Ruby, Grown Flabby, Languishes in Jail

Herald Tribune News Service

DALLAS, Tex., Nov. 21 Flabby, unkempt and vacant-eyed, Jack Ruby sits in the always-watched jail anteroom that has been his home since the day after he shot Lee Harvey Oswald.

It is almost a year now since he murdered the accused assassin of President Kennedy on Nov. 24, 1963, in the basement of Dallas Police Headquarters.

For his first months in the Dallas County Jail, Ruby did exercises, mostly a sort of push-up. With his feet high on the plaster wall, his nose pointing at the floor, he would lift his short body with his thick, muscular arms.

Now he doesn't bother.

Shows Decline

During his month-long trial in February and March, he was a trim dresser. His blue suit was always neatly pressed, his thinning hair combed straight back, his beard closely shaven.

Now his hair is scraggly and there are sore patches on his arms and legs—he has taken to pulling the hair out.

Almost until the time that the Dallas jury sentenced him to die in the electric chair, his conversation was coherent and often to the point.

Now he rambles. He is obsessed by hallucinations about persecution of Jews, persecution that he somehow blames himself for.

Ruby's wardrobe is a white, one-piece short-sleeve jail uniform. His home is a squarish room that would usually be the anteroom for the office of Chief Jailer E. L. Holman. His is not an ordinary cell.

Three walls are plaster. The other, looking out on a balcony that protrudes over a row of cells below, is barred.

One Trip Outside

During his long confinement, he has been out of the jail building once—on a semi-secret trip to the Dallas Neurological Clinic where pretrial tests were administered. The courtroom where he was tried is in the jail building.

Ruby's physical contacts with the outside world are few. He used to get a lot of mail. Now the letters have slowed down to a few a week, and he seems but slightly interested in them.

His sister Eva, a buxom emotional blonde, lives in Dallas and visits him often. Eva told him about the Warren Commission report the day it was issued but, she said, he "just didn't comprehend it." Their brother, Sam, also a Dallas resident, visits frequently.

Lawyer Visits

Occasionally a friend from Ruby's days of running the Carousel Club, a sleazy, second-story strip-tease joint, stops by.

There are frequent visits from Phil Burleson, the young lawyer who still toils on Ruby's appeal after a series of other attorneys have come, clashed with the volatile Ruby family, and gone.

Other times Ruby reads, plays solitaire or plays dominoes with one of the guards who are stationed in his room 24 hours a day. Since his abortive "suicide" attempts (he once dashed his head against the wall; once he stuck his finger in an electrical socket) his bed has been moved into the main room from a small room to the side where he used to sleep.

Most of the time Ruby just sits silently.