

Why Jack Ruby Killed Lee Harvey Oswald

November 25, 2005



Ruby shooting Oswald (Sunday, November 24)
– Warren Commission Exhibit #2636

Contrary to the claims of conspiracy writers, Jack Ruby died telling the truth. There is no credible evidence he was part of a conspiracy. Ruby murdered Oswald for personal reasons – he wanted to show that "Jews had guts"; he felt emotionally distraught about the Kennedys, and he wanted to fulfill his life long dream of becoming a real hero.

by Mel Ayton

In March of 1964, 52-year-old Jack Ruby was found guilty of the murder of John F. Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, and sentenced to die.

For 32 months, since the time he shot Oswald, Ruby had been locked in a windowless cell on the Dallas County Jail's corridor 6-M. A "suicide watch" guard looked in on him around the clock – a single exposed light bulb glared over his bed. Several times Ruby would make attempts on his own life.

Ruby could not tell night from day. He read every newspaper he could lay his hands on, eagerly sifting them for his name. He read dozens of books, including Perry Mason novels and the Warren Report, played cards with his guards, did physical exercises – and seemed out of his mind most of the time, according to jail staff.

Ruby was clearly tipping over the edge in his psychosis and paranoia. He rammed his head against the plaster walls and raved over and over about the suffering Jews who were being killed as revenge for his crime. Near the end, Ruby screamed that his prison guards were piping mustard gas into his cell. Later, when his doctors discovered that he was suffering from brain tumors and adenocarcinoma – a cancer that had spread swiftly

through most of the cavities, ducts and glands of his body, Ruby accused them of injecting him with the disease – a medical impossibility.

On Oct. 5, 1966 the Texas Criminal Court of Appeals granted Ruby a new trial on the grounds that his statements to Dallas policemen immediately after the shooting should not have been allowed as evidence against him and that the original court should have granted a change of venue to another jurisdiction because a fair trial was all but impossible in Dallas.

By Dec. 5, 1966 Wichita Falls was selected as the new venue for the trial. When the sheriff of Wichita Falls arrived a couple of days later to transfer Ruby to Wichita Falls he noticed that Ruby was ill and refused to take him away. The Dallas jail had been treating him with Pepto-Bismol for a stomach problem. He was taken to Parkland Hospital on Dec. 9, 1966 and the doctors treated him for pneumonia – a day later they realised he had cancer in his liver, brain and lungs, and had probably been suffering from it for 15 months.

Almost from the time he arrived at the hospital, Ruby's condition was considered hopeless. He died on Jan. 3, 1967.

Who Was Jack Ruby?

According to the Warren Commission Report, Ruby was born in 1912 to a Russian immigrant, a quiet, gentle woman who was intimidated by her husband and who spent some months in her later years in an Illinois mental home as a result of her alcoholism. His mother died in an insane asylum in Chicago. His father was a drunk and was treated for psychiatric disorders. A brother and a sister had psychiatric treatment. Ruby and his brothers and sisters spent much of their childhood in a series of foster homes while their parents were separated. By the time Ruby was 8 or 9 years old, he was making money selling shopping bags in the Chicago streets at Christmas time. In his teens he started selling pennants and earned money by parking cars. At age 23 he went to California to sell tip sheets at a racecourse. When that didn't work he sold subscriptions for Hearst newspapers.

Until he was drafted into military service in 1943, he continued with these types of petty jobs. He worked as a union organizer, travelled through the Eastern states selling punchboards, then opened what he called a legitimate mail-order business.

Ruby was inducted into the U.S. Army Air Force on May 21, 1943. He spent most of his service at military bases in the South. Two people who recalled Ruby's military service said he was extremely sensitive to insulting remarks about Jews. Ruby attacked a sergeant who had called him a "Jew bastard." He expressed to some soldiers his high regard for Franklin D. Roosevelt and cried when he was informed of Roosevelt's death in April 1945. Ruby attained the rank of private first class and received the good conduct medal. His character and efficiency ratings were classed as excellent. Following his honorable discharge from the Army Air Force he returned to Chicago. With his sister Eva now residing in Dallas, Ruby moved there, and through her, got involved in the nightclub business there.

In 1952 a Dallas club he ran failed badly and, depressed about it, he went to a Dallas hotel and considered suicide. He changed his mind and decided to re-enter the club business. "I was doing some things on the side," Ruby explained. "I made a trip to New York to promote a little colored boy who could sing and dance. Then I became a distributor for pizza pie and for some medicine. I built some log cabins for a man named Gimble, but we didn't do well. I took over a private club in 1960 but I didn't make a go of it with all the credits involved so I changed it to the Carousel Club in 1961." The Carousel was a sleazy striptease nightclub near the Adolphus and Baker hotels in Dallas.

Ruby's medical history gives some insight into the origins of his mental instability and his impulsive and aggressive behaviour throughout his adult life. The records show a series of head injuries. In 1928 when he was selling tickets outside Soldiers Field in Chicago, two plainclothes policemen beat him on the head with their pistols. In 1941, in some sort of brawl, he suffered a concussion. In 1955, while he was running the Silver Spur nightclub in Dallas, he got in a fight with three customers and a woman ended it by hitting him over the head with a half-gallon jug of wine.

He had a long history of violent, antisocial behavior, and when it was over he wouldn't remember what he had done. A stripper named Penny Dollar, who once worked at Ruby's Carousel Club, testified at Ruby's trial in 1964. She told the jury that she had seen Ruby throw a man downstairs and beat his head repeatedly on the pavement, then rise in bewilderment and say, "Did I do this? Did I do this"? Ruby's autopsy revealed "15 brain tumors," according to Ruby's lawyer, Joe Tonahill.

Ruby had a habit of carrying a gun and assaulting patrons who wouldn't pay or who bothered women at his clubs. He acquired the nickname "Sparky" because of his quick temper. And he loved to play the big shot, bragging of his friends in the Mafia, cultivating friends among the Dallas police, and pestering reporters for publicity. Friends and acquaintances have testified that Ruby wanted to appear as a big shot by dropping names and appearing to be an insider with the Dallas Police.

Many friends spoke of Ruby's yearning for class. He wanted a clean image for his clubs and always thought he would eventually own a "high class joint." Ruby's efforts to attain class were frequently humorous. He was a Mr. Malaprop in his use of language, once telling one of his girlfriends "You make me feel very irascible," or "It's been a lovely precarious evening."

Conspiracy advocates have often alleged that Ruby may have been homosexual but there is no evidence to support their claims. The rumors may have started because Ruby was a bachelor and he shared an apartment with his friend, George Senator.

Ruby had a long-standing relationship with Alice Reaves Nichols, who helped him manage his club. When asked why they hadn't married Ruby told a friend she had too much "class" for him. Nichols said she never seriously considered marrying Ruby because he had a gambling habit. Ruby also had intimate relationships with a number of women who worked for him but they were only fleeting affairs as he was enamoured with Alice.

Ruby's nightclub dancers spoke of his frequent acts of kindness, giving them money when they got into debt and paying their children's medical bills. Many of his staff thought Ruby was a kind and generous person but he was also a man who displayed frequent outbursts of anger towards his staff. Afterwards, he was invariably remorseful but instead of apologizing he would leave the club and return with food snacks as a way of saying sorry. He had a hands-on approach to the running of his clubs and whenever a dispute with patrons arose he would angrily confront whoever had been responsible, sometimes beating up a customer who got out of hand. Yet he had strong feelings for the underdog, frequently buying a meal for people who were down on their luck. And he was also an emotional man often reacting violently to any slights about the Jewish faith.

Rabbi Silverman, who had known Ruby for 10 years, said that one day in 1963 Ruby suddenly appeared on his doorstep with half a dozen dogs. Ruby was crying and said that he was unmarried but, pointing to one dog, described it as "his wife." He then pointed to the other dogs and described them as "his children." According to Rabbi Silverman, Ruby was sobbing and crying and seemed to be "a very emotional, unstable, erratic man."

At the moment President Kennedy was assassinated, on Friday afternoon, Nov. 22, 1963, Ruby had been at the offices of the *Dallas Morning News*, placing advertisements for his two clubs, The Carousel and Vegas, that would appear in the newspaper. When word reached the building that Kennedy had been shot Ruby was clearly upset at the news.

The next evening Ruby visited his sister, Eva Grant. They talked about the assassination and Ruby's feelings came pouring out. He was remorseful of what the assassination had done to Dallas and of how the Jews had lost a great friend in the President. Ruby was highly strung and obviously disturbed. Later that evening he went to the Dallas police station and observed Oswald's midnight press conference. Ruby was enraged that Oswald was smirking at the police officers who surrounded the alleged assassin. Close friends who met Ruby that evening spoke of Ruby's anger, revulsion and hatred for Oswald. At his last stop that night, at the Southland Hotel's coffee shop, he told his friend George Senator of his anger at an anti-Kennedy advertisement which had been placed in Friday's *Dallas Morning News*. He was especially upset because the advertisement had been placed by someone who had a "Jewish sounding name" which he believed would bring discredit on the Jews.

Ruby slept until 9 a.m. Sunday morning. He watched television for a while and then made breakfast. When he left the apartment at 11 a.m. he took his pet dachshund with him. Into his jacket pocket he slipped his .38 caliber revolver. Ruby usually carried the weapon in his car or, if he was holding cash receipts from the clubs, in his jacket. Bob Larkin, a doorman at Ruby's Carousel nightclub said, "He carried a lot of money....that's why he kept a gun in the bank bag...whenever he was carrying money he kept his piece handy."

Ruby drove downtown past the Texas School Book Depository and parked his car not far from his destination, the Western Union Telegraph office where he was to telegraph

some money for one of his dancers. He left his dog Sheba in the car, a telling act that would later convince a number of Ruby's friends the nightclub owner had not planned on killing Oswald. At 11:17 a.m. the Western Union clerk gave Ruby a receipt for his money order. Ruby walked out the door and headed down Main Street toward the police station. He was four minutes away from his historic role in the tragic events of that weekend – the slaying of the president's alleged assassin before a television audience of millions.

Dets. L.C Graves and James Leavelle led Oswald to the basement of the Dallas Police Department. As they were going down in the lift Leavelle said to Oswald, "If anybody shoots at you I hope they're as good a shot as you are." Leavelle was handcuffed to Oswald's right arm and Graves held his other arm.

The armoured car that was to take Oswald to the County Jail could not manoeuvre down into the basement so a police car was assigned for the job. As Oswald came through the swing doors Ruby had just positioned himself in a group of television and newspaper reporters. Camera lights flashed and blinded the detectives and police officers who were guarding the basement. As Oswald was escorted out the swing doors to the basement garage, 10 to 15 feet away from the escort car, Ruby angled himself directly in front of Oswald's path. Ruby then rushed forward and fired a single shot into Oswald's abdomen, the bullet striking vital organs. Leavelle grabbed Ruby by the shoulder and pushed down on him. Graves had the hammer of the pistol locked with his thumb while Ruby was trying to pull the trigger again. Dets. L.D Montgomery and 'Blackie' Harrison grabbed Ruby from the back and got him to the ground. Ruby responded with "I'm Jack Ruby. You all know me." As he was taken to a third- floor interrogation room, Ruby said, "I hope I killed the son of a bitch. It will save you guys a lot of trouble."

After Ruby was subdued Oswald was carried back into the jail office and given artificial respiration. The ambulance arrived in a matter of minutes and Oswald was taken to Parkland Hospital. One of his escorts, Det. Billy Combest, said Oswald made a "definite clenched-fist salute" during the journey to the hospital. Oswald was pronounced dead at Parkland Hospital at 1:07 p.m., about an hour and a half after he was shot.

Ruby and the Mob

It was Ruby's relationships with unsavoury mob-linked characters throughout his life that led to a great deal of speculation that he was controlled by organized crime. The Warren Commission's investigation into his background failed to dispel this notion because the commission – which basically relied on hundreds of FBI interviews of Ruby's known associates – did not fully investigate his alleged Mafia connections and his trips to Cuba.

One of the most intriguing questions surrounding Oswald's assassin concerned Ruby's 1959 trip to Cuba. The 1976-1979 House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) investigation determined that he had made at least three trips to Havana that summer and that he had visited a safe deposit box in Dallas in the meantime.

However, the trips had nothing to do with the Mafia. As Ruby's lawyer Melvin Belli explained, "It came out in one of our earliest interviews that he had tried to arrange some sort of deal with Cuba soon after Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista regime. But

that, Ruby would insist, was when Castro was considered something of a hero in the United States. Now Castro was considered a Russian-supported Communist, and Ruby was mortified to think that anyone might get the wrong impression of the deal. 'When Castro first came in he was considered a hero,' Ruby said, 'and I thought maybe I could make a deal in selling jeeps to Cuba. He was still a hero at the time; his brother was the first one to turn. Steve Allen and Jack Parr (television entertainers) and Jake Arvey's son were all interested then in making deals with him. I had been associated with a very high type of person, but a gambler, Mack Willie, who ran a club in Cuba, so I went there for eight or 10 days.' People would say he had planned to give guns to Cuba, Ruby fretted; they would think he wasn't a good American. He insisted that we telephone all over the place to try to set the record straight on this, although I got the impression, frankly, that the deal had been primarily the figment of his imagination."

That same year, according to the HSCA, the FBI contacted Ruby eight times trying to recruit him as an informant. But J. Edgar Hoover, head of the F.B.I., withheld the information from the Warren Commission. Later it was disclosed that Ruby, because of his advantageous position as a Dallas nightclub owner, had given FBI agent Charles Flynn information about thefts and similar offenses in the Dallas area. In November of 1959 Flynn recommended that no further attempt be made to develop Ruby as a PCI, (potential criminal informant), since his information was useless. Ruby had been trying to dish the dirt on his nightclub competitors.

Hugh Aynesworth, a *Times Herald* reporter who knew Ruby well, said, "In 1959 the FBI tried eight times to recruit Jack Ruby. They wanted him as an informer on drugs, gambling, and organized crime, but every time they contacted him, Ruby tried to get his competitors in trouble. 'Ol' Abe over at the Colony Club is cheating on his income tax.... Ol' Barney at the Theatre Lounge is selling booze after hours.' After a while the FBI gave up on the idea."

As the years passed following Ruby's death, discoveries about his activities provided more material for sensationalist speculation by conspiracy advocates. During the 1970s the public learned that the CIA failed to disclose a report that Ruby may have visited Santos Trafficante, mob boss of Florida, during the time Trafficante was in a Cuban jail. The HSCA later investigated these reports but did not place any credence upon them.

Ruby's telephone records have been the subject of numerous investigations and some conspiracists have alleged they provide proof of Mafia involvement in the assassination of President Kennedy. While it is true that Ruby made many telephone calls to his underworld contacts in the months before the Kennedy assassination, the calls had nothing to do with any arrangements to kill the President. There is no evidence the calls were conspiratorial in nature. In fact the calls centered around the fact that Ruby had wanted assistance from the strippers' labor union to dissuade rival clubs from using amateur talent.

Furthermore, since most of the calls were made before the President's trip to Dallas was even announced, much less before the motorcade route was set. Journalist Seth Kantor speculated that Ruby borrowed money from the mob and that the mob later called in the

debt by asking him to silence Oswald. Kantor, however, provides no proof of his allegations.

Conspiracy advocates rightly point to Ruby's association with Dallas mob bosses Joe Civello and Joe Campisi as evidence that Ruby was mob-linked but they fail to put the connection in the right context. Ruby's world consisted of nightclubs and socializing with people who were in the same business. As the McClellan Committee recognized in the 1950's, no city in the United States was immune to Mafia control of off-track betting, gambling, and nightclub entertainment. It was the milieu in which Ruby operated. Ruby also entertained many Dallas police officers at his club. None of them testified to any sinister connection with the Dallas bosses. One police officer, Joe Cody, said that Ruby was often seen with Joe and Sam Campisi because they were part of Ruby's social scene. Ruby ate at the Egyptian Lounge and Cody often joined Ruby and the Campisi brothers. Cody said there were no criminal reasons for the meetings.

It was inevitable that Ruby would associate with characters who could be linked in some way with the underworld. But it is illogical to assume mob involvement in Ruby's actions that tragic weekend. The evidence indicates otherwise. "It is so ludicrous to believe that Ruby was part of the mob," Tony Zoppi, a close friend of Ruby's, told author Gerald Posner (*Case Closed* 1993). "The conspiracy theorists want to believe everybody but those who really knew him. People in Dallas, in those circles, knew Ruby was a snitch. The word on the street was that you couldn't trust him because he was telling the cops everything. He was a real talker, a fellow who would talk your ear off if he had the chance. You have to be crazy to think anyone would have trusted Ruby to be part of the mob. He couldn't keep a secret for five minutes. He was just a hanger on, somebody who would have liked some of the action but was never going to get any."

Former Dallas Assistant D.A. Bill Alexander said, "It's hard to believe...that I, who prosecuted Ruby for killing Oswald, am almost in the position of defending his honor. Ruby was not in the Mafia. He was not a gangster. We knew who the criminals were in Dallas back then, and to say Ruby was part of organized crime is just bullshit. There's no way he was connected. It's guilt by association, that A knew B, and Ruby knew B back in 1950, so he must have known A, and that must be the link to the conspiracy. It's crap written by people who don't know the facts."

Conspiracy advocates have alleged that Ruby had been involved in the nightclub business in Chicago and was sent to Dallas by the Chicago Mafia. However, many years later Ruby's brother Earl said, "That's absolutely false. I worked with Jack during that time, and he never had anything to do with nightclubs in Chicago. When you were actually there and know what went on, it drives you crazy to hear charges like that, which are just completely wrong."

Bill Roemer, the FBI agent in charge of investigating the Chicago Mafia in the 1960's, agrees. "Ruby was absolutely nothing in terms of the Chicago mob," Roemer said. "We had thousands of hours of tape recordings of the top mobsters in Chicago, including Sam Giancana (the Chicago godfather), and Ruby just didn't exist as far as they were concerned. We talked to every hoodlum in Chicago after the assassination and some of

the top guys in the mob, my informants, I had a close relationship with them – they didn't know who Ruby was. He was not a front for them in Dallas."

Roemer knew how the Mafia operated. He arrested many members of the Mafia and bugged the Armory Lounge, Giancana's headquarters. Roemer was convinced that if the Mafia hired anyone for a hit they would choose someone who had a track record of killing and who would remain "tight lipped." None of these traits applied to Ruby.

Ruby certainly knew many people who had police records. "It was the nature of his business," said Bill Alexander. "Running those types of nightclubs, he came across plenty of unsavory characters. The police had a pretty good idea of what happened at Ruby's club, and there was no dope and he certainly didn't allow any of the girls to do anything illegal from the club, because that would have cost him his license. Ruby was a small time operator on the fringe of everything, but he never crossed over to breaking the law big time."

Jack Ruby and the Conspiracy Theorists

Despite attempts by conspiracy writers to prove Ruby was part of a conspiracy to kill JFK, there are compelling and persuasive reasons that Ruby was acting alone when he shot Oswald. Despite some claims to the contrary, there is no evidence to suggest Ruby had been hired by the Mafia to silence Oswald. Allegations that Ruby acquiesced to the Mafia's demands because he knew he had cancer have made the rounds for years – and continue to do so – but are spurious.

There are no medical records, or statements from his brothers and sister to say that Ruby knew he had cancer prior to killing Oswald. Ruby certainly never claimed he had cancer prior to killing Oswald. It would not be until 1966 that Ruby, suffering from paranoia and delusions would claim that he was being injected with cancer cells. The doctors at Parkland Hospital, who began treating Ruby for cancer in December of 1966, estimated he'd had the disease for only the last 15 months.

Mark Lane in his conspiracy book *Rush to Judgement* (1966), Oliver Stone in his movie *J.F.K.* (1991), and Henry Hurt in his book *Reasonable Doubt* (1986) examined Ruby's 1964 testimony to the Warren Commission and concluded it indicated Ruby's involvement in a conspiracy.

After Ruby had been convicted of Oswald's murder and sentenced to death, Warren Commission members Earl Warren and Gerald Ford questioned him at the Dallas jail. For many months there had been rumors that Ruby was a hit man whose job had been to silence Oswald. According to Lane and Stone, Ruby seemed eager to disclose his part in a conspiracy. According to Lane, "Ruby made it plain that if the commission took him from the Dallas jail and permitted him to testify in Washington, he could tell more there; it was impossible for him to tell the whole truth so long as he was in the jail in Dallas... (Ruby said) 'I would like to request that I go to Washington and... take all the tests that I have to take. It is very important...Gentlemen, unless you get me to Washington, you can't get a fair shake out of me.'"

However, it is clear from Ruby's Warren Commission testimony that he simply wanted to inform the commissioners of a conspiracy to murder Jews. Earl Warren, the commission's chairman said, "I went down and took Jack Ruby's testimony myself – he wouldn't talk to anybody but me. And he wanted the FBI to give him a lie detector test, and I think the FBI did, and he cleared it all right. I was satisfied myself that he didn't know Oswald, never had heard of him. But the fellow was clearly delusional when I talked to him. He took me aside and he said, 'Hear those voices, hear those voices'? He thought they were Jewish children and Jewish women who were being put to death in the building there." He told Warren, Gerald Ford and others, "I am as innocent regarding any conspiracy as any of you gentlemen in the room." Ruby was actually begging the commission to take him back to Washington so that he could take a polygraph examination and prove that he was telling the truth when he denied any role in a conspiracy.

After his arrest, Ruby had been diagnosed as a "psychotic depressive." His testimony to the Warren Commission indicates that he believed he was a victim of a political conspiracy by right-wing forces in Dallas. He suggested that the John Birch Society was spreading the falsehood that he, a Jew, was implicated in the President's death in order to create anti-Jewish hysteria. "The Jewish people are being exterminated at this moment," Ruby insisted. "Consequently, a whole new form of government is going to take over our country...No subversive organization gave me any idea. No underworld person made any effort to contact me. It all happened one Sunday morning...If you don't get me back to Washington tonight to give me a chance to prove to the President that I am not guilty, then you will see the most tragic thing that will ever happen...All I want is a lie detector test...All I want to do is tell the truth, and that is all. There was no conspiracy."

A letter Ruby sent to his brother Earl clearly reveals Ruby's mental state. Ruby wrote, "You must believe what I've been telling you for the past two and a half years. If you only would have believed me all along you would have found some way to check out what I said. You would have saved Israel, but now they are doomed, because they think the U.S. are for them, but they are wrong because (President) Johnson wants to see them slaughtered and tortured. Egypt is making believe they are an ally of Russia, that is only to fool Russia and the U.S. It's too late now to do anything, and we are all doomed. They are torturing children here. If you only would believe what I'm telling you...Earl, they are going to torture you to death, and you will witness your own family being put to death. Forgive me for all this terrible tragedy I've caused. I know you won't listen to me Earl, but if you go to a public phone booth, they may be watching you, pretend that you are going to a department store or a movie, and then give them the slip..."

Another primary claim the conspiracy theorists make is that the Dallas police conspired with Ruby to take out Oswald. Oswald was scheduled to be transferred from the city jail in the police station to the county jail at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 24th. Before the transfer of Oswald to the county jail, the alleged assassin was due a further interrogation by Captain Will Fritz and representatives of the Secret Service and FBI. Oswald's

interrogation on Sunday morning lasted longer than originally planned because Postal Inspector Harry D. Holmes arrived. Holmes had helped the FBI trace the money order that Oswald used to buy the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle. Holmes had also helped the FBI trace the ownership of the post-office box number to which Oswald's rifle and pistol were sent.

The arrival of Holmes delayed the transfer of Oswald. In his testimony to the Warren Commission Holmes said, "I actually started to church with my wife. I got to church and I said, 'You get out, I am going down to see if I can do something for Captain Fritz. I imagine he is as sleepy as I am.' So I drove directly on down to the police station and walked in, and as I did, Captain Fritz motioned to me and said, 'We are getting ready to have a last interrogation with Oswald before we transfer him to the county jail. Would you like to join us?' I said I would."

Secret Service agents and an FBI agent interrogated Oswald after Fritz. Unexpectedly, Fritz then turned to Holmes and asked whether he wanted to interrogate Oswald. Holmes accepted. It was for this reason the interrogation continued for another half hour or so.

Ruby shot Oswald approximately five minutes after Ruby left the Western Union office. If Inspector Holmes had continued on to church with his wife that morning, the length of interrogation would have been shortened and Jack Ruby would never have had the opportunity to kill Oswald. David Scheim in his book *fContract On America* (1988), ignores this vital piece of evidence surrounding the transfer of Oswald. Scheim took part of Ruby's testimony out of context in order to present evidence that Ruby had had assistance in the murder of Oswald: "Who else could have timed it so perfectly by seconds. If it were timed that way, then someone in the police department is guilty of giving the information as to when Lee Harvey Oswald was coming down." Exactly the same conspiratorial statement, taken out of its proper context, was used 10 years later by Noel Twyman in his book *Bloody Treason* (1997).

This "conspiratorial" statement contradicts Ruby's actual testimony. What Ruby really said was, "...but I know in my right mind, because I know my motive for doing it, and certainly to gain publicity to take a chance of being mortally wounded, as I said before, and who else could have timed it so perfectly by seconds. If it were timed that way, then someone in the police department is guilty of giving the information as to when Lee Harvey Oswald was coming down. I never made a statement. I never inquired from the television man what time is Lee Harvey Oswald coming down. Because really a man in his right mind would never ask that question. I never made the statement 'I wanted to get three more off. Someone had to do it. You wouldn't do it.' I never made those statements...Anything I said was with emotional feeling of I didn't want Mrs. Kennedy to come back to trial."

Some conspiracists have alleged that the Dallas police allowed Ruby to enter the Dallas police basement through an unlocked door instead of entering by a ramp. However, they ignore an important witness who actually saw Ruby descend the ramp. The witness was an ex-Dallas police officer named Napoleon Daniels. Daniels, a college educated African-American had been a member of the segregated Dallas police force who had left prior to

the assassination. Daniels had observed Ruby descend the ramp when the police officer guarding the entrance, Roy Vaughn, was distracted by a car trying to manoeuvre into the basement entrance. Vaughn had to walk into the middle of the street to divert the car. Daniels thought the man entering the basement was a police detective and did not tell Vaughn. He did, however, notice a bulge at the person's waist that he believed to be a holstered handgun. The Dallas police tried to discredit Daniel's testimony possibly because he was black but also because his testimony revealed the incompetence of the Dallas Police Department.

Another authoritative source has gone on record as late as March 1997 which confirms that Ruby, in the confusion that surrounded the police station that Sunday morning, did not have any assistance in entering the basement. Paul McCaghren, a retired police lieutenant who was not present at the time but later investigated the shooting of Oswald, said that Ruby's access to the basement was just lucky timing on his part. He said that in hindsight things should have been done differently but it was a situation that had never occurred before.

According to the report filed by the Dallas Police Department investigating Oswald's shooting, an armored truck was to be used to transport Oswald to the county jail from the city jail. According to the report, police decided that, "an unmarked police car would be better from the standpoint of both speed and deception...Such a car, bearing Oswald, should follow the armored truck." But the police lieutenant driving the squad car was forced to go the wrong way on a ramp at police headquarters to pull in front of the armored car because the exit was blocked. Another police officer, guarding the area, the report said, was surprised when the lieutenant pulled in and blasted his car horn to hold the pedestrian traffic. McCaghren said this is when Ruby slipped into the basement, went immediately down the ramp and shot Oswald.

Jim Ewell, a former reporter with the *Dallas Morning News*, maintains that the idea that the Dallas Police Department had a hand in assisting Ruby is not true and that Dallas Police Department officials would have done things differently in the transfer of Oswald but top city officials over-ruled them. He believes the police would have made the media stand in the street had they been given their way. The city officials wanted to make sure the world knew that Oswald was not being mistreated. Furthermore, during the transfer of Oswald, many officers were blinded by the high intensity television lights which accounted for the fact that Ruby was able to move among them without being challenged.

Conspiracy advocates raise all kinds of similar conspiratorial questions about Ruby in their attempts to prove he was part of a plot. As David Belin first noted (*Full Disclosure*, 1988), nearly every conspiracy theorist ignores the testimony of Ruby's rabbi, Hillel Silverman. Rabbi Silverman had visited Ruby in prison frequently. Rabbi Silverman is convinced Ruby was not part of a conspiracy. According to Silverman, at his first meeting with Ruby on the day after the shooting of Oswald, Ruby told him that, "Had I intended to kill him (at a press conference on the Friday evening), I could have pulled my trigger on the spot, because the gun was in my pocket." And the truth of Ruby's

explanation is confirmed by Lonnie Hudkins, a newspaper reporter, in an interview with BBC "Timewatch" researchers. "I asked him if he was packing a pistol at that midnight press conference," Hudkins said, "and he said 'Yes'. I asked him, 'Why didn't you plug him then?' and he said 'I was frightened of hitting one of you guys.' "

These circumstances are vital to an understanding of Ruby's actions because the time to shoot Oswald would have been the Friday night press conference. It was pure coincidence that Ruby had an opportunity to kill Oswald on the Sunday morning.

The final words by Ruby about the allegations that federal agents or the Dallas police were instrumental in allowing Ruby to enter the basement of Dallas Police Headquarters were uttered shortly before he died. Ruby made a deathbed statement using a tape recorder, secreted in an attaché case, which was smuggled into his hospital room by his brother, Earl Ruby. Ruby was questioned by his lawyers. The tape recording was later incorporated in an L.P. record entitled "The Controversy" (1967). The interview lasted 12 minutes but was edited down to three minutes for the recording. Ruby said that it was pure chance in meeting Oswald at the Dallas police headquarters, "The ironic part of this is I had made an illegal turn behind a bus to the parking lot. Had I gone the way I was supposed to go, straight down Main Street, I would never have met this fate, because the difference in meeting this fate was 30 seconds one way or the other...All I did is walk down there, down to the bottom of the ramp and that's when the incident happened – at the bottom of the ramp." In the final recording of Ruby's voice he was asked if he knew the time Oswald was supposed to have been moved, Ruby replied "He was supposed to be moved at 10'o'clock." Ruby explained he always carried a gun because he often had large sums of money.

Furthermore, it is logical to assume that no conspiracy could profit by silencing Oswald in a public fashion. There would be no point in eliminating one suspect while simultaneously handing the police another. And, if it were Oswald's intention to "talk," he could have done so in the two days he was incarcerated in the Dallas Police Station.

Ruby denied that he knew Oswald and said Oswald had never been in his club. Rumors that Ruby and Oswald knew each other have been repeated over and over again since the time that Ruby shot Oswald. Many Conspiracy advocates have stated flatly that Oswald recognized Ruby just before Ruby pulled the trigger in the Dallas police basement.

The Warren Report investigated numerous specific allegations that Ruby knew Oswald but found none which merited credence. Although it would be impossible to investigate all of these "sightings" – which are uncorroborated and unsubstantiated – a clue why they arose in the first place may be gleaned from the commission's investigation of one particular sighting. The Warren Commission stated, "The testimony of a few witnesses who claim to have seen Ruby with a person who they feel may have been Oswald warrants further comment. One such witness, Robert K. Patterson, a Dallas electronics salesman, has stated that on Nov. 1, 1963, Ruby, accompanied by a man who resembled Oswald, purchased some equipment at his business establishment. However, Patterson did not claim positively that the man he saw was Oswald, and two of his

associates who were also present at the time could not state that the man was Oswald. Other evidence indicates that Ruby's companion was Larry Crafard."

The Warren Commission concluded that Crafard, sometime in late October or early November, accompanied Ruby to an electronics store in connection with the purchase of electronic equipment.

Furthermore, Oswald's wife Marina never believed that Oswald and Ruby would have associated with each other, "How could Lee have known Ruby?...He didn't drink, he didn't smoke, he didn't go to nightclubs and, besides, he was sitting home with me all the time."

Ruby's True Motives

On the evening of JFK's assassination, Ruby met one of his dancers, Kay Coleman, and her boyfriend Harry Olsen, a Dallas policeman. They talked for an hour and Olsen told Ruby, "They should cut this guy (Oswald) inch by inch into ribbons." Ruby agreed and cursed Oswald. This may have been the beginning of Ruby's plan to kill Oswald. Ruby never mentioned the conversation until after his trial knowing it would be evidence of premeditation.

According to Rabbi Silverman, Ruby had seen a television broadcast on the Saturday morning in which a rabbi had been speaking about President Kennedy and the assassination. The next morning, Nov. 24, Ruby read in the newspaper that Jacqueline Kennedy might have to come to Dallas to testify at Oswald's trial. Ruby's rabbi was convinced of the sincerity of Ruby's explanation that he had killed Oswald because he was emotionally distraught over JFK's murder.

Melvin Belli, who became Ruby's lawyer after he shot Oswald, wrote, "There was one weird trait. Unfailingly, at the mention of a member of President Kennedy's family, tears would start to course down his cheeks. It could even be a casual mention – later we tested his reaction by saying things like, 'Too bad Jack Kennedy won't be able to see the Giant's play' -- and the tears would just flow out of there. It was too spontaneous to be an act. I am convinced of the sincerity of this affection..."

Ruby's sister, Eva Grant, has testified to the emotional turmoil Ruby was experiencing the weekend of the assassination. "He was sick to his stomach...and went into the bathroom...He looked terrible...He looked pretty bad...I can't explain it to you. He looked too broken, a broken man already. He did make the remark, 'I never felt so bad in all my life even when Ma and Pa died...someone tore my heart out.' "

Cecil Hamlin, a long-time friend of Ruby's, said Ruby was "very emotional...very broken up." Buddy Raymon, a comedian, remembered that when Ruby telephoned him, "He was crying and carrying on, 'What do you think of a character like that killing the president'? Ruby had asked him. George Senator said it was the "...first time I ever saw tears in his eyes."

After the assassination Ruby had visited his synagogue and cried. His brother Hyman said, "They didn't believe a guy like Jack would ever cry. Jack never cried in his life. He was not that kind of guy to cry."

Ruby described his actions that fateful Sunday morning, "...I don't know what bug got a hold of me. I don't know what it is, but I am going to tell the truth word for word. I am taking a pill called Preludin. It is a harmless pill. And it is very easy to get in the drugstore. It isn't a highly prescribed pill. I use it for dieting. I don't partake of that much food. I think that was a stimulus to give me an emotional feeling that suddenly I felt, which was so stupid, that I wanted to show my love for our faith, being of the Jewish faith, and I never used the term and I don't want to go into that – suddenly the feeling, the emotional feeling came within me that someone owed this debt to our beloved President to save (Jackie Kennedy) the ordeal of coming back (for Oswald's trial). I don't know why that came through my mind."

James Leavelle, the homicide detective who was handcuffed to Oswald when he was shot and who also transferred Ruby to the county jail, said that he asked Ruby why he shot Oswald and his answer was, "I wanted to be a hero. It looks like I fucked things up." Leavelle also said, "Ruby told me an interesting thing when I was a patrolman which didn't make any sense to me at the time, but it did after. He told me, 'I'd like to see two police officers sometime in a death struggle about to lose their lives, and I could jump in there and save them and be a hero.'"

Ruby told Assistant D.A. Bill Alexander, "Well, you guys couldn't do it. Someone had to do it. That son of a bitch killed my President." Leavelle's reasoning for Ruby's actions are confirmed by many of Ruby's friends who believed the nightclub owner shot Oswald to become a hero. And Ruby, in the days after the shooting believed he would soon be out of jail and running his nightclubs as usual, according to Ruby's bartender, Andrew Armstrong, who visited Ruby regularly in jail to report on the club's affairs. "In the beginning," Joe Tonahill said, "Ruby considered himself a hero. He thought he had done a great service for the community. When the mayor, Earle Cabell, testified that the act brought great disgrace to Dallas, Jack started going downhill very fast. He got more nervous by the day. When they brought in the death penalty, he cracked. Ten days later he rammed his head into a cell wall. Then he tried to kill himself with an electric light socket. Then he tried to hang himself with sheets."

In interviews conducted by authors Ovid Demaris and Gary Wills, Armstrong and many of Ruby's friends and acquaintances had little doubt as to what went through Ruby's mind at the time he decided to shoot Oswald. "At the club, after the first shock," said Carousel Club drummer Bill Willis, "we all said, 'Well, it figures. Jack thought while he was downtown he might as well kill Oswald too.'" Max Rudberg, a Ruby friend said, "Well, everyone was saying the sonvabitch needs killing, and Jack was anxious to please...he was bound to poke his head in and see what was happening. Wherever there was a crowd, he couldn't possibly pass it by." Milton Joseph, a local jeweller and friend of Ruby's, had no doubt that Ruby killed Oswald to be in the limelight.

Contrary to the claims of conspiracy writers, Ruby died telling the truth. There is no credible evidence he was part of a conspiracy. Ruby murdered Oswald for personal reasons – he wanted to show that "Jews had guts"; he felt emotionally distraught about the Kennedys, and he wanted to fulfil his life long dream of becoming a real hero.

Ruby was a small time wheeler-dealer who could never have been a participant in a complex conspiracy. No one, least of all the Mafia, would have trusted such an incompetent small timer to play a leading role in an elaborate and secretive plot. Most people who knew Jack Ruby agree.

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