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Ruby's .38 turned over to House panel by Mattox

Washington Bureau of The News

WASHINGTON — Jack Ruby's .38 caliber Colt Cobra was turned over to the House Assassinations Committee Tuesday by Rep. Jim Mattox, D-Dallas.

Mattox said he received the gun in Dallas Sunday from Jules F. Mayer, executor of the Ruby estate, who had declined to turn it over directly to the committee.

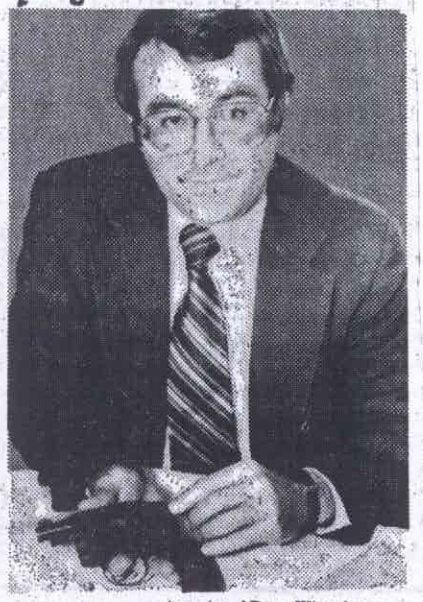
He quoted Mayer as saying that he trusted Mattox with possession, but, "I don't trust any of those guys up there."

Mattox said he received assurances in writing that the weapon would be returned undamaged to Mayer. The congressmen went to the committee late Tuesday after hearings on the King assassination.

"The purpose is to check out any linkage between Ruby and the gun to anything else," Mattox said. "There have been all kinds of rumors about conspiracies with the Dallas Police Department, the FBI and the district attorney's office."

Mattox said that although he has not supported the committee activity, "If they are going to do it I want a thorough investigation."

He added that he learned from Mayer that although the longtime Dallas attorney was one of the first persons Ruby talked with after the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald and had visited Ruby in jail, the Warren Commission did not question him.



Associated Press Wirephoto.

Rep. Jim Mattox . . . holds the pistol that Jack Ruby used to kill Lee Harvey Oswald.

Dallas Times Herald 8-15-78

Mattox carries Ruby's gun to investigators

By RUTH EYRE
Staff Writer

The snub-nosed revolver used by Jack Ruby to kill Lee Harvey Oswald was to be turned over to the House Assassinations Committee for ballistics tests today by U.S. Rep. Jim Mattox, who agreed to carry the gun to Washington for the executor of Ruby's estate.

Mattox, a friend of the Dallas attorney Jules F. Mayer, executor of Ruby's estate, said he had brought the weapon by airplane to the capital Sunday and would turn it over to the committee in executive session this afternoon.

"I felt it best not to disclose I was bringing it to Washington until I got it here because of the value of the gun," Mattox said. "He (Mayer) had been offered $125,000 for it, and frankly, it is probably worth a good bit more than that."

Mattox said Mayer asked him to deliver the gun personally to the committee while it was in session so the committee would be on record as promising to return the weapon undamaged.

"Since early June, the assassinations committee had been attempting to serve Mayer with a subpoena and obtain access to the weapon," Mattox said. "He was reluctant to accept service and turn the gun over because of the position the government took toward Marina Oswald and her attempts to obtain the rifle Oswald purportedly used to assassinate President Kennedy.

"There was a long drawn-out court battle which cost $75,000, and she still was not able to obtain the gun."

Despite written assurances Ruby's gun would be returned, Mayer insisted that Mattox turn it over to the committee rather than an investigator, according to the Dallas congressman. Mattox said Mayer is charged with maintaining the assets of Ruby's estate and "this is about the only thing left" of value.

Mattox said the committee intended to run ballistics tests on the .38-Special Cobra Colt and trace its origin to learn how Ruby obtained the gun. He said he anticipated the committee would have the gun for approximately two weeks.

Mayer could not be reached today for comment.

Officer allegedly with Ruby at buy

Assassinations panel gets gun; merchant can't recall policeman's name

By EARL GOLZ

Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby was with a Dallas police officer when he bought the revolver he used to kill accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, the man who sold him the gun said Tuesday.

But Ray Brantley, who operates a hardware and sporting goods store at 730 Singleton, said he could not remember the name of the officer who accompanied Ruby to his store to buy the gun in early 1960, three years before the assassination.

He said it would not be unusual for the officer, who sources believe was a lieutenant, to be in his store because "policemen trade with me."

Meanwhile, Ruby's .38-caliber Colt Cobra was delivered to the House Assassinations Committee Tuesday after the independent executor of Ruby's estate refused to release it directly to the committee under congressional subpoena.

REP. JIM MATTOX of Dallas delivered the gun to the committee, meeting in executive session Tuesday.

Several months before Ruby bought the gun he ordered four other Colt Cobras shipped by Brantley to Havana, Cuba, to a Ruby friend who was an associate of organized crime figures, Ruby told the Warren Commission.

Brantley told The News Tuesday that "offhand" he could not recall sending the four guns in 1959 to former Dallas gambler Lewis McWillie, then manager of the Tropicana Casino in Havana.

Brantley also told the FBI hours after Oswald was shot that he "had had no business dealings with Jack Ruby prior to that time (the 1960 sale of the revolver that killed Oswald)."

Mattox said the shipment of guns by Ruby to Havana "is a pretty substantial connection to the Cubans. It makes it all look kind of suspicious . . . The other Cubans floating around and Oswald having the Cuban connections."

THE HOUSE committee implied to Mattox their investigators wanted the revolver to check "any possible link between this weapon and any other offense that may have been committed with this weapon."

Mattox said the committee "assured me as expeditiously as possible they would get it (the gun) back to me."

The executor of Ruby's estate, Dallas attorney Jules F. Mayer, said he would trust only Mattox, a personal friend, to loan the gun to the committee with written assurances it would be returned. He said a person has bid as high as $125,000 for the $49 weapon.

The House panel has heard allegations "that the guns were switched in some way," Mattox said, so "that there may have been more than one gun involved.

"THEY JUST HAVE every kind of theory in the world floating past them," Mattox said, "that Dallas police were involved in a conspiracy and if they were involved there was no way they could be trusted to have done the proper ballistics tests. You name it and they have heard it."

The committee has indicated the revolver will be given a ballistics test, whether the FBI tested it in 1963.

"I don't know what they would be gaining by taking the gun up there," Brantley said.

He said the gun "definitely" was new when sold to Ruby in January, 1960.

"That's the reason it was so easy to trace because it had been passed through just the factory that manufactured it to us," Brantley said.

Ruby also bought another revolver from Brantley to ship to McWillie on May 10, 1963, just six months before the assassination, the FBI said.

THE .38-CALIBER Smith and Wesson was shipped to McWillie in Las Vegas, Nev., where he moved after he was forced to flee Havana in 1961. His last job in Havana was pitboss at the Capri Casino being operated for reputed Florida Mafia chief Santos Trafficante, informed sources said.

Ruby told the Warren Commission McWillie asked for the four Cobras in Havana because "he was a little worried of the new regime (Fidel Castro had taken over in Cuba) coming in, and evidently he wanted some protection. He called me or sent me a letter that I should call Ray Brantley."

Ruby noted in his Warren Commission testimony that Brantley "denies I ever called. Evidently, he feels, maybe he feels, it would be illegal to send some guns out of the country."