

Wide FBI Inquiry on Ruby

■ **Archives:** The agency found him unstable. It uncovered no links to Oswald or ties to a Mafia- or Communist-led assassination conspiracy.

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WASHINGTON—FBI agents cast a wide net after the November, 1963, shooting death of Lee Harvey Oswald, trying to determine whether Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby had acted alone or as part of a Mafia- or Communist-led conspiracy to silence President John F. Kennedy's assassin, newly released records showed Tuesday.

Ultimately, the agency concluded that Ruby was an unstable person who had acted impulsively and on his own when he shot Oswald at point-blank range as the accused assassin was being transferred to the Dallas County Jail two days after Kennedy was killed. The stunning moments were captured for a horrified nation live on national television.

Before reaching their conclusion, FBI agents interviewed informants from New Orleans to Chicago and from Los Angeles to New York, gathering often extraneous and conflicting data about Ruby.

The details of the bureau's efforts and conclusions are contained in a 21,000-page FBI "headquarters file" on Ruby, which was made public Tuesday by the National Archives.

Release of the long-secret files—organized in tan folders inside gray cardboard boxes—marked the second time this year that U.S. archivists opened once-confidential materials related to the presidential assassination 30 years ago.

The records were ordered opened by Congress under the JFK

Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992, which required that all relevant documents in the government's possession be sent to the National Archives for public viewing.

The first batch of 800,000 papers, made public last August, included files from the CIA, the Warren Commission that investigated Kennedy's slaying, the 1975 Rockefeller Commission that investigated CIA domestic activities and the House Select Committee on Assassinations in 1979.

Among the newly released files were interviews in which FBI agents investigated Ruby's past career and associations as well as his mental health.

One typical interview dated Nov. 25, 1963, was with an informant named Lou Leiby of Albuquerque, N.M. According to the report, Leiby was a former bookmaker who had lived near Ruby in Chicago—Ruby's birthplace—and knew him by his nickname, "Sparky."

Leiby described Sparky as somewhat emotionally unstable [and] an extremely stubborn person and a publicity hound," the document said. It quoted Leiby as saying that Ruby had "made his living primarily from scalping tickets to sports events in the Chicago area."

But Leiby "was not aware of

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Saw Him a Loner, Files Show

any underworld connections which Ruby may have had . . . and to his knowledge Sparky had no extremist or subversive views whatsoever and had no contact with organized criminal or hoodlum elements," the FBI report added.

The Leiby interview provided the first of many indications that Ruby was emotionally unstable. Later that same day, a woman informant, known to be reliable, told the FBI that Ruby was "impulsive, quick-tempered, oversensitive and at the same time loud and somewhat of an extrovert," the records showed.

In another interview, Eva L. Grant, Ruby's sister, said that her brother had been "very upset" over a full-page Dallas newspaper advertisement critical of Kennedy on the eve of his visit, according to the files. Grant said that Ruby was a great admirer of the President and had kept a published photograph showing Kennedy with his son, John, in the Oval Office.

At his subsequent trial, Ruby attributed his crime to emotional distress. Convicted of acting alone in shooting Oswald, he died of cancer in a Dallas hospital while still in custody in January, 1967.

One FBI memo said that Ruby's mother, with whom he had lived, "had a long history of mental illness preceding [her] death."

As for possible criminal connec-

tions, two FBI informants told agents "that Ruby was never anything but a punk and never had any hoodlum connections or associations," according to a report dated Nov. 26, 1963.

One was quoted as saying Ruby once "attempted to sneak into a prize fight in Chicago . . . and was caught by a police officer who beat him over the head with his night stick.

"As a result of this beating," the report continued, "Ruby now has a plate in his head. Apparently this causes pressure when Ruby becomes excited and causes Ruby to act emotionally."

Another source told the FBI that Ruby had "frequented Clover Bar next door to Sherman Hotel, Chicago, Ill., 1946 to 1949," which he described as "a hangout for the hoodlum element," the records showed.

But an FBI analysis in late 1963 characterized Ruby as a small-time operator who was "never able to cultivate" friendships with important figures in organized crime.

The FBI also investigated rumors that Ruby and Oswald had known each other but ultimately concluded that they had not, according to the documents.

An additional 950,000 pages of FBI material are to be transferred to the archives next year.