

Mr. KRAVITZ. Well, this is an error here; Parker—that name is wrong—it should be Fred Barber, otherwise that's pretty accurate.

Mr. GRIFFIN. All right, let me ask you to sign it in a conspicuous spot not far from where it has been marked.

(Mr. Kravitz signed instrument referred to.)

Mr. GRIFFIN. All right; thank you very much. I have no more questions. I appreciate your coming here tonight.

Mr. KRAVITZ. All right; I was glad to come.

TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH ROSSI

The testimony of Joseph Rossi was taken at 8:05 p.m., on July 24, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building, Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Burt W. Griffin, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I am Burt Griffin and I am a member of the general counsel's staff of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy.

We have a routine procedure of giving a little information before we start to take testimony, about what we are doing here. I should say first of all, that I should tell you that the President's Commission was set up by Executive order of President Johnson and a joint resolution of Congress. The Commission has been directed to investigate the assassination of President Kennedy and the death of Lee Harvey Oswald and to report back to the President on the facts that we are able to determine in that connection. We have asked you to come here this evening in particular because you have known Jack Ruby and you saw him not too long before President Kennedy came to town.

I have been specifically designated under the rules of the Commission to take your testimony. You have indicated that you didn't get your letter until a day or so ago. The rules provide that you are entitled to 3 days' notice before appearing here, and I might ask you if you are willing to go ahead now without the 3 days' notice?

Mr. ROSSI. Well, what would the notice be in effect for?

Mr. GRIFFIN. It would just give you 3 days to get ready for it.

Mr. ROSSI. Well, I wouldn't be any readier, I don't know, if perhaps talking to a counselor or something like that; but it wouldn't necessarily gain anything—I'm just wondering why they waited this long to get to me.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Well, we have had a lot of work to do and we all wish we could have gotten around a little sooner than we did. If you are willing to go ahead, let me ask you to raise your right hand and be sworn.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. ROSSI. I do.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Would you state your full name to the court reporter?

Mr. ROSSI. Joseph Rossi.

Mr. GRIFFIN. And how do you spell your last name?

Mr. ROSSI. R-o-s-s-i [spelling].

Mr. GRIFFIN. And where do you live now, Mr. Rossi?

Mr. ROSSI. At the present I reside at 4433 Purdue Street.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Is that in Dallas?

Mr. ROSSI. Dallas, Tex.

Mr. GRIFFIN. When were you born?

Mr. ROSSI. October 24, 1914.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Are you married?

Mr. ROSSI. Yes.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What business are you in?

Mr. Rossi. Well, at present I am primarily in real estate; or I should say, back into the food or restaurant business and various enterprises. I conduct and am interested in two or three different things; investments, and small little businesses, and what have you; but basically always handling some real estate.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Are you a real estate broker?

Mr. Rossi. Yes; I am.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Do you run a brokerage agency of any sort?

Mr. Rossi. Yes, I am an agent on my own. I operate singly and cooperate with other brokers. I deal mostly in commercial or resort type properties and primarily representing the South Padre Island Investment Company.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How do you happen to know Jack Ruby?

Mr. Rossi. Well, for one thing, we came from the same town and the same neighborhood. I met Jack Ruby when he was here in Dallas and I had been in the entertainment business, in a sense, and worked around with shows and clubs and expositions, and naturally knew quite a few of the club operators around town, or restaurant men and one way or another, ran into Jack Ruby, who was operating a club, and, because of our same birthplace, or growing up in the same town, in the same neighborhood, gave us something in common to talk about. I actually didn't know him in Chicago and our paths never crossed there. I am surprised, they didn't because we resided pretty close in the same area.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How long ago was it that you first met Jack?

Mr. Rossi. Oh, I would say about 12 or 15 years ago, something like that, and maybe longer now. These months go by now—but I don't really know that.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Over the years, how often did you see him?

Mr. Rossi. Well, I might see him possibly every day for weeks or so at a time, and then it might be I would not see the man for a year, so to speak.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How would it come about that you would happen to see him every day for a period of time?

Mr. Rossi. Well, in the latter years I had a coffee shop in the Mercantile Security Building and Jack had his attorney—who officed there in that building.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Which attorney was that?

Mr. Rossi. Stanley Kaufman; and Jack would have occasion to see him on business or one thing or another. Now, during that period of time I saw Jack, you might say, fairly often—once every couple of weeks or sometimes two or three times a week, but sometimes possibly for not a month. Prior to that time, in his different club enterprise or what have you, because my group—myself and my wife would like to dance or occasionally I go out and look for something in the way of various ideas and call on different people, and possibly stop into a club or two, and I would run into Jack Ruby, or possibly meet him out in a bowling alley or something of that nature. I'm not Jewish, but I patronize them because I like Jewish food and I would occasionally run into Jack in a kosher restaurant or somewhere, or anywhere in town, and I am fairly well known in the downtown area of Dallas and so we would always have a little something to say.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Prior to the fall of 1963, were you ever involved in any business enterprise with him?

Mr. Rossi. With Jack?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes.

Mr. Rossi. I never really was involved in any business enterprise with him.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you ever have occasion to discuss with Jack the opening of a new nightclub?

Mr. Rossi. Yes.

Mr. GRIFFIN. When did Jack first talk to you about that?

Mr. Rossi. That was a day or two before the assassination—that must have been about the 20th of November.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Where did that discussion take place?

Mr. Rossi. Now, I'm going to just take a guess at the dates when I say the 20th—it may have been the 19th. I would have to go back and check some of these things, but I would say roughly somewhere about the 20th, or the day before I left for Brownsville. I was going to a brokers meeting on South Padre Island.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Maybe this would refresh your recollection. When you were interviewed by the FBI on November 25, they have reported that you told them you thought it was the 20th that you saw him; would your recollection at that time have been accurate?

Mr. ROSSI. I think that's about correct, because I believe the President was assassinated on the 22d.

Mr. GRIFFIN. That's right.

Mr. ROSSI. That's when I arrived in Brownsville. I left the previous evening, and I believe it was just the day before, when I spoke to Jack, so I would say it was the 20th—that's—the 20th is about correct, and at that time he discussed two things with me. He had with him a novelty item—a twistboard. It was not very large, about a foot or so square and on a swivel base or a bearing base, and he was quite enthused about it. I go in for some of those little promotional deals of one nature or another, and Jack knew it so he asked my opinion of it and told me it looked like it was going to be a hot item. His brother or relative or some friend, I forget whether it was locally or in Chicago, manufactured them so he had the exclusive or the complete deal on it. The object was to get on the board and twist and that exercised you. In other words, it would be an entertaining or amusement type of exercise—both at the same time.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you express any opinion to him?

Mr. ROSSI. Yes; I thought it had good possibilities, and had pretty good appeal, and there were various other things that we spoke of regarding it. He was looking for a little financing or possibly wasn't looking for financing. I am trying to recollect whether he wanted some financing on it or not, and how much it would take to go into it on a big scale. He asked if I was interested and I told him at the time I wasn't. I was pretty well tied up and involved with the South Padre Island resort properties and we were doing some promotional work on the sales of the island, so I told him I would take a raincheck on it.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What was the other business you talked about?

Mr. ROSSI. The other business he also discussed with me was regarding a new type of club—a new type of nightclub, and that it was going to be better, or upgraded from what he had, and I think it was going to be somewhat of a girlie club—swankier and all that—I don't know whether it was going to be a burlesque or not—I don't quite recall.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you ever hear him mention anything about a Playboy Club?

Mr. ROSSI. No; at least he didn't mention that to me in regards to this, or, he may have been thinking something about that—that may have been the reference to the girls or something of that nature, because it wasn't going to be just a burlesque type of club. It was going to be a lot on the higher scale and he wanted to know if I would be interested in it. I told him that, again at the present time I wasn't interested but not to exclude me, if things changed or time permitted, that I would consider looking into it further, and if it was worthwhile I would, or if I could afford to, I would participate in it.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did he want you to invest some money in it?

Mr. ROSSI. Not necessarily; Jack was always pretty nice to me. He had made me offers a number of times to locate my brokerage office up in his club area—he had some spare office space there—and he says, "You are welcome to the space anytime you want it, desk, or equipment." Then at the time I had been looking around for one or two other coffee or snackbar locations, and he informed me that he had equipment up there in his club—kitchen equipment and so forth—and he would be more than glad to give it to me. He was very generous; he said, "If you want it, just take what you need." He said, "Anything I've got you can have." I have never really done anything special for, or given Jack anything of any nature—it's just that possibly I understood him a little bit better than the average person. We have something in common, as I say, from our childhood days.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What exactly did he want you to do with this club?

Mr. ROSSI. Oh, nothing; he knows I'm pretty good as a manager or as an operator—my background has been with food and entertainment. He knew I under-

stood that end of the business. I'm not a drinker or anything like it, and I am pretty steady and dependable.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Where did this conversation take place?

Mr. ROSSI. This took place in the arcade or the lobby of the Mercantile Security Building in front of where, and also in, what used to be my snackbar or coffeeshop.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Had Jack arranged to meet you there?

Mr. ROSSI. No, no. It was one of those chance meetings where he saw me and then just stopped and started talking about the twistboard. I had no idea of even being there at the coffeeshop, let alone that I would see Jack there. My time was limited, because I was making preparations to leave town that night, and I was talking about this the day before—that night.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What time of the day was it when you saw him?

Mr. ROSSI. Oh, I would say it was in the a.m., about, somewhere around 10—possibly 11 o'clock.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did Jack indicate to you what his business was at the Mercantile Security Building?

Mr. ROSSI. Well, he was going up on the assumption also—I don't recall positively if he mentioned that particular fact, I think he did say something in regards to going up and seeing Mr. Kaufman, his attorney, and looking into this twistboard—I don't recall whether it was in regards to possibly setting up a corporation, or whether it had to do with getting the patent rights or the exclusiveness or something of that sort.

Mr. GRIFFIN. And he specifically mentioned that he was going up to see somebody about the legal aspects of the twistboard.

Mr. ROSSI. Well, as I say, I don't recall just why he was going up to see him, whether it was about the legal aspects of the board or what, but he did mention he was going up to see Mr. Kaufman in regards to something on the twistboard.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Could it have been that he mentioned he was going up to see another attorney about the twistboard?

Mr. ROSSI. I believe he mentioned a tax problem, or at least I mentioned it—there was something or a discussion about a tax problem, inasmuch as he had been involved with a tax problem with the Internal Revenue Department and during the discussion of the club deal. Of course I was aware of his tax problem, and I wasn't going to especially participate in any venture with Jack because I knew that he did have problems of this nature and I didn't want to become involved. But at the same time I did bring up the fact that, "Well, won't this interfere with this business venture or anything like that, that you have?" And he made mention then that he had accumulated or gotten some money or was in the process of getting this all taken care of. That he had the tax problem settled or finalized, and that they would meet with some agreement as to how much or just what amount they would settle for. He was going to get that all squared off, and I believe he made mention of the fact that he had some money set aside for that required settlement. I don't know the exact amount of money, but I think it ran up a fair size sum.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How long did this conversation last, approximately?

Mr. ROSSI. Oh, I would say 20 or 30 minutes.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Was anybody else present?

Mr. ROSSI. Well, yes; one of my former employees was there—well two of them—actually, one is still managing the coffeeshop and the other happened to be in the coffeeshop at the time, and I believe he was there.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What are their names?

Mr. ROSSI. One of them is Joseph Di Gangi and the other is John Trace, and I believe at the time I was talking to Mr. Di Gangi when Jack came walking down the hall and came in. That's how I got to talking to Jack, and I believe Mr. Di Gangi became engrossed in talking to somebody else and Jack and I stepped out in the hall in order to make a little more room for the customers in the snack bar and we did our talking out there.

Is that phone hooked up all right; could I call my present business and let them know where I am at?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Certainly.

(At this point the witness, Mr. Rossi, made a telephone call which lasted approximately 3 minutes.)

Mr. ROSSI. Now, before we continue, let me say this—you led me into this deposition without any preliminary discussion. I noticed though in the request to appear that it made mention of the fact that my testimony would be taken and then allowed for me to read and correct and approve—right?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes.

Mr. ROSSI. So, that answers that question there, because inasmuch as this took place—when the incident took place I was down in the valley in Brownsville and talked to the news reporter there—they have—I guess because of space and one thing or another taken it out of context—your conversation and they use what they want and at times when you are expanding on something which you don't necessarily feel like that that is what he is going to print, or, you are just voicing a casual opinion, he might pick that up and make that the important part of his text, and the part that you wanted to say he didn't, and as much as one of the things I did mention to him, and they took this writeup and it didn't appear, was to me important in the sense that I said, "I'm sure that the people of Dallas were more and even greater shocked than anybody else anywhere and that the Dallas people for the many years that I have lived there have all been fine, good people, and all, and this is a thing that happened in my estimation just out of a clear blue sky."

The reason I mentioned it to them—at this point, was the fact that already I could see the attitudes and the feeling of the people all around, but he made no mention of that fact in the paper.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Where did that appear—in the Brownsville paper?

Mr. ROSSI. Yes. Another thing I want to get in here, and I want to set this in the record before any other testimony that I give, and that is, that what I say is without prejudice against Dallas or anybody or anything. There is a certain attitude that I feel was wrong and has been somewhat corrected as this all took place. Emotionally everybody was pretty well upset and all and what I am describing here, took place before anybody else in the country, or anyone had interviewed Ruby, and, important thing that I want to state now is that I knew Ruby—that Jack Ruby was capable of doing what he did regarding Oswald, even prior to my knowing that Jack Ruby actually did it.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How did you know that?

Mr. ROSSI. Well, to clarify it, let me say this: We had just broken up or finished a meeting that the real estate brokers on the island were having regarding the Padre Island development and promotion, when someone came in from the hotel lobby—we were at the Island Hotel or Motel, and said that they had just shot Harvey or Lee Oswald—somebody had just shot him. One thing led to another—they were going to reshow it, at least we didn't see the actual first film of the shooting, so to speak, but they were going to reshow it, so a number of us went out to the lobby of the motel to see the TV showing of it, and while standing there we saw the event take place and then the announcement came through that the one who murdered or shot Harvey Lee Oswald was Jack Ludi. There was a Jack Lodi or Ludi or something like that and standing next to me was Mr. John O'Sorio, who is an attorney, and also the counsel for the company down there, and one of the participants and he turned to me and he asked me—he says, "Joe, you are pretty well known in Dallas, at least you know quite a number of people in Dallas, do you know Jack Lodi," and I replied, "No, I don't know any Jack Lodi or Jack Luby or Jack Lucas"—whatever it might have been that he said, but I said, "If they had said or made mention of the fact that it was Jack Ruby who had shot Oswald," I says, "I wouldn't be too much surprised."

Then, he asked me why and I says, "Well, he just happens to be that type of a person. He is impulsive and emotional and everything and he probably felt like he was doing something that—a favor or something."

Mr. GRIFFIN. What experiences had you had with Jack Ruby before then that led you to that conclusion?

Mr. Rossi. Well, now, before I answer that question, let me continue—it was not but a minute or so that they got down to the correction on the name and made mention of the fact that it wasn't Lodi or whoever it was but a Jack Ruby, a nightclub operator in Dallas. Mr. Osorio turned to me and said, "By golly, you were right." I said, "I was right, but I was shocked also. I knew that Jack is impulsive, but I didn't think he would do a thing like that just offhand."

The things that led me to feel this way about Jack is that I had seen him or I had stopped off into his club or had seen him in a number of discussions and had occasion to see him argue about certain points and things and knew that he got quite emotional and quite upset. He would be right in his own way and would have no way of possibly explaining it to anybody and couldn't get his point across—it would just get him that much more excited.

I have seen him get pretty worked up over the fact that one of the burlesque dancers was 5 minutes late in her performance and he would just work himself up into a dither, with, "Now, where is she, why isn't she here on time, it's show time and she isn't here," and he would work himself up and all, and saying that he ought to bop her on the head or something like that, and that he was paying them a salary and he couldn't depend on them, and I mentioned to him—I said, "Jack, you act like this is a big George White production or something like that." I said, "After all, your customers are enjoying themselves, they are listening to the emcee and he is popping off jokes and they are drinking their drinks. They don't even know what time it is, let alone, that the girl is supposed to be on."

He said, "But that's beside the point. They pay to come up here and we schedule a show at a certain time and some of these people, even if they don't know the time, are entitled to see it when we specify it."

Now, he was that type of a person. When I mention this, I mean that he was pretty well overwrought and quite angry over little things.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did you ever hear him get violent over any of these things?

Mr. Rossi. I never really saw Jack get violent but I saw him get pretty angry, or I say he could be violent, if somebody didn't cool him off. So, let's say, that Jack, as I knew him, didn't drink or smoke and always dressed well, and was in as clean appearance as anybody and kept himself clean and wanted to make a good appearance, and wanted to be somebody socially. As I stated, here in this news article and to the Secret Service men who questioned me, and as I mention in the article here (showing newspaper) that because of the lack of education and one thing or another, he was limited. He wanted to become somebody socially or somebody important, and yet, he wasn't accepted quite on that status, and I wouldn't say that the man was frustrated about this, but I know that everything he did, basically he would try to do on an upgrade or try to become somebody more important or better socially or a better man.

Mr. GRIFFIN. What do you know about his friendships with people who are engaged in gambling or other illegal activities?

Mr. Rossi. Whether he had any of those or not, or whether he was engaged in any activities of that type, I'm not the least bit aware of, because I never did talk to him about anything or at least he never spoke to me about any of that, if he was, and I didn't know too many of his other acquaintances outside of by sight or by seeing them around town and so forth, but just general people and all that.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did he have a reputation among other people of your friends who knew him as being somebody who was on the shady side?

Mr. Rossi. Well, I wouldn't say that the reputation would be on the shady side, but they knew Jack was a manipulator and had been involved in these clubs and there had been some after-hour talk and so forth, but they knew that his background—just like because of mine—where I grew up—you see, it was mentioned even in the article here, it was known as the Bloody 24th Ward, so everything in the way of shades of different colors and hues—that all took place there. Now, whether Jack did any of that here or participated in any of it here, I'm not aware of it.

Mr. GRIFFIN. You didn't have any information at all that people thought he was a professional criminal of any sort?

Mr. ROSSI. Oh, there may have been one or two people and I couldn't no more tell you who they were or what, that possibly mentioned in my presence that Jack Ruby—I wouldn't say was a criminal, but knew him as an operator and possibly had reference to him as a little bit of a shady operator or something like that or that he might be capable of it.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Was that before he shot Oswald or after he shot Oswald?

Mr. ROSSI. Oh—yes, yes; that was before. Well, I might say, if you put it that way—I heard comments afterwards, but I didn't participate in any of the discussions afterwards.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Did Jack Ruby ever tell you any of his political attitudes—did he ever discuss any of them with you?

Mr. ROSSI. No, not especially; not to me personally, but I would say publicly in a sense, and this goes back a little bit of time, I knew definitely that he leaned towards the Democratic party or at least he had a high respect for President Roosevelt.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How did you find that out?

Mr. ROSSI. Well, just in his talk about him and everything. Of course, I was against Roosevelt and his policies and all, and any time anybody would mention anything about social security or various doles and so forth and other ways of increasing the expenses, or what have you, or any of the things that Roosevelt reforms, I would expound against them, and I know that Jack took Mr. Roosevelt pretty seriously, and would defend him and his policies. He thought he was a great man and a great President, and I thought Roosevelt was a wonderful salesman and orator myself.

Mr. GRIFFIN. How many of these expressions did you discuss with Jack?

Mr. ROSSI. I—oh, I would say—I didn't especially discuss them with him, but I would say in general discussions when perhaps he happened to be in a group and somebody was making some comment on the issue of the day and you know how you have a little political talk involved in it usually.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I am going to mark for identification a document which consists of two pages. It is a copy of a report that two FBI Agents, Thomas W. Crawford and Clay Zachry had with you on November 25 down at Brownsville. I am going to mark this document on the first page, which is actually No. 112, Joseph Rossi Deposition, July 24, 1964, Exhibit No. 1, and the second page of this two-page document is numbered page 113, and I am going to hand both pages to you and ask you to read them and tell us whether or not that is an accurate report of what you told the FBI agents in November 1963?

Mr. ROSSI. This is all correct with the exception of the last sentence, in regards to Ruby's hat—it wasn't Ruby's friends that kidded him, but more or less just people that knew him. When Ruby might stop into my place at the coffeshop or something like that, or any of the old Chicago hoodlums—now, my brother, he won't appreciate this—he will just about kill me, but we called everybody from our area Chicago hoodlums—where we had grown up around there together.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Mr. Rossi, let me ask you if you would sign this on the first page and initial it on the second page, and sign it as near the top line and mark it for identification.

Mr. ROSSI. Up here?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Yes.

Mr. ROSSI. (Signed instrument referred to.)

Mr. GRIFFIN. Thank you very much for coming here. I am sorry we have had so many mixups, but that could not be helped, and you have been very helpful to us.

Mr. ROSSI. Well, that's all right. Do you want any other opinions?

Mr. GRIFFIN. Do you have any others to make?

Mr. ROSSI. I think so.

Mr. GRIFFIN. All right, will you state them—I thought we had exhausted about everything, but I will be glad to hear them.

What else do you have that you think will be useful to us?

Mr. ROSSI. Well, in my own personal opinion—I think it was an impulsive thing all the way around. I wouldn't say the Dallas people are guilty. It is

just one of those things that gets started, you might say, as a joke and becomes an actuality, and then it's all busted up.

I believe Oswald himself possibly had no intention in the beginning of killing the President or assassinating him, and if I go along with the Morning News I may as well classify it as being suspected of the assassination, and I believe possibly he was more interested in Governor Connally than in the President, but the number of incidents that had taken place prior to Mr. Kennedy's coming to Dallas showed the somewhat emotional feeling of the people here.

Now, Mr. Johnson was pretty well liked but also pretty well disliked, and he also had a reputation of missing ballot boxes or what have you. The incident that took place while he was here was not a reflection of all the Dallas people here. It was just a group of sort of people that were there and somebody impulsively did something, because I think basically you don't go there with the idea of spitting at the President or anything like that, or the Senator, at the time.

The same way, when Mr. Stevenson visited Dallas. I believe the woman that was there was just worked up into a pitch along with many in the crowd and why anybody would go to any place and meet any of these people or form a group, I guess it's all right, but I have seen too much of it, and waving flags and carrying banners, and then you stand there in the front of the line and the next thing you know—she got the urge to pop him on the head, maybe, and she did, but this just built up talk around the Dallas area.

Now, I'll give you some of the coffeeshop talk that goes on when you are sitting down having a cup of coffee and people are discussing the events and politics of the day and prior to Mr. Kennedy's arriving here, the general talk then was, "You know what happened to Johnson. You saw what happened to Stevenson, boy, when Jack comes, it's going to be murder. They are just liable to kill him."

Now, this was said in a number of times—I would say—without a doubt I heard the remark a hundred times, but just publicly in general—somebody popping off and of course I know that it was all said but nothing meant by it, but still in all we have a certain amount of people who. I won't say they are not literate enough, but their minds are a little bit warped or they are a little bit more impulsive and we have different institutions that took care of a lot of sick-minded people, but this caused them to think and do a lot of things. I say that subconsciously they are hypnotized with something.

I'm trying to bring out a point here that Ruby and Oswald themselves were in the middle of all this talk, and I would say that Oswald on his job heard quite a bit of this type of talk going on and everything. Ruby knew that in his business dealings during the day and all that, discussed it with friends, either sitting over a cup of coffee, heard the same type of comments—they were just general.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Let me ask you: You were not in Dallas on November 22, 23, or 24?

Mr. ROSSI. No, I was not.

Mr. GRIFFIN. So, you don't know what kind of talk there was around here after Oswald was shot or after Oswald was alleged to have shot the President?

Mr. ROSSI. Yes, I do, because it may have been a day or two afterwards—a day or so afterwards that I spoke to my wife and she told me what the general conditions of the Dallas area was, or at least things—but now I know for a fact that down in the valley, even they were talking about this disliking Dallas people, and if you crossed over to the Mexican side, even the Mexicans over there didn't like Dallas tags and they seemed to know who was out of the country, too.

Mr. GRIFFIN. So, it is your suggestion that this kind of talk had something to do with it?

Mr. ROSSI. People had a fixed idea in their mind about this—that this was all planned, premeditated, and communistic inspired.

After the border was opened between Mexico and the United States, when I crossed over to the Mexican side at Matamoris, I know one or two of the merchants there and in discussing the fact or the incident with this particular

merchant, I told him that I knew Jack and I didn't think that it was Communist inspired or through Cuba or anything and I spoke to him for about 20 minutes, generally speaking, but I could not make that man believe it. The man's comments to me were, "I don't care if you slept with the man or anything, as far as I am concerned, I know this was all brought about through Cuba and the Communists and everything."

He says, "You might know the man, but you may not know him close enough. He may have been a Communist all of his life."

I says, "Well, he could have been, but just from what I know and when I knew him, I never would have suspected or even thought of it and I still don't."

Now, in the newspapers here locally, when I came back to Dallas, there was quite a bit of feeling of animosity about Jack Ruby, so I never made any comments to anybody about my knowing anything or knowing him personally. In other words, I just kept it to myself, and when the trial was going on, I could have gone ahead and offered some testimony on Ruby's behalf, or on just the general behalf of what I knew, but I stayed away, then, because just as Judge Sarah Hughes said, there is a lot more behind all of this and Dallas was guilty of part of it, but that I didn't want to stick my neck out and have the people jumping on me, because it would have hurt me businesswise, and what have you. Emotionally, they were all still quite upset and it wasn't because of what Jack did. I believe it was because Jack had denied them the privilege of knowing just why Harvey Lee Oswald did it.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Now, this, of course, is something that is not within our province to speculate about here.

Mr. Rossi. Right.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Our job is to find out what the facts are, and as to who did what and where and when, and then try to arrive at some conclusions.

Mr. Rossi. Well, Ruby was very well known by the police. He was a friend to them. Whenever he had the opportunity to be he was a friend to them, because he tried to be ingratiated in their field or area.

I know of one or two little incidents where he would contribute to their welfare funds or what have you and I think then when they had him there at the city hall and they caught him after the shooting, and the remark was made, "You know me, I'm Jack Ruby": it wasn't that he wasn't an important man, but I believe he was trying to say, "You know me, I am Jack Ruby. I am your friend, I don't hate cops. I was doing this to help you because your hands were tied."

And I had heard comments made to the effect that many more people said if they had a chance they would get Oswald. I had even heard this comment made in the coffee shops and down in the valley there, that the assassination was set up by Johnson.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Well, as I say, this speculation which we really can't indulge in but I appreciate your wanting to offer this to us.

Mr. Rossi. Well, I am offering it because I think I have studied it and looked at it and I know it and I feel like I know about it, but I don't know—I may be completely 100 percent all wet.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I think we will all be able to form a lot better impression of this after we have gathered all the facts and we are able to sit down and inform the people after we have evaluated it, and I know that from what you have said you will probably be very interested in knowing that we are developing these facts and we are going to publish it in—650 pages—we are working toward, but I want to thank you very much for coming here tonight, Mr. Rossi.

Mr. Rossi. All right. I feel it is a privilege and if I have been of any help—fine.

Mr. GRIFFIN. It has been a pleasure to have you, and again, we appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Mr. Rossi. I guess everybody is sorry it happened—and I am not a Democrat.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Well, I know there are a lot of people who are, are sorry that it happened.

Mr. Rossi. Well, if I could go back and go three times and bring hi back, because I think he was one of the finest young men we have had, at least, I felt that way, and I felt most of us felt that way and I think Ruby wanted to be

somebody and he felt that way—he looked up to the President and thought that he was a fine President, and at any rate that's all changed.

Mr. GRIFFIN. All right, thank you very much, Mr. Rossi, for coming down.

Mr. ROSSI. Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF NORMAN EARL WRIGHT

The testimony of Norman Earl Wright was taken at 9:10 a.m., on July 24, 1964, in the office of the U.S. attorney, 301 Post Office Building Bryan and Ervay Streets, Dallas, Tex., by Mr. Burt W. Griffin, assistant counsel of the President's Commission.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Let me introduce myself. My name is Burt Griffin. I am a member of the staff of the general counsel's office of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy.

I want to tell you a little bit before I administer the oath and start to ask you questions about the nature of the proceedings that we are going to have here for the next few minutes.

The Commission that I work for was set up by President Johnson under an Executive order which he issued on November 29 of last year, and also pursuant to a joint resolution of Congress.

We have been directed to investigate into and evaluate and report back to the President on all the facts that relate to the assassination of President Kennedy and the death of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Under this Executive order and joint resolution, the Commission has been given authority to promulgate certain rules and regulations. Pursuant to those rules and regulations I have been designated to take your deposition. Our particular purpose in calling you here today, as you probably well would imagine, is to find out what you know about Jack Ruby. But if you have any information about the assassination of President Kennedy or any other matters that we are inquiring into, we would like to have any of that that you can give us.

Let me ask you if you received a letter from the Commission.

Mr. WRIGHT. Well, the letter is in St. Louis, but I didn't receive it while I was there. I was on my way when it came to East St. Louis.

Mr. GRIFFIN. I should tell you under the rules of the Commission you are entitled to receive written notice from us 3 days before you appear here, and I would ask you at this point if you are willing to go forward without actually having received the letter.

Mr. WRIGHT. Yes. I spent a lot of money on this.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Do you have any questions about this proceeding before I administer the oath?

Mr. WRIGHT. None whatsoever, because I have been through this with the FBI quite a few times on the west coast, and I imagine it is along similar lines.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Let me ask you to raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. WRIGHT. I do.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Will you state to the reporter your full name?

Mr. WRIGHT. My full name is Norman Earl Wright. My stage name is Earl Norman.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Where do you presently live?

Mr. WRIGHT. I live at 8820 Bermuda Street, Caseyville, Ill.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Were you living in Dallas in the fall of 1963?

Mr. WRIGHT. Yes. My family was here. I will explain that. I lived here, but the week of the Friday the President was killed, I opened at the Largo Club in California the night he was killed, on that day, which would be November 22.

Mr. GRIFFIN. Where had you been working in Dallas previous to that?