime."

To reach that conclusion, the commission had to ignore memoranda from its staff, which knew about some of Ruby's illicit activities; and the staff was, in turn, kept in the dark by the FBI and CIA, which knew even more.

Ruby moved from Chicago to Los Angeles in 1933 and began selling handicapper's tip sheets at Santa Anita racetrack. Johnny Roselli testified to the Kefauver Crime Committee in 1951 that he, too, had moved from Chicago to Los Angeles in 1933—to oversee gambling at Santa Anita for the Chicago mob.

By 1939, Ruby was back in Chicago as a secretary to the waste handlers union. He was once arrested in connection with the murder of the secretary-treasurer of the local, although he was released for lack of evidence. That murder enabled the mob, and eventually the Teamsters, to take over the union. (Robert Kennedy, in his book *The Enemy Within*, called this episode a key step in the mob's rise to domination over the Teamsters.)

Luis Kutner, a Chicago lawyer who worked with the Kefauver Committee, says Ruby hobnobbed with Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana and his crowd during this period. Then, after a brief stint in the army, Ruby moved to Texas in 1947 as part of a Chicago mob move into the lucrative Dallas rackets.

Jack Ruby's story, as it is now emerging, is the story of a man who tried all his life to ingratiate himself to powerful mobsters—and who, to some extent, eventually succeeded

At that time, Ruby was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, after several friends who had accompanied him from Chicago were arrested with 40 pounds of opium. Ruby, though, learned fast—from his first days in Dallas, he was careful to become friendly with the local police. Later he became known as "the pay-off man for the Dallas Police Department," and a man who "had the fix with the county authorities," according to FBI documents quoting members of the Dallas underworld.

By 1956, a Federal Bureau of Narcotics informant had named Ruby as the contact for a "large narcotics set-up operating between Mexico, Texas and the East." FBI reports contained in the Warren Commission files also indicate that Ruby was heavily involved in various gambling operations in the area. By almost all accounts, whether it was narcotics, gambling, prostitution or bribery, Jack Ruby was the man to see in Dallas.

Yet Ruby didn't limit himself to Dallas. By the late 1950s, according to his own Warren Commission testimony, Ruby had developed a particular affinity for all things Cuban. That was where the money was and that was where the Mafia was. It was through his Cuban intrigues that Ruby's trail crossed those of some of the most powerful organized-crime bosses in America. Cuba was the connecting thread.

Cuba and the Mob

During the late 1950s, the Mafia followed a curious strategy in Cuba. The same American mobsters who would later join with the CIA in a conspiracy to kill Castro were actually supplying his rebel army with guns. It wasn't that the American gangsters wanted Castro to overthrow Fulgencio Batista's government. (The corrupt Batista was a good friend of the mob.) They were merely buying themselves some insurance. If they helped Castro, they reasoned, he would protect their considerable interests should he ever come to power.

One of the major participants in the syndicate's attempt to hedge its bets in the explosive Cuban political situation was Norman "Roughhouse" Rothman. Beginning in 1958, Rothman, a strapping Havana-based mobster and one of Santos Trafficante's closest associates, coordinated the smuggling of arms to Castro. (Simultaneously, Rothman was splitting his take from Cuba's slot machines with Batista's brother-in-law.) The available evidence indicates that Ruby helped in Rothman's gun smuggling. After Ruby captured national attention in 1963, two women came forward to identify him to the FBI as a man they had met in June 1958, in the Florida Keys. They were introduced to Ruby by the brother of one of the women, a confirmed Cuban gunrunner. The women were told that "Jack" was going to "run some guns to Cuba." One of them told the FBI that "Jack had a trunk full of guns," and that she was told that "more guns were hidden in the marshes which would be sold to the Cubans." The other woman recalled that she was led to believe that "Jack," who owned a nightclub in Dallas, was a member of the "syndicate."

Ruby was connected even more directly to Rothman's operation by a Miami FBI informant named Blaney Mack Johnson. Johnson told the FBI that Ruby was "active in arranging illegal flights of weapons from Miami to Castro forces in Cuba," and that he was reportedly part-owner of two planes used to make the flights.

Johnson named Eddie Browder as a gunrunning pilot involved with Ruby in the operation. Browder, a flamboyant Miami arms dealer, was Rothman's main operative in the gun smuggling, according to various federal court documents. Browder's FBI file, which has not been released by the Bureau, is more than a thousand pages thick. Yet the FBI turned over only three innocu-

The Line-Up: (Left to right) Santos Trafficante respectfully refusing to answer questions; Norman "Roughhouse" Rothman at his 1960 gun smuggling trial; Castro hit-squad organizer Johnny Roselli, whose body turned up in a Miami bay two months after he testified before the Senate; and his boss, Sam Giancana, who took seven bullets in the face a week before his scheduled testimony

ous reports to the Warren Commission.

One of the more interesting names that pops up in Browder's FBI file is that of Frank Sturgis, better known as one of the Watergate burglers. Sturgis was then a swashbuckling soldier of fortune, a gunrunner for Castro and, according to several sources, a close associate of Normie Rothman. Another of Browder's colleagues in the Rothman arms-smuggling operation, as revealed in the FBI file, was Efren Pichardo, a long-time friend of Sturgis.

The gun smuggling began in mid-May 1958, and continued full-throttle that summer, with Browder, Sturgis, Pichardo and others traveling up to Alexandria, Virginia, to buy rifles and machine guns from the International Armament Corporation (then a CIA proprietary) with crisp hundred-dollar bills. They transported the arms in station wagons and small trucks to secret drop-off points in the Florida Keys. There, the guns were stored until they could be picked up and smuggled into Cuba.

When questioned, Pichardo confirms that the arms were hidden in the marshes of the Florida Keys (where Ruby was seen by the two women in June 1958), and he recalls running guns with Browder and Sturgis—but his memory grows vague when asked about Ruby or Rothman. Sturgis' memory, too, seems quickly to fade at the mention of Ruby and Rothman, and documents relating to Ruby's gun trafficking have mysteriously disappeared from federal government files. A 1958 letter from a Jack Rubenstein (Ruby's real name, which he often used in connection with his Cuban activities) to the State Department's Office of Munitions Controls, "requesting permission to negotiate the purchase of firearms and ammunition from an Italian firm," though discovered by the State Department in a 1963 file search, is inexplicably missing from the files today. And a 1959 Army Intelligence report on U.S. arms dealers listing a "Jack Rubenstein" also cannot be located, although it, too, Army Intelligence clerks found, was around in 1963.

It was through his Cuban intrigues that Ruby's trail crossed those of some of the most powerful organized-crime bosses in America. Cuba was the connecting thread

Exactly how much Ruby's efforts may have contributed to the success of the gunrunning operation is not clear—probably little. Although Ruby's involvement in the gunrunning was minor, he later told his psychiatrist and lawyers that he feared his role would be revealed and he would be considered unpatriotic, even communistic. Ruby was not alone. Of all the Americans who helped Castro before the revolution, very few talk openly of their involvement. Most simply deny it.

The reason, of course, is that their efforts were enormously successful. American guns made the revolution succeed. They started arriving in the summer of 1958, and a few months later, on New Year's Day, 1959, Fidel Castro marched into Havana. Batista was overthrown and fled to the Dominican Republic, and his patron, mob chieftain Meyer Lansky, left quickly for Miami.

Lansky, described by knowledgeable crime reporters as the chairman of the board of the national crime syndicate, a loose confederation of America's top organized-crime families, was forced to flee because of his conspicuous friendship with Batista. He left behind his good friend Trafficante to make sure that business continued as usual.

But Fidel Castro was determined to rid Cuba of the American Mafia. Shortly after taking power, he announced to a small group of his advisers that he intended to nationalize the casinos and other American business interests.

One of those who attended that meeting in the Havana Hilton, Castro's temporary headquarters, was Frank Sturgis, by then a trusted aide. Sturgis quotes Castro as saying, "I'm going to run all these fascist mobsters, all these American gangsters, out of Cuba. I'm going to nationalize everything. Cuba for Cubans."

Sturgis, whom Castro put in charge of Cuba's casinos, says he had actually been working undercover for the CIA all along; and, after the meeting, he says he informed several American casino owners, as well as the American Embassy, of Castro's intentions.

Sturgis says he specifically warned Trafficante, known to American authorities as the kingpin of narcotics in the Caribbean, of Castro's plans. But Trafficante did not heed the warning, telling Sturgis, "Not in this world; you think he's going to close up a hundred million dollars' worth of businesses that we got? We generate over ten thousand people working. He's going to put all these Cubans out of work? He'll never do it."

But Santos Trafficante was soon to learn otherwise. Sturgis, on Castro's or-

ders, closed down the gambling casinos for ten days as a warning of what was in store. The Mafia began to get the message. And, while Castro reopened the casinos on a limited basis in March 1959, the underworld knew that it was in for rough times in Cuba. The crowning blow came in April, when Castro had Trafficante, the undisputed boss of the Havana underworld, arrested and thrown in prison.

Soon afterward, according to FBI sources, at a meeting of the national crime syndicate, Meyer Lansky placed a $1 million contract on the life of Fidel Castro. Present at the meeting was the rotund gangland boss of Chicago, Sam Giancana, who was to become a central figure in the CIA plots against Castro.

Sturgis says that in 1959 several prominent gangsters offerred him between $100,000 and $1 million to eliminate Castro. One of them was Normie Rothman, who sent an emissary to Sturgis with an assassination plan. Sturgis says that he refused the offers but relayed the mob's interest in assassinating Castro to his CIA contact in Havana. The CIA-Mafia plots were initiated shortly thereafter.

Ruby told the Warren Commission he made only one trip to Cuba—a pleasure trip in 1959. But he may have traveled to Havana six times or more—on mob-connected errands

Rothman's efforts continued but they now had the official sanction of the United States Central Intelligence Agency. According to two newly uncovered FBI reports, Rothman was one of the original liaisons between the CIA and the Mafia. He was soon joined by others.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, which investigated the CIA-Mafia connections, reported that Johnny Roselli, the ambassador to Las Vegas for the Chicago mob, was chosen to actually organize the assassination of Castro—with the CIA supplying the necessary money and weapons. As the plotting progressed, Roselli quickly realized he would need the assistance of Trafficante, who still had many of his underworld henchmen in Havana. Roselli contacted Giancana, his boss in Chicago, to arrange a meeting with Trafficante, who promptly put several of his lieutenants—including Rothman—at Roselli's disposal. Trafficante and his men would become the main operatives in the CIA-Mafia assassination attempts.

It was around this time that Jack Ruby apparently became a frequent visitor to Cuba, developing connections to several of Trafficante's lieutenants, as well as to Trafficante himself.

The Warren Report, though, merely reiterated Ruby's story that he made only one trip to Cuba—a pleasure trip in 1959. But FBI reports indicate that Ruby may have traveled to Havana six or more times. It wasn't hard to visit Cuba secretly in those days, leaving behind no records of the journey. The only document required to enter Cuba was a $2.50 "tourist card" that could be filled in with any name one chose.

Indeed, Ruby knew more about Cuba

RUBYGATE

In a letter to the Warren Commission only declassified in 1975, J. Edgar Hoover disclosed that on March 11, 1959, as Jack Ruby was about to embark on his most audacious Cuban exploit—the attempt to secure the release of mobster Santos Trafficante from jail—he was contacted by special agent Charles W. Flynn of the Dallas office. Flynn asked if Ruby would become an informant for the Bureau. According to Hoover's letter, Ruby "expressed a willingness to furnish information." (Ruby had long been an informer for the Dallas Police Department—the police, in return, would then stay out of his way. But his status was relatively low.)

Flynn says he hoped Ruby would know something about crime in Dallas (burglaries, bank robberies and the like). In fact, Ruby knew very little about such activities at the time, because he was up to his neck in Cuban intrigue with some of America's top mobsters—a potential gold mine of intelligence infomation for the FBI. But Flynn says he didn't know about Ruby's Cuban connection.

After their initial contact in March, Ruby and Flynn's next substantive meeting was to be April 28, 1959. Apparently in preparation for this meeting and his subsequent work for the Bureau, Ruby purchased over five hundred dollars' worth of miniature tape-recording equipment in March or April of that year. The saleswoman who waited on Ruby told Secret Service agents after Kennedy's assassination that Ruby had bought "a wristwatch which held a microphone for the equipment, and also an instrument to bug a telephone," as well as a "tie clip and attache case." Professional spy equipment.

An FBI agent interviewed the saleswoman immediately after the Secret Service did but he filed a meager two-paragraph report, leaving out most of the important details.

In any event, on April 27, 1959, the day before he was to meet with agent Flynn, Ruby rented a safe deposit box, perhaps as a repository for the tapes he intended to make. Before and after every trip to Cuba, Ruby would enter his safe deposit box and then visit his FBI contact.

In total, the FBI dealt with Ruby on nine occasions between March 11 and October 2, 1959, during the height of his Cuban activities. The FBI maintains it received absolutely no useful information from Ruby, but several present and former FBI agents, including Representative Don Edwards (D–Calif.), say the Bureau never interviews an informant nine times if he is providing worthless information.

Special agent Flynn, who retired in 1962, says he was new at the job in 1959, and that his inexperience explains the repeated contacts with an unproductive informant. Flynn also insists that he can remember nothing of substance about his dealings with Ruby. (But there are conflicts between what he does remember and the reports he filed with the Bureau.) Flynn denies any knowledge of Ruby's safe deposit box, his expensive spy equipment, his trips to Cuba, or his association with Trafficante and McWillie.

Ruby certainly was not trying to hide his Cuban trips from the FBI. Before embarking on one of his jaunts in 1959, Ruby was overheard by an airline ticket agent talking to one of his employees on the phone. Ruby told the employee not to tell anyone of his whereabouts *except* for the Dallas police or any other "law enforcement official" who might be interested. And Flynn told a reporter several years ago that Ruby *did* tell him of at least one of his Cuban excursions.

If Flynn and the Bureau are telling the truth, it makes Hoover's FBI look like modern-day Keystone Cops. If Flynn and the Bureau are lying, it is one of the more significant coverups in the FBI's history.

After Ruby was arrested for murdering Oswald, his safe deposit box was opened by the Dallas police. According to an FBI report, "when opened, this box was completely empty." The last time it had been entered was August 20, 1962, over a year earlier. The FBI report noted that "the identity of the person opening the box at this time is not reflected." Yet it is impossible to enter a safe deposit box without being the authorized renter, showing proper identification and signing a name card. Unless, of course, you happen to be a federal law-enforcement official. —*W. S. M.*

and its politics than the average Dallas nightclub owner might have been expected to know. At a news conference hours after Kennedy was killed, Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade erroneously told the assembled press that Oswald was a member of the Free Cuba Committee, a violently anti-Castro organization with CIA ties. A voice arose from the back of the press room, politely informing Wade that Oswald was a member of the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and that "there is a great difference" between the two. The voice belonged to Jack Ruby.

Ruby told the Warren Commission that his "one" trip to Cuba was purely a social visit at the invitation of his best friend, Lewis J. McWillie. As Ruby testified, he "idolized" McWillie—and McWillie, in turn, told the FBI that he treated Ruby as "one would a brother."

Enter McWillie

To understand Ruby's Cuban intrigues it is necessary to understand the tangled affairs of his friend McWillie. A former girlfriend described McWillie to the FBI as "a big-time gambler, who has always been in the big money and operated top gambling establishments in the United States and Cuba. He always had a 'torpedo' [bodyguard] living with him for protection."

According to FBI reports, McWillie had run several illegal gambling houses in the Dallas area before moving to Cuba in the summer of 1958—about the same time Ruby was seen in the Florida Keys with his trunk full of guns. Arriving in Havana, McWillie was promptly hired by Rothman as a pitboss in Trafficante's Sans Souci casino. In September 1958, McWillie moved to the Tropicana casino, described at the time as "the largest nightclub in the world." It was in Havana that McWillie became a close associate of what were, according to the FBI, some of the most prominent gambling hoodlums in the U.S.

Among them were Santos Trafficante and the Lansky brothers, Meyer and Jake. During the course of several interviews conducted over the last year, McWillie admitted to knowing Rothman, who, he said, "had something to do with the slot machines" at the Tropicana, but he denied knowing Trafficante or the Lansky brothers.

However, an FBI document that intrigued the Senate Intelligence Committee reports that "McWillie solidified his syndicate connections through his associations in Havana, Cuba, with Santos Trafficante, well-known syndicate member from Tampa, Florida; Meyer and Jake Lanski [sic]; Dino Cellini and others who were members or associates of 'the syndicate.'"

McWillie's boss, Trafficante, was arrested in Havana in April 1959. In late April or early May, saying it was a "life

Don't light that cigar!: Fidel Castro chuckles about something he read in the afternoon paper

and death matter," Jack Ruby tracked down Robert McKeown, a convicted gun smuggler and an intimate of Fidel Castro. According to FBI interviews, Ruby told McKeown that he was attempting to get three people out of a Cuban prison. He said that if McKeown could facilitate their release, he would be paid $5,000 per person, adding that someone in Las Vegas would finance the operation.

In mid to late May 1959, a man whom McKeown later identified to the FBI as Jack Ruby appeared at McKeown's store in Houston, and the two men adjourned to a back room to discuss details. Ruby's plan was simple: make a trade with Castro. He told McKeown that he had an option on some jeeps in Louisiana that he could use in the exchange. Ruby said he was willing to do almost anything to get these people out of Cuba; and to secure the deal, Ruby offered McKeown $25,000 for a letter of introduction to Fidel Castro which would "clearly indicate that the bearer was responsible and reliable."

A short time later, Ruby visited McWillie in Cuba. And on July 8, 1959, Castro ordered the deportation of three prisoners: Loran Hall, Henry Saavedra and Santos Trafficante.

According to information obtained by congressional investigators and outlined in a confidential House Assassinations Committee briefing memorandum, "Lewis J. McWillie, a close friend of Ruby and a man with many contacts among organized-crime figures, indicates that in 1959 Jack Ruby traveled to Cuba and visited Santos Trafficante in jail." And a recently declassified CIA cable, dated November 27, 1963, reports that a British journalist told the American Embassy in London that he had been in Cuba in 1959, and that he was briefly jailed by Castro before being deported. The journalist, John Wilson-Hudson, said that while in jail he "knew a gambling-gangster type named Santos" who, he said, "was visited frequently by another American gangster-type named Ruby."

A further indication that Ruby visited Cuba frequently comes from an FBI report. The report says a Ruby employee "managed Ruby's Vegas club during the *three summer months*, during which period Ruby vacationed in Cuba." (Emphasis added.) Ruby's frantic activity actually began in May, when, after meeting with McKeown, Ruby passed a message of some sort—in code—to McWillie in Havana. The woman who carried the message could remember only one word of it when questioned four years later by the FBI. The word was "arriving."

By June, according to Gerry Patrick Hemming, a hulking, six-foot-six soldier of fortune who was a member of Castro's rebel army, Ruby was in Cuba attending a meeting at the home of rebel Captain William Morgan. Morgan, an American, was a hero of the revolution and a man with considerable pull in Cuba. He was also an acquaintance of Lewis McWillie. Hemming says he does not know the purpose or outcome of Ruby's meeting with Morgan, but it was apparently in connection with the effort to secure Trafficante's release from jail. (Hemming's testimony has not always proved reliable, but this account has been partially confirmed by several sources, including federal court documents.)

Ruby was seen again in Havana during the Labor Day weekend (September 5–7) at McWillie's Tropicana, by two Chicago lawyers and an architect. Flight manifests reveal that Ruby was in Miami after Labor Day, and flew to Havana on September 12. He returned to the mainland the next day.

Trafficante was ordered deported in July, but was actually released in September, and was still in Havana, according to news dispatches, on September 13. By early September, FBI reports say, Normie Rothman was also making plans to slip back into Havana.

His campaign to free Santos Trafficante placed Ruby in some fast company. Others who wanted Trafficante released included Johnny Roselli and his boss, Sam Giancana—both of whom, says a House Assassinations Committee memorandum, visited Trafficante in jail in 1959. A close friend of both Roselli and Giancana, who testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee, says Roselli told him, "Ruby was hooked up with Trafficante in the rackets in Havana."

McWillie was still working in one of Trafficante's Havana casinos when the CIA-Mafia plots were initiated. In 1960, McWillie left his job as manager of the Tropicana casino to become a pitboss at the Capri casino. The Capri was then

being run for Trafficante by Charlie "The Blade" Tourine, whose mistress confirms that she was assisting Frank Sturgis in an attempt to slip Castro some CIA poison. The poison plot was apparently the mob's first CIA-sanctioned assassination attempt. Giancana was overheard discussing the plans, bragging that he had met with the "assassin," Sturgis, who had been making the arrangements, according to a 1960 FBI memo.

After the poisoning failed late in 1960, McWillie continued to work at the Capri through December, until he was finally forced to flee on January 2, 1961, to avoid arrest. According to Jack Ruby and others, McWillie was one of the last American gangsters to leave Cuba.

Ruby was in constant contact by phone with McWillie after he fled Cuba. This was during the height of the Castro assassination plotting, when Roselli, Giancana, Trafficante and the CIA were meeting in Miami. McWillie was also in Miami, where he remained for the first six months of 1961, until shortly after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the first two CIA-Mafia assassination attempts against Castro. He then took a job as floor manager at Lake Tahoe's Cal-Neva Lodge.

According to Gerry Hemming, by then the leader of an anti-Castro Cuban exile group, "Roselli was using McWillie just prior to the Bay of Pigs, on the hit job [against Castro] and some other intelligence stuff . . . related to some high officials in Castro's government with heavy mob connections."

Re-enter Ruby

In 1962, the CIA renewed its Castro assassination plotting with its Mafia friends, particularly Trafficante. In April, while Trafficante was meeting with the CIA in Florida, Ruby showed up there, allegedly to recruit strippers. He visited several bars in Tampa—the same ones frequented by Trafficante. The CIA and the Mafia decided to have another go.

But like the earlier efforts, this assassination attempt was thwarted by Castro's security officials. And after the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, the Kennedy Administration lost enthusiasm for the CIA's ill-fated attempts to "liberate" Cuba. The last CIA-Mafia plot apparently came to an end in early March 1963, when one of Roselli's hit squads, equipped with high-powered rifles and walkie-talkies, was picked up on a Havana rooftop.

In late 1963, there was an intriguing development for which there is still no explanation. Federal sources close to the Florida investigation of Johnny Roselli's murder say that two Miami motel rooms have been identified as the locations of two meetings between Roselli and Jack Ruby. The meetings occurred during the two months preceding the Kennedy assassination on November 22, 1963.

Beginning in the summer of 1963, and continuing into November, Roselli was under FBI surveillance. An FBI agent familiar with the case says that Roselli was indeed in Miami when the meetings with Ruby are supposed to have occurred. The FBI's surveillance of Roselli explains how investigators were able to identify the exact motel rooms 14 years later.

Columnist Jack Anderson says that Roselli admitted knowing Ruby. "One of our boys" is how Roselli described him to Anderson. And a Roselli friend says that in the course of various conversations over the years, Roselli often referred to Ruby as "the crazy Jew."

Yet it is still not clear what relationship, if any, exists between Ruby's involvement with the likes of Johnny Roselli and Santos Trafficante, and his

Ruby said he would do almost anything to get these people out of jail. To secure the deal, he offered $25,000 for a letter of introduction to Fidel Castro

murder of Lee Harvey Oswald on November 24, 1963. What is known is that in the month before the assassination, Ruby, according to the Warren Commission, was in close contact with a number of highly interesting "friends": Dusty Miller, head of the Teamsters Union's Southern Conference; Paul "Red" Dorfman, a Hoffa intimate, boss of the Teamsters' mob-riddled Central States Pension Fund, and one of the most powerful organized-crime figures in the country; Irwin S. Weiner, a senior Teamster bondsman with close ties to the Chicago mob, who was acquitted of allegedly defrauding the Teamster pension fund of $1.4 million, after the government's star witness was shotgunned to death; and Barney Baker, described by Robert Kennedy as "Hoffa's roving organizer and ambassador of violence." Baker, in turn, called another of Ruby's friends, Dave Yaras, a Cuban gun runner and member of the Chicago mob, on the eve of the assassination.

And Roselli's version of the Kennedy assassination, as told to Jack Anderson, is worth noting: "When Oswald was picked up, Roselli suggested, the underworld conspirators feared he would crack and disclose information that might lead to them. This almost certainly would have brought a massive U.S. crack-down on the Mafia. So Jack Ruby was ordered to eliminate Oswald . . . ."

Ruby's own version of events seems to coincide with Roselli's. While in jail in 1965, Ruby told his psychiatrist, Dr. Warner Teuter, that he had been part of a conspiracy to kill Kennedy that involved "high government agencies." Although Ruby told others the same thing, Dr. Teuter doubted the truth of the story; Ruby often followed such admissions with fits of ranting and raving.

Ruby had always feared his role in running guns to Castro, if it ever became known, would be seen as unpatriotic. He told Dr. Teuter that he was blackmailed into shooting Oswald by people who threatened to reveal his gun running. "They got what they wanted on me," Ruby said.

In looking for possible connections between the mob and Kennedy's assassination, it is worth remembering that one of Sam Giancana's major obsessions was the Kennedy assault on organized crime. Attorney General Robert Kennedy is reported to have placed Giancana at the top of his "hit list" of those slated for special prosecutorial attention, right below Jimmy Hoffa.

The *Washington Post* recently reported a chilling conversation between Santos Trafficante and a young Cuban exile, Jose Aleman, that allegedly occurred in September 1962. Aleman says it started as a business discussion, but when it turned to the subject of John Kennedy, Trafficante's relaxed mood quickly changed.

"Have you seen how his brother is hitting Hoffa, a man who is a worker, who is not a millionaire, a friend of the blue collars?" Trafficante said. "He doesn't know this kind of encounter is very delicate. Mark my words, this man Kennedy is in trouble, and he will get what is coming to him." Aleman argued that Kennedy would get re-elected, whereupon, he says, Trafficante told him, "No, Jose, he is going to be hit." Aleman says he told the FBI about Trafficante's little indiscretion before Kennedy was gunned down in Dallas. The FBI has yet to comment on the matter.

But House Assassinations Committee investigators say Aleman is sticking to his story. And Santos Trafficante is not taking it very well. House investigators say that when they arrived to serve Trafficante with his subpoena last March, he was actually trembling. And with good reason. In June 1975, Sam Giancana was killed by seven bullets in the face one week before he was slated to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee. Then, in April 1976, Johnny Roselli testified secretly before the Senate Intelligence subcommittee investigating the Kennedy assassination. Two months later, his mutilated body was found floating in Miami's Dumfoundling Bay, stuffed in an oil drum. ●