RUBY, Jack Leon. (?, 1911-January 3, 1967), assassin, was born Jacob Rubenstein in Chicago, Illinois, the son of Joseph Rubenstein, a carpenter, and Fannie Turek Rutkowski, Yiddish speaking Polish-Jewish immigrants. The fifth of eight living children he grew to manhood in the midst of poverty in a violent slum, his father an irregularly employed alcoholic and his mother suffering from intermittent mental disease. Amid constant family tumult he finally completed the eighth grade. He was quick tempered, impulsive, a street brawler, and emotional.

A nobody who aspired to be somebody he possessed neither the means nor the natural resources to achieve his goal. In this respect he was not much different than non-Jews born into unhappy families whose parents could not make a living. So Ruby began making a living anyway he could; he became a creature of society and his tainted environment as he sought to rid himself of their hobbling restraints. He did not have the ability to become a real gangster, but was a hanger-on at pool halls, gymnasiums, and local establishments. He looked to others to do what they wanted him to. The overriding factor of his life was to have others like him. He failed at every project or business enterprise he undertook throughout his life.

In the 1930s he engaged in street peddling, selling of racing sheets, and running sales promotions. From 1937 until 1940 he worked as a union organizer for Local 20467 of the Scrap Iron and Junk Handlers Union. He then sold novelties and punch boards for gambling until drafted into the Air Force in 1943. Upon discharge in 1946 he sold novelties until 1947 when he moved to Dallas, Texas. The same year he changed his name.

With rocky finances he ultimately became owner of the Carousel Club, a sleazy night club featuring striptease acts. Chaos marked his finances and taxes. He was noted for a volatile temper and sudden violent acts. He was a police fan,
making friends of officers and in other ways ingratiating himself to those in positions of visible power.

He had earned several minor arrests, traffic tickets, and license violations, and had charges made against him. Some charges were serious. The Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade turned his Ruby files over to the FBI where they disappeared (Wade). One of the files carried a letter from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Ruby had a dog named Sheba whom he sometimes referred to as his wife, e.g., a rabbi related he once remarked "this is my wife"—and pointed to one of the dogs" (Kaplan and Waltz, p. 275). The SPCA's concern was Ruby was treating her that way. It had reason to believe it.

Another complaint charged that at a fair Ruby publicly fondled the breasts of girls entering puberty, remarking to friends, "I'm just breaking them in to come to work for me."

Under pressure the FBI grudgingly admitted contact with Ruby to enlist him as a criminal informant, but that he did not make the grade. It refused to release its records. The process of recruitment would have generated Criminal Informant file serial 137 on the contact, enlistment, pay, and results both at the Dallas Field Office as-well-as FBI Headquarters.

The November 22, 1963, death of President John F. Kennedy gave Ruby a serendipitous opportunity to be a somebody. The time frame and act negate a conspiracy. At 10:00 a.m. on November 24, the police broadcast they would move Oswald from the city jail to the county jail for better security. As they proceeded, a postal inspector who had left church services on pang of conscience to complete his interrogation of Oswald arrived and delayed the transfer. Only at 11:15 did the authorities know when they would effect the move by descending the elevator into the basement and waiting van. At 11:17 a.m., Ruby stopped at the Western Union building adjacent to the police station to send money to one of his strippers, an act
and time unequivocally sustained by witnesses and documents. He then walked
into the station basement just as 70 or more police officers emerged with Oswald.

At 11:21 a.m. Ruby shot Oswald, who died on the way to the hospital.

The killing unleashed a torrent of speculation that a conspiracy had existed
to kill President Kennedy. In the aftermath federal officials launched a massive
investigation of Ruby, while at the same time focusing on holding Oswald up as
the lone assassin. The official investigation "found no evidence that . . . Jack
Ruby was part of any conspiracy, domestic or foreign," (Warren Report, p. 21), a
conclusion embraced by responsible critics.

No solid reason exists to believe that Oswald and Ruby had ever seen each
other, let alone conspired together. The rumors of it are unconfirmed and without
sense. At the same time no credible evidence links Oswald to the murder of
President Kennedy, thus rendering Ruby's act singularly damaging to the national
government's image as an inquiry into the murder by falsely affirming in the most spectacular manner
that some other person was the real killer of the president. The official investigation
found no evidence that Oswald and Ruby were involved with each other.

The presumptions that the Mafia or the Central Intelligence Agency or
Cuba was behind the assassination through Ruby are mythologies that spurns
known and indisputable facts. Dallas treated Ruby well in jail and his oft cited
remark to Chief Justice Earl Warren of the Commission investigating the crime
that if taken to Washington he would talk was prattle from a mind increasingly
irrational. A psychiatrist who evaluated him for his defense counsel reported that
Ruby had serious psychiatric problems and was "not now capable of cooperating
intelligently in his own defense" (West).

Dallas tried Ruby for murder, found him guilty, and sentenced him to death,
an unusual act in a city where the typical sentence for gunshot murder was eight
years. Appeals overturned the sentence in October 1966. While he awaited a
second trial. Sheriff Bill Decker noted he was ill and ordered him examined. The
Dallas doctors detected advanced stages of cancer, apparently of the brain. He
lived only a few weeks. A responsible autopsy affirmed the findings. The
historical question will forever linger of whether the illness had been of such long
duration to have controlled his behavior in 1963.

Bibliography: Ruby left few papers and gave a half-dozen different dates for his
birth, but all in the year 1911. A vast federal collection of documents related to
Ruby compiled by the assassination investigations is in the National Archives.
The Texas Court of Inquiry left files. The papers of most major figure involved in
the investigation contains material on Ruby, including at the federal level Gerald
Ford, Richard Russell, John Sherman Cooper, Earl Warren, Lyndon B. Johnson,
and Allen Dulles and at the local level Texas Attorney General Waggoner Carr.
The psychiatric report of Dr. L. J. West is in the Cooper papers as is that of Dr. R.
L. Stubblefield. The papers of critic and scholar Harold Weisberg, Frederick, MD,
to be deposited in Hood College, contain essential files, along with his
correspondence with District Attorney Henry Wade, his notes and aide memoirs
him throughout and includes a biography, pp. 779-806, while its 26 volume
Hearings and Exhibits (1964) contains essential exhibits and witness testimony.
The House Select Committee on Assassinations Report and 12 volumes of reports
and testimony (1979) represent the ineptness of the second major federal
investigation.

Almost every book on the assassination of JFK discusses Ruby, most
superficially and with scholarship distorted by theories. Four volumes on the trial
itself that also discuss his life are, Melvin M. Belli and Maurice C. Carroll, Dallas
Justice (1964), John Kaplan and Jon R. Waltz, The Trial of Jack Ruby (1965),