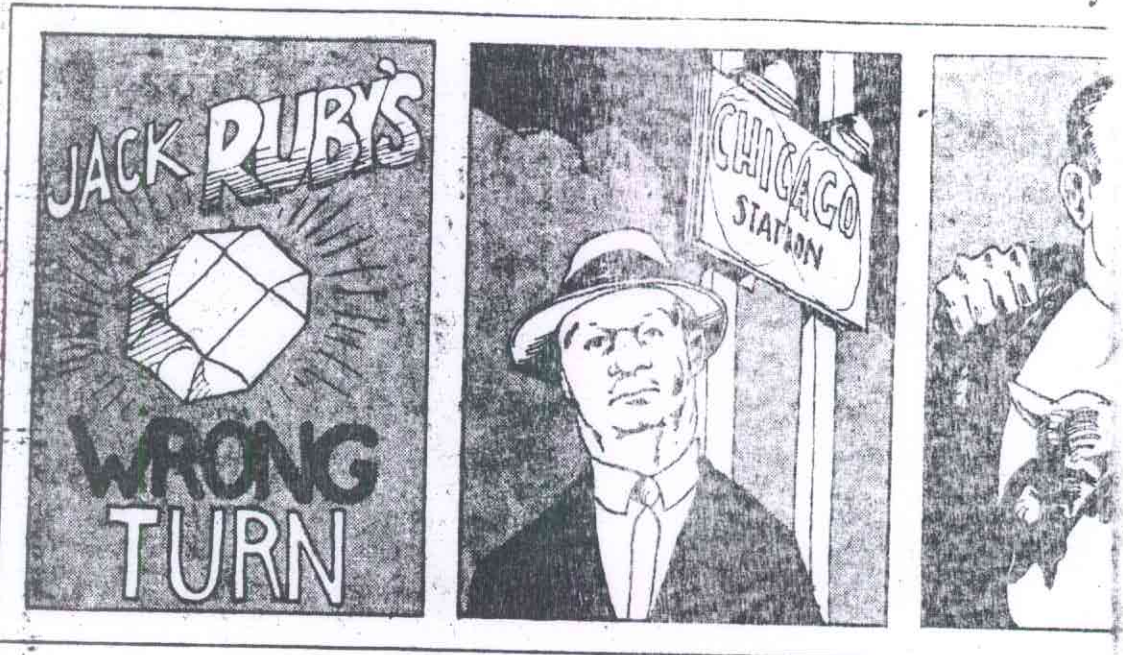


Who was Jack Ruby?

The FBI file paints Ruby as a hustler with a tendency



By Jack Thomas
Globe Staff

In December 1966, as Jack Ruby lay withering to death from cancer in the Dallas County Jail, Lee Harvey Oswald's mother, Marguerite, wrote to the FBI, insisting that at the public announcement of Ruby's death, she wanted complete assurance that he was actually in the coffin.

The newspapers list the date of his death as Jan. 3, 1967, but Jack Ruby really died that awesome November weekend in 1963 when, curious about the commotion in the basement of Dal-

las police headquarters, he sauntered down the ramp and into history, murdering Oswald in a spontaneous act for passion, patriotism or publicity.

He never enjoyed another peaceful moment, and, among Americans, the doubts about his role pursued him beyond the grave.

"Why wasn't Jack Ruby photographed in his hospital bed when he was supposed to be dying of cancer?" wrote a New York man to the FBI. "Why wasn't a photograph of Jack Ruby taken in death? Certainly in view of all the inferences, innuendoes and

accusations, should it not be vitally important to the government beyond shadow of doubt that this man was dead?"

Jack Ruby was the third figure in the trinity of tragedy, but while Kennedy and Oswald died violently and quickly, Ruby lingered grotesquely for 37 agonizing months in jail, begging Americans to believe that he had acted alone and patriotically. Through a honky-tonk trial, 18 lawyers, endless appeals, hearings and injunctions, his mind slowly corroded and at times he

Source:

Boston Globe

January 15, 1978

Boston globe
Jan 15, 1978

towards name-dropping, brawling and sexual perversions



rammed his head into a cement wall or stuck his finger into light sockets.

Last month, when the FBI released the first half of its 80,000-page file on the Kennedy assassination, newsmen reached first for the 119 volumes about Jack Ruby, partly because investigators for the House Assassinations Committee say privately that they are more puzzled about Ruby's role than Oswald's.

"This guy was born in Chicago in an Italian-Jewish neighborhood," said a researcher. "He sold punch boards and scalped tickets. He was a gambler with

contacts in Cuba and Las Vegas. He was involved with unions in Chicago and he owned a strip joint in Dallas, and they say he was not involved with the syndicate?"

In the most exhaustive murder investigation in history, the FBI conducted more than 25,000 interviews from the day of the shooting through the final entry on Aug. 8, 1976, when Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis was questioned about published reports that he knew Ruby had met Castro in Cuba.

The Ruby file alone stands more than six feet, and although the FBI

found nothing to contradict Ruby's contention that he had acted alone, the investigation provides a montage of Ruby as a shadowy, small-time hustler, a hanger-on, a gambler and strip club owner with a tendency towards name-dropping, street brawling and sexual perversions.

Ruby lived in Chicago until middle age, always on the fringe but never inside big time crime organizations. He scalped tickets, sold punchboards as far away as New England, and survived in a world of characters named Piggy

RUBY, Page A2

Jack Ruby 'always anxious to p

★ RUBY

Continued from Page A1

Marchese, Sneaky Healy, Pigface Cohen and Needle-nose Labriola.

Ruby moved to Dallas and opened a strip joint called the Carousel, but returned to Chicago occasionally to visit relatives.

Trying to pin down Ruby's relationship with organized crime, the FBI interviewed a number of top mobsters in Chicago, including James Allegritti, who denied that the syndicate had run Ruby out of Chicago.

"If we had run him out of town," said Allegritti, "he'd never have come back at all." And when the FBI pressed for more information, Allegritti said, "I just told you he's not connected."

Al Capone's brother said he never heard of Ruby, although he was generally acquainted with many of what he referred to as the so-called criminal element.

"No matter how much you investigate," mobster Leonard Patrick told the FBI, "you'll never learn nothin' as he had nothin' to do with nothin'."

Frank Butch Loverde ridiculed the suggestion that the underworld might have assigned Ruby to kill Oswald.

"Look at it our way," he told the FBI. "It's not logical to send a guy in to hit a guy (Oswald) who's stood up for 25 hours. You know you can trust a guy who can stand up for 25 hours, but how do you know you can trust the guy you send in to hit him. He might break in half an hour."

Throughout the FBI reports, Ruby's sex life is mentioned frequently and in a variety of ways, and if Ruby was not bisexual or homosexual, he was at least kinky.

His roommate, George Senator, referred to Ruby as his boyfriend, and said Ruby never showed any special interest in girls.

At the club, Ruby insisted strippers perform within the law. Once he turned off the house lights because a stripper named Jada took off her G-string. Sometimes Ruby would enter the strippers' dressing room after a show, take off his shirt, and let the girls feel his muscles.

The Carousel Club featured strippers like Tamara, Patsy DeLor and Loretta Twiss—high-heeled women who smelled of heavy cologne and sweat.

Lonely, moody men sat at the bar, warming themselves on booze and erotic fantasies and nibbling at bowls of peanuts or other salty items.

Members of the band called Ruby "Auntie" or "Queen" and told the FBI that he was a homosexual whose macho pose disguised his sexual self-doubts.

A telephone company employee, Elaine Rogers, said that Ruby liked to call her and read risqué poetry and talk obscenely, describing his private parts and discussing at length the pleasures she would derive from sexual intercourse with him.

A stripper told investigators that Ruby never insisted on sexual intercourse, but made perverted advances, proposing that he rub against her leg.

Dorothy Kilgallen, the late New York columnist, warned Ruby before his trial that the prosecution would try to prove he was a homosexual.

"Yes," said Ruby. "I'm ready for that. It's not true, but I expect it to come up. Actually, I like girls, but I'm a bachelor, and they're going to wonder about that. And I've made some remarks that were just jokes to me, but might strike some people as sounding odd, like when I refer to one of my dachshunds as my wife."

Indeed, Ruby had an extraordinary fascination for animals, more particularly for dogs, and most particularly for his pet dachshunds, Clipper and Sheba. His rabbi told the FBI Ruby had a morbid attraction for dogs, but Ruby was more involved with his dogs than the rabbi knew.

A few months before the assassination, a Phoenix businessman visited Ruby in his office at the Carousel Club, and, for the entertainment of his guest, Ruby proceeded to masturbate a male dog until the businessman told him to stop, that it was making him sick.

The FBI papers show that it spent a great deal of time tracking down unfounded rumors circulated by news reporters hungry for any fresh exclusives.

angle to the Kennedy assassination story, no matter how unreliable.

If a bartender mentioned casually that an insurance man told his brother-in-law that Ruby and Oswald had shared a room at Princeton Law School, there was a good chance the story would emerge somewhere in print.

As a result, the news media have been blamed for the dissemination of many inaccurate assumptions that persist today.

For example, according to the FBI papers, Jack Willner wrote a story for the Chicago Daily News that a payoff had been made to Oswald or to Ruby or to both in Chicago.

That, of course, would prove there had been a conspiracy, not only between Oswald and Ruby, but other parties, including, possibly, organized crime. "What was the source of the information?" the FBI inquired of Willner, the reporter.

"Not one person," he told the FBI. "A number of people had contacted him with tidbits of information and ideas, and someone had told him there was a Cuban committee that had been active in Chicago, and one person, whom he can't remember, suggested that perhaps the Cuban committee had been behind the assassination. As a result of all information, he (the reporter) concluded there was a good possibility money had been paid. No, he didn't have any facts."

But if the reporting was not always accurate, the writing was sometimes colorful. One newspaper interviewed Jada, a Carousel stripper, and began its story this way:

"I strip naked in New Orleans," said luscious, law-abiding Jada, the flame-haired peeler who once heated up the Dallas G-string emporium operated by Jack Ruby, the man who gunned down Lee Harvey Oswald, President John F. Kennedy's assassin. "When I strip, I strip as far as the law allows," said the super-sexy stripper whose act involves a lot of interesting horizontal torso-twisting, at floor level on a Bengal tiger rug.

The FBI investigation, an extraordinary effort to unravel the workings of one human mind, showed that Ruby was not the kind of man who would be

please'

enlisted in a conspiracy to assassinate anyone. Assassins are supposed to be resolute of spirit and nerveless, but Ruby was tormented, belligerent, emotionally unstable and too shallow intellectually, his rabbi said, to know the differences among communism, democracy and totalitarianism.

Indeed, even his roommate, George Senator, couldn't tell the FBI whether Ruby was politically left or right because Ruby never talked about politics.

He moralized with his fists, hated punks, and spent a lifetime seeking status, always on the prowl for the one big deal that would make him a really big man.

At his trial, doctors testified that Ruby was emotionally involved to an unusual degree in the Kennedy assassination, and in the hours that followed, he struggled to retain his sanity. He was morose that the event had occurred in his home city of Dallas, that the Kennedy children would be left without a father, and that Jackie Kennedy would have to return to Dallas and endure the agony of Oswald's trial.

Doctors say that when Ruby encountered Oswald, the perpetrator of all his trouble, his resistance disintegrated. He experienced a psychotic episode, a state of diminished consciousness in which he lost control, his defenses crumbled and his hostile, aggressive nature became focused on Oswald.

Ruby may have looked upon the shooting of Oswald as his one chance to amount to something for, as he told investigators, he fired the gun to show the world that Jews had guts.

As a Dallas bondsman said, "Well, everyone was saying the son of a bitch (Oswald) needed killing, and Jack Ruby was always anxious to please."

But everything backfired. During the Warren Commission proceedings, Ruby leaned towards Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren and said, "Boy, I'm in a tough spot, I'll tell you that."

He couldn't bear to be thought of as a fool, and, oddly, that is how he is remembered because he failed to recognize that Americans hated Lee Harvey



This is how Jack Ruby (then Rubinstein) looked in Chicago about 1957 in a song-and-dance routine with a youngster known as Sugar Daddy. (UPI)

Oswald so much they wanted him to live.

When Ruby died, he was 55, and looked 80. As he wasted away at Parkland Hospital, the world awaited his deathbed description of that traumatic weekend.

On that fateful Nov. 24, Ruby woke to a 10 o'clock telephone call from a stripper, Little Lynn, who asked him to wire her \$25 to pay her rent.

It was near 11 o'clock in the morning when Ruby's car approached the Western Union office across the street from the police station. Ruby said he had no idea Oswald was still at the city

jail, and, indeed, Oswald was supposed to have been transferred to a county jail an hour earlier, at 10 a.m.

"I saw that there was no parking place at Western Union," Ruby said, "so I made a left turn — I'm sorry, it's illegal — and went into the parking lot."

That fateful illegal left turn set in motion the timetable by which Ruby emerged from the Western Union office at 11:17, saw the commotion at police headquarters, and walked 107 steps in 62 seconds to the police station, down the 37 steps of the ramp in 22 seconds, and, within two minutes, he shot Oswald and altered American history.