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."