

ix. Lewis J. McWillie

Biographical Summary

(1153) McWillie was born May 4, 1908, in Kansas City, Mo. He resided in Dallas, Tex., from 1940 to 1958. (1748) In 1941 and 1942, he was employed at the Blue Bonnet Hotel. (1749) He then worked at the Top of the Hill Terrace, a gambling club in Arlington, Tex. (1750) McWillie also ran a gambling house in Fort Worth called the Four Duces. (1751)

(1154) In September 1958, McWillie moved to Cuba and managed the Tropicana Casino until May 1960. (1752) He worked as a pitboss at the Capri Hotel-Casino in Cuba from May 1960 to January 2, 1961, when he left Cuba. (1753) McWillie also worked in Aruba and Curacao. (1754)

(1155) In 1961, McWillie worked at the Cal-Neva Lodge in Nevada, (1755) and then at the Riverside Hotel, Thunderbird Club, Carousel Club (Las Vegas), and the Horseshoe Club. (1756) In 1978, McWillie was employed at the Holiday Inn Casino in Las Vegas, Nev. (1757)

Treatment by the Warren Commission

(1156) The FBI interviewed McWillie about his relationship with Ruby on two occasions. (1758) McWillie was not interviewed by Warren Commission staff, nor did he testify before the Commission.

(1157) McWillie was mentioned in the Warren Report, which stated that in September 1959, Ruby went to Cuba to visit "a close friend and known gambler, Lewis J. McWillie." (1759)

(1158) According to the Report, McWillie left Cuba in January 1961,* and in 1963, Ruby sent him a pistol in Las Vegas, "but McWillie did not accept the package." (1760) The Report concluded by stating:

The Commission has found no evidence that McWillie has engaged in any activities since leaving Cuba that are related to pro- or anti-Castro political movements or that he was involved in Ruby's abortive jeep transaction. (1761)

(1159) An appendix to the Warren Report included the following:

Ruby apparently met McWillie in about 1950 when McWillie operated a Dallas nightclub. McWillie, whom Ruby said he idolized, supervised gambling activities at Havana's Tropicana Hotel in 1959 and later was employed in a managerial capacity in a Las Vegas gambling establishment. Ruby testified that he went to Havana for 8 days in August 1959 and left because he was not interested in its gambling activities. McWillie corroborated this story except he stated only that Ruby visited Havana "sometime in 1959." (1762)

(1160) Ruby testified before the Warren Commission that McWillie called him from Cuba and requested that Ruby contact Ray Brantley, a gun store proprietor in Dallas, and have "four little Cobra guns" sent to Cuba. (1763) Ruby stated:

*McWillie's activities regarding Ruby and Cuba are discussed at length in another section of this volume.

I called Ray Brantley and I said, "Ray, McWillie called me." I don't remember if he sent me a letter or he called. He said he wants four little Cobras, or something like that. He said, "I know Mac. I have been doing business with him for a long time." (1764)

Ruby said this incident occurred during the early part of 1959. (1765) He had been asked, during his polygraph examination, if he told the truth about relaying the message to Ray Brantley regarding the guns, and Ruby replied, "Yes." (1766) Ruby also testified that he "idolized" McWillie. (1767)

(1161) The FBI interviewed Ray Brantley, the owner of Ray's Hardware Store, where Ruby allegedly purchased the guns. (1768) Brantley stated that Ruby purchased one Colt Cobra on January 19, 1960. (1769) He also stated that, at Ruby's request, on May 10, 1963, he sent a .38 Smith and Wesson Centennial revolver to L. J. McWillie in Las Vegas, Nev. (1770) Because McWillie did not pick up the revolver at the post office, it was returned to the store. (1771) In her FBI interview, Mrs. Brantley related the same information. (1772)

(1162) McWillie told the FBI that in 1963 he did request that Ruby send him a gun, but after discussing it with his wife, he decided not to pick it up at the post office. (1773) McWillie was not asked by the FBI or the Warren Commission if he ever requested that Ruby send him guns in Cuba.

Illegal Activities

(1163) McWillie had been engaged in gambling activities for 46 years (1774) in Memphis, Tenn.; Jackson, Miss.; Dallas, Tex.; Havana, Cuba; Miami, Fla.; and Reno and Las Vegas, Nev. (1775) McWillie, however, did not have an extensive arrest record. (1776) While he was arrested in Dallas, Tex., in 1949 for investigation of gambling, he was released. (1777)

(1164) McWillie admitted being acquainted with several organized crime and gambling figures, including R. D. Matthews, (1778) a Dallas and Las Vegas gambler; Joseph Civello, (1779) a Dallas organized crime leader (now deceased); and Sam Yaras, (1780) the brother of organized crime figure, Dave Yaras. In Cuba, McWillie knew Santos Trafficante, Jake Lansky, and Dino Cellini, notorious organized crime figures. (1781) He stated, however, that he knew them only "casually." (1782) McWillie was employed in Cuba by Martin and Pedro Fox, who were allegedly involved in narcotics and gambling activities. (1783) McWillie stated that he made a number of trips to Miami to deposit money in banks for the Foxes. (1784)

Relationship With Ruby

(1165) McWillie told the FBI that he had known Ruby since 1947 or 1948 but, according to the FBI report, "knew him only as an operator of a nightclub." (1785) According to another FBI report, McWillie also stated that his association with Ruby was:

strictly social and personal without any intertwined business interests, knowing that Ruby is not a gambler and does not understand the gambling business. (1786)

(1166) McWillie did not believe Ruby was involved in "gambling, prostitution, or illegal liquor sales." (1787) He said Ruby had infrequently visited the Top of the Hill Club where McWillie was employed. (1788)

(1167) McWillie told the committee he had met Ruby in approximately 1951. (1789) He explained that he would see Ruby occasionally at Webb's Coffee Shop in the Southland Hotel, a late-night restaurant, and was told Ruby operated the Vegas Club. (1790) McWillie made the following statement regarding his first meeting with Ruby:

Finally, one night we got up to go out into the lobby of the hotel and he walked up to me and said, "Is your name McWillie?" I said, "Yes." And he explained who he was and that he was Jewish and that he was having a problem with his nightclub. He talked like a real nice fellow. I said, "Why don't you go see Mr. Schepps—a man named Julius Schepps?" He owned a big liquor distributing place there and he used to play with us at the Top of Hill, a real nice man. (1791)

(1168) McWillie stated that Ruby did see Schepps and "from then on, I could never get rid of Jack Ruby." (1792) McWillie also stated that Ruby sort of "idolized" him. (1793) He indicated that the problem with Ruby's club was that "they were making him close early or something." (1794) McWillie told the committee that Ruby visited him in Cuba in 1959. (1795)

(1169) McWillie informed the FBI that in 1961, after leaving Cuba, he drove from Miami, Fla., to Lake Tahoe, Nev. En route from Miami, he stopped in Dallas and stayed overnight at Ruby's apartment. (1796) According to the FBI report, McWillie only saw Ruby for "2 or 3 hours on this occasion." (1797) McWillie told the committee that this 1961 visit was the last time he saw Ruby. (1798) He stated, however, that he received several letters from Ruby concerning Ruby's clubs. (1799) According to McWillie, Ruby never visited him in Las Vegas. (1800)

(1170) McWillie told both the FBI and the committee about his request in the early part of 1963 to have Ruby send a gun to Las Vegas. (1801) McWillie did not, however, recall asking Ruby to send four guns to Cuba in 1959. (1802)

(1171) McWillie told the FBI that his last contact with Ruby was approximately 2 months before the assassination, when Ruby telephoned him about:

some trouble he was having with a show, as a result of which he referred Ruby to Bill Miller, the owner of the Riverside Hotel in Reno, where McWillie had formerly been club manager. Their discussion on this occasion had to do only with the club's act with which Ruby was concerned. (1803)

(1172) McWillie also told the committee that Ruby had contacted him in 1963 and informed him of some "trouble" he was having with AGVA. (1804) McWillie said Ruby asked him if he knew the president of the union. (1805) McWillie did not, but referred Ruby to Bill

Miller. (1806) McWillie also called Miller and told him a friend of his was having trouble with AGVA. (1807) Ruby subsequently contacted Miller and later called McWillie a number of times to express his thanks for McWillie's assistance. (1808) McWillie stated he had no familiarity with AGVA's operations in Dallas. (1809)

(1173) McWillie described Ruby as being a very frugal individual (1810) who was always courteous to the Dallas policemen and gave them whiskey as Christmas presents. (1811) McWillie told the committee he believed Ruby wanted to be a big man around Dallas and that he shot Oswald in order to become a martyr of some sort. (1812)

(1174) Regarding Ruby's associates, McWillie stated that he and Ruby had two mutual friends, Jake Rifkin, a gambler, and Meyer Panitz, a bookmaker. (1813) According to McWillie, Ruby knew the two Campisi brothers, (1814) Jack Todd (1815) and Gordon McLendon. (1816)

(1175) McWillie told the FBI that "he did not believe Ruby had any underworld connections" but might have been "acquainted with some figures in gambling and other illegal activities." (1817)

(1176) The transcript of the deposition taken by the House Select Committee on Assassinations can be found in JFK volume V, hearings before the House Select Committee on Assassinations, p. 7ff.

x. Lawrence V. Meyers

Biographical Summary

(1177) Lawrence V. Meyers was born December 16, 1910, in New York, (1818) spent a number of years working in various California cities after leaving New York as a teenager, (1819) and settled in the Chicago area, staying there for 8 years. There is an indication that he once went by the name of Hyman Victor Meyers. (1820) In 1978, he was living in Dallas, having moved there in March 1964 for business purposes. (1821) He married in 1936 and had three children. (1822)

(1178) In 1963, Meyers was a sales manager in the sporting goods division of Ero Manufacturing Co., 714 West Monroe Street, Chicago. (1823) In 1964, he moved to a similar position with a competitor, Farber Brothers, Inc., of Memphis, Tenn. (1824) In 1963, he told an acquaintance that his headquarters was in Chicago and that he had business interests in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Las Vegas. (1825) In 1978, Meyers was semiretired and worked for himself under the corporate name of LVM Sales, Inc. He was also connected with Walls Industry of Cleburne, Tex. (1826)

(1179) There is no indication that Meyers had engaged in criminal activities, had a criminal record or had been the subject of any criminal or related investigations (besides the assassination investigation). He did not appear to have any political or law enforcement connections.

Treatment by the Warren Commission

(1180) The Warren Commission considered Meyers to be a personal friend of Jack Ruby, with no intimation of criminal or similar links, and it merely tried to examine the extent of this friendship, Meyers'