Ruby Gun To Stay in Police Hands

Man Pleads Not Guilty To Firearm Charges

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By Nancy Lewis
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U.S. Capitol Police are holding on to the revolver Jack Ruby used to kill Lee Harvey Oswald, and the man they seized it from was ordered yesterday to appear in court April 20 for a preliminary hearing on misdemeanor charges that he had an unregistered gun and that he was carrying the gun without a license.

The .38-caliber Colt Cobra was taken from Robert Luongo when he was arrested Saturday on Capitol grounds. Luongo, a representative of the owner of the $220,000 gun, entered a not guilty plea yesterday in D.C. Superior Court. He was allowed to remain free on the $1,000 bond he posted Saturday.

After the hearing, Luongo and his lawyer, G. Allen Dale, strode past the more than a dozen television cameras set up outside the courthouse, and Luongo refused reporters' requests to discuss the circumstances of his arrest.

"I'm innocent," Luongo said as the reporters followed him down the street.

"It's not in my best interest to talk," he said.

Dale said he is trying to find out what will happen to the gun, for which Ruby paid $75. Anthony Pugliese, identified as a Florida gun collector, paid $220,000 for the gun at a New York auction in December.

Capitol Police said they will keep the gun until the U.S. attorney's office tells them what to do with it. Normally, guns seized from suspects in the District are destroyed after cases are concluded.

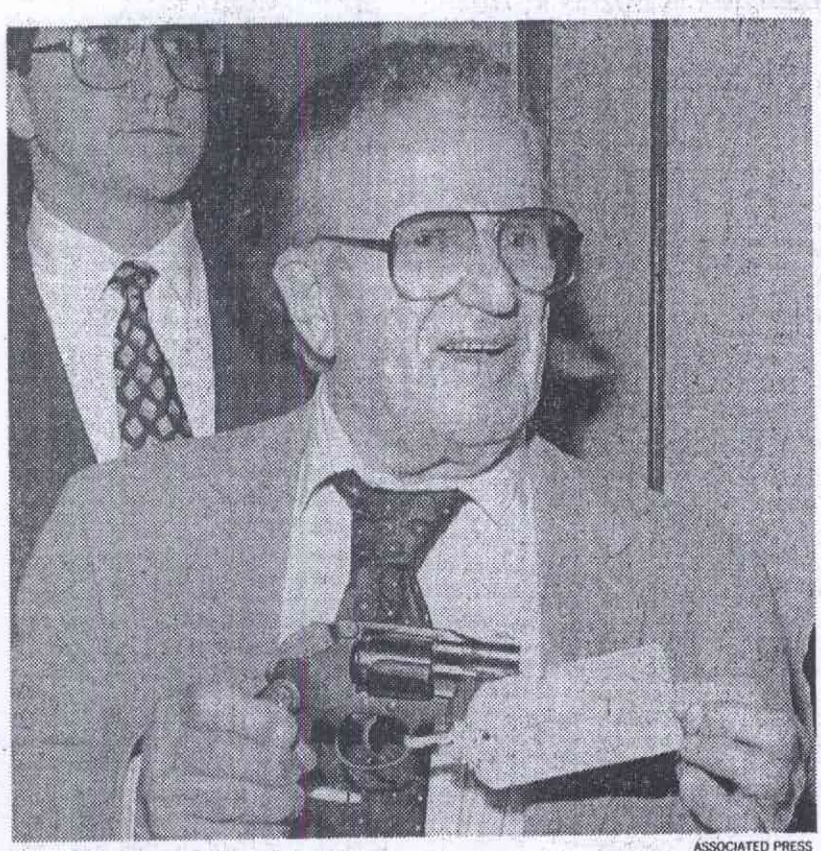
Luongo, 37, of Ocean Ridge, Fla., said in an interview Sunday that he had brought the gun to the District for an appearance on a Friday night broadcast of the "Larry King Live" television program. In the hours before his scheduled flight home Sunday, he went sightseeing. While he was at the Capitol, a police officer pointed out Thomas S. Foley, and, on a whim, Luongo said, he offered to show the historic weapon to the speaker of the House, a Washington Democrat.

"He did have a brief conversation [with Foley]. Two officers were standing there, and then afterward they asked for the gun case," Capitol Police spokesman Dan Nichols said.

If convicted of the charges, Luongo could be sentenced to a year in prison and fined $1,000.

Nichols said yesterday that the gun had not been test-fired to see if it is operable. To convict someone of carrying a pistol without a license in the District, the government must prove that a gun is operable.

Staff writer Brian Mooar contributed to this story.



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Jack Ruby's brother, Earl, displays gun at the time it was auctioned last year.