

THE ASSASSIN'S MOTIVES

'I Had to Show the World'

By the Associated Press

Jack Ruby had complex reasons for killing Lee Harvey Oswald but he pinpointed the trigger-pulling urge this way: "I guess I just had to show the world that a Jew has guts."

That is what Forrest V. Sorrels, a Secret Service agent, says Ruby told him right after the slaying of Oswald, identified by the Warren Commission as President John F. Kennedy's assassin.

The Secret Service was trying to find out whether there had been a conspiracy to kill the President or whether Oswald acted alone. There was talk Ruby was part of a conspiracy and killed Oswald to silence him.

Later the commission headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, set up to investigate the assassination, assessed the testimony of Sorrels and many others. It concluded that Oswald acted on his own and Ruby did the same.

Ruby seemingly was confused about the motives that

drove him to gun down Oswald in the Dallas County Jail two days after the Kennedy assassination on Nov. 22, 1963. Oswald was shot while handcuffed to Detective J. R. Leavelle who was transferring him from city jail to the county lockup.

Ruby told law officers he killed Oswald because he couldn't stand the thought that the widow, Jacqueline Kennedy would have to undergo the ordeal of going back to Dallas to testify at Oswald's trial.

He said he felt great compassion for Caroline Kennedy, the President's daughter who was 6 at the time of the assassination. He said he had been driven into a state of insanity over the whole affair.

Then, pressed for the precise reason he killed Oswald, Ruby said he guessed it was to show the world that Jews had guts.

The Warren Report, released Sept. 27, 1964, and testimony details the commission made public Nov. 23, 1964, show how the web of Ruby's motives was woven:

Ruby was at a newspaper office placing an advertisement in connection with the night club he owned. There he learned of the assassination.

He canceled the ad, closed his place and did no business for three days.

He said he was so stricken the day of the killing "I couldn't stop crying."

Sorrels testified he was

told that "on the Friday night (after the Kennedy assassination) he (Ruby) had gone to a synagogue and had heard a eulogy on the President . . . that when he saw that Mrs. Kennedy was going to have to appear for the trial, he thought to himself why should she have to go through this ordeal for this no-good so-and-so."

The Warren Report quotes Ruby as saying:

"The emotional feeling came within me that someone owed this debt to our beloved President."

So on Sunday morning Ruby stuck a gun in his pocket, called his pet dachshund, Sheba, went to the police station and mingled with the throng waiting to see Oswald transferred from city to county jail.

In full view of a nation watching on live television, he pulled the gun and shot Oswald fatally.

Ruby later argued that it was sheer coincidence that he was on hand at the moment Oswald appeared. If he had not made a wrong turn while driving to the jail, he said, the timing would have been different—and history, too.

Ruby's character was complex and his background patchwork. The commission report gives this portrait:

Born in Chicago of Polish immigrants who were quickly disillusioned of their hopes for success in America, Ruby grew up on the streets. His father, Joseph Rubenstein, was said to be an excessive drinker and rarely was employed, his mother Fannie was an unstable person who at times was confined to a mental institution.

Ruby was only 10 when his parents separated and he went to foster homes. Appar-

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—Associated Press

Jack Ruby in custody.

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ently he never went to high school.

In Chicago he managed to steer clear of involvement with police while in a variety of ventures ranging from ticket scalping and selling knickknacks to peddling horserace tip sheets. After occasional partnerships in business with his brothers or sister, Ruby drifted into ownership of a Dallas night club.

Often Arrested

Whatever his success, he owed the government some \$40,000 in federal taxes when he killed Oswald. He had been arrested eight times by Dallas police between 1949 and 1963 on charges ranging from carrying a concealed weapon to permitting dancing after hours in his night club.

The strange contrasts of his character show him to have been a man of compassion in some circumstances and in others brutally violent.

Ruby was extremely fond of dogs and was incensed when he witnessed cruelty to them.

But he kept physically fit and acted as his own night club bouncer. The report says that 15 times since 1950 Ruby beat with his fists, pistol-whipped or blackjacked patrons who became unruly. At other times he ejected them without a beating but he also was known to throw a patron down the stairs.

A psychiatrist called Ruby a "psychotic depressive" divorced from reality.

Friends said he was a publicity hound, a glad hander, a name-dropper and one always seeking to be the center of attraction.