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Dallas, Oct. 9 (AP)- San Francisco attorney Melvin Belli says he doesn't believe his former client -- Jack Ruby -- gunned down Lee Harvey Oswald to keep Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy from having to return to the scene of her husband's assassination.

The fiery Belli rendered this opinion in his book entitled "Dallas Justice" which is just off the presses. * He said Ruby's story of trying to protect Mrs. Kennedy from a harrowing court appearance at Oswald's trial "did not add up although it was a story in which he (Ruby) persisted off and on to the end (of the trial)."

Belli was chief defense attorney in ~~that~~ trial in which Ruby was assessed the death sentence for murdering Oswald, accused ~~of~~ as President John F. Kennedy's assassin.

Belli suggested in his book that the idea of protecting the first lady may have been planted in Ruby's mind by a defense attorney.

During Belli's first lengthy interview with Ruby, "he would sooner admit that he was a murderer rather than admit to himself that there was a blank spot in his memory," Belli said. "I was convinced Ruby was simply falling in, confabulating.

"He had put some of this stuff in his own mind; that is what confabulation means. And some of the business about 'doing it for Jackie and the kids' had been put there for him," the book says.

The book, published by David McKay Co., New York, is scheduled to be in bookstores Oct. 19.

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* review filed Books