

## BOOKS



## He Killed Lee Harvey Oswald, but Why?

### Who Was Jack Ruby?

By Seth Kantor. Everest House, 248 pp., \$10.95.

By John Barkham

**T**O ANSWER the question posed in the title, Jack Ruby was the paunchy gunman who shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald in the basement of the Dallas jail in full view of millions of television viewers shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. To this day the deeper question remains unanswered: how did a man like Ruby, himself supposedly uninvolved in the assassination, get into the Dallas jail close enough to Oswald to execute him?

This book by Seth Kantor, a Washington-based investigative reporter, provides a great deal of illuminating data, much of it provocative if not definitive. Ruby, he tells us, had served the Dallas police as an informer, which presumably gave him access to the Dallas jail. A more substantive question is: why did he kill Oswald? The explanation he gave was that he had performed a patriotic act in exacting revenge for the murder of a popular president, but Kantor believes there is much more to it than that.

His book is highly critical of the Warren Commission for, among other things, its failure to interview Ruby in Washington. According to Kantor, Ruby had underworld connections in Texas and made repeated requests to testify in Washington, where he felt he could speak more freely. He was never asked to do so.

Here it should be noted that all three of the historic assassinations that have occurred in this country in recent years — the two Kennedy brothers and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. — have inspired a host of conspiracy theories. Kantor builds a detailed and impressive case for his theory that Ruby was more than merely a Dallas resident who wanted to revenge the president's assassination.

He draws attention to Ruby's shady underworld connections, to his alleged *sub rosa* links with Dallas law enforcement agencies, to his unsavory private life. Much is made of a Cuban connection, an alleged CIA attempt to assassinate Castro, and particularly of the Warren Commission's failure to explore certain leads in the case.

Kantor has been nothing if not thorough in

pursuing his quest for evidence. His pages are crammed with background information on Ruby and his various associations.

According to Kantor, Ruby's principal interests in life were men, dogs he had as many as ten at one time, and women. In that order. Both he and Oswald were loners with abnormal life-styles. Ruby died, a cancer-ridden prisoner, in Dallas in 1967.

Readers will find the book so packed with facts — relevant and peripheral — that in the final analysis it is difficult to know what to accept.

Overall, Kantor asks more questions than he answers. What he clearly establishes is that the Warren Commission did not pursue leads it should have and that it did not press its investigation as purposefully as it could have.

While one can admire Kantor's terrier-like tenacity in tracking down so many facts, the central question abides: did Ruby kill Oswald for patriotic reasons or to silence him from revealing a conspiracy to "get" the president?

S.F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle