

Ruby Peak

REPORT ON HIS LAST DAYS

Ruby Denied Any Plot to Edge

If Jack Ruby hadn't killed Lee Harvey Oswald, there might be little or no controversy about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. But Jack Ruby ended any possible Oswald testimony and, as his own death approached, begged the world to believe what many find it hard to believe, that he was part of no conspiracy to silence Oswald. Here is a report on Jack Ruby's last days.

By BERNARD GAVZER
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DALLAS.—Jack Ruby deined it to the edge of death.

But even his family couldn't help asking, because so many others seemed to be asking, whether he really acted alone, and not as part of a conspiracy, to kill the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy.

And so, near the end, Earl Ruby asked his brother again, as he had many times before:

"Are you sure, Jack, there was nothing else?"

And Jack Ruby answered, says his brother:

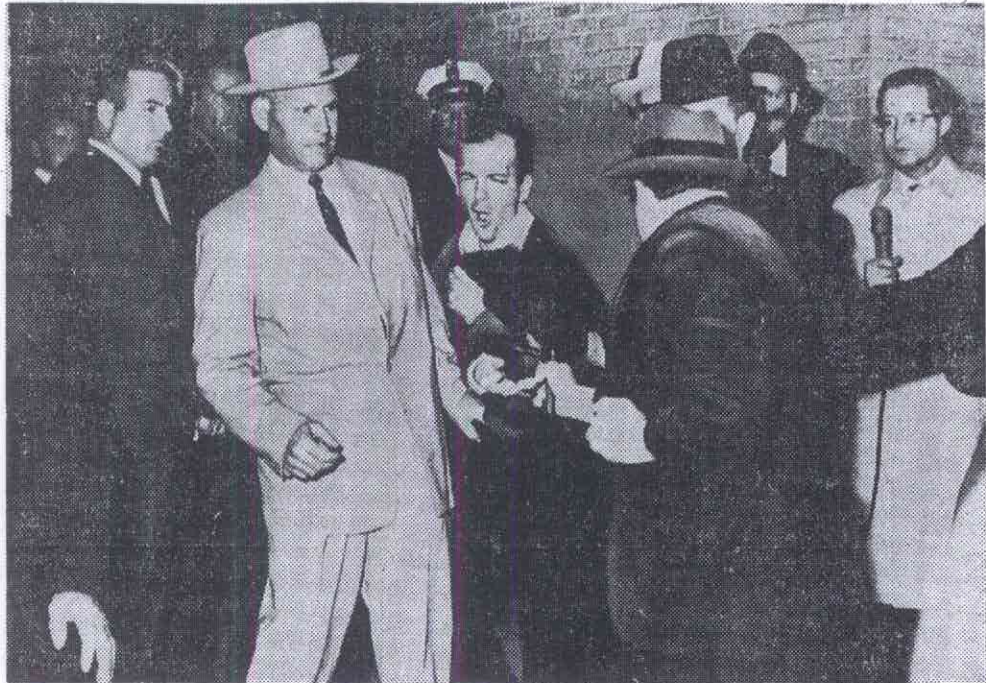
"I'm not hiding anything. I'm not protecting anybody. There is nothing to hide, no one to protect. Believe me."

As he lay in his guarded room in Parkland Memorial Hospital, stricken with cancer, Jack Ruby often weemed to be begging the world to believe he would take no secrets to the grave.

HALLUCINATIONS

He also was tormented by hallucinations in which he imagined that millions of American Jews were being slain in a pogrom as punishment because he, a Jew, silenced the alleged killer of a President.

Ruby could be rational on certain levels and wholly irrational on others, according to those closest to him. For example, he might be watching a football game on television and something would touch him off—like



JACK RUBY SHOOTS LEE HARVEY OSWALD NOV. 24, 1963, IN DALLAS

a penalty. Worse is being done to the Jews, he would say.

Ruby insisted that he alone, without plan or prompting, shot Lee Harvey Oswald.

He swore also that rumors of secret meetings relating to the President's assassination, the killing of Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit and the slaying of Oswald, were lies invented by "Momwerem," a Yiddish epithet.

These details of Ruby's last days came from his brother, Earl, a Detroit businessman; Elmer Gertz, a Chicago attorney prominent on the legal team which won reversal of the death sentence given to Ruby in 1964, and, through them, from other members of the family.

CONTROVERSY

The Ruby murder trial and the Warren Commission report supported conclusions that Ruby acted alone in shooting of Oswald—a shooting that was witnessed by a television audience of millions of Americans Sunday, Nov. 24,

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of Death

1963.

But a controversy about the Warren report has produced various theories of conspiracies—some of which give Ruby a hidden role. However, Mr. Gertz said:

"He simply could not conceive that people could not see that he not only acted alone but that they could take this and twist it into a premise for giving him a role in a plot against the President, a man he worshipped!"

Jack Ruby sought no forgiveness for shooting Oswald. Mr. Gertz explained:

"I don't think Jack mentioned his name more than a few times in the many times I saw him,

and then it was as if Oswald was a figure beyond his comprehension. Jack saw himself as a kind of instrument. He did not have the delusion that God told him to do it, or that he was an instrument of any people, but that it happened without his conscious will."

FORGIVENESS

But Jack Ruby sought forgiveness from America's Jews. He was convinced that his crime had triggered a pogrom in which Jews were being transported to Dallas and tortured to death in the basement of the Dallas County jail.

"That is not true, Jack. It is not true," Earl told him. And so did many others whom he ordinarily trusted.

"Don't tell me! Don't tell me!

I hear from screaming from the basement every night."

Jack Ruby also complained that his cancer was induced secretly in jail. When he experienced difficulty breathing early in December and was taken to the hospital, it was believed that he had pneumonia. He took this as proof that mustard gas was seeped into his cell. When his condition was diagnosed as cancer, he was certain it had been injected into him.

However, his family praised the treatment Ruby received in Parkland, although they complained that his condition had been neglected or brushed off as "hamming it up" in jail.

GUARDED

Jack Ruby spent his last day

in a large private room which had one wall dominated by a wide window. A nurse and two deputy sheriffs were always on duty. Ruby spent hours watching television, especially football games.

On Saturday afternoon, Dec. 17, he felt so good, he motioned for his sister, Eileen, to come to his side.

"Eileen, do me a favor," he asked.

He handed her a list for pastrami, corned beef, kosher dill pickles, rye bread, lox, cream cheese, green onions, bagels.

"The doctors didn't object," said Mr. Gertz. "Of course, Jack couldn't hold that food down, but to deny it to him would be like denying a condemned man his last meal."

Near the end his mood—ac-

ording to the family—changed to one of "black despair."

And he whispered that he did not want to die far from home. Home, for Jack Ruby, was Chicago, the city of his birth.

To his brothers and sisters, Jack Ruby was to the end, a "fine, sympathetic, generous man."

CONFUSED

Though they were convinced his shooting of Oswald was an impulsive act and that Jack did it entirely alone, they, too, were confused by all the rumors and arguments. During such fleeting moments of doubt, they would ask if there were any others who might also have been responsible.

Attorney Gertz and Earl Ruby said Jack was fully aware of the controversy about the Warren report.

"He knew of the incredible constructions by various critics in which it was hinted that there were secret meetings, that Jack might have had connections with Oswald, or with J. D. Tippit (the police officer Oswald also was accused of killing)," Mr. Gertz said.

One day in December, Mr. Gertz asked Ruby: "Jack, tell me, did you know Tippit? People keep on saying you knew him."

DENIAL

"First of all," Ruby said, "there were three Tippits on the police department. The one who was shot I never knew, never heard of. One of the other Tippits I knew."

"What about Oswald? Was he ever in your night club, did you ever meet him or see him?"

"The first time I ever saw Oswald was in the jail after he was arrested. I never saw him in my club and I never met him before in my life," Ruby said.