

The Man Who Killed King —His 3 Hours in Memphis

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—The man sought as the slayer of Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his name as John Willard.

He spoke with a Southern drawl.

He paid for his \$8.50-a-week room with a crisp \$20 bill, fishing it out of a pocket and holding it in both hands before handing it to the landlady at 422½ South Main.

He wore a dark suit and appeared to have little in common with men who stay in flophouses.

He took room 5. It is no more than 13 steps from there to the dingy bathroom from which a



Associated Press Wirephoto

A sketch of the man believed to be the assassin.

killer struck Dr. King.

King was shot as he stood alone on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel exactly 205 feet and 3 inches away across Mulberry St.

No Rifle

The man did not have with him the 30-caliber, pump-action Remington rifle and telescopic sight that killed King. It was 3:15 p.m. when he checked into the rooming house.

Mrs. Bessie Brewer said she left the inside chain latch on when the man knocked at the office door.

"He was a clean, neat man," she said. "I showed him room 8, a \$10-a-week kitchenette but he said, 'I only want a sleeping room.'"

"I showed him room 5 and he said, 'This will be fine.'"

"We went back to the office.

"He said his name was John

Willard and I wrote out a receipt. He paid with a \$20 bill. He reached into his right pants pocket, pulled it out and unfolded it with both hands."

Police investigators took the receipt carbon and the \$20 to headquarters.

Mrs. Brewer said the man was as tall as her husband—about six feet.

B. L. Reeves, a 74-year-old retired hotel clerk, watched the man as he talked to Mrs. Brewer.

"I seen him when she check him in. He had his back to me, but I judge he was about 5-11. He had dark hair and a pretty neat hair cut."

Neighbor's View

Charlie Q. Stephens, in room 6—between the room taken by Willard, and the bathroom—got a better look.

"He was clean shaven and had a long, sharp nose. He had normal eyes and a square chin, thick hair at the front and receded on each side.

"He was wearing a black solid color-dress suit, a white shirt and a very dark or black, narrow tie. He combed his hair straight back."

Mrs. Brewer said his features didn't register too much with her, but his neatness was noticeable.

"He spoke like any other Memphian," she said.

She said she never asks questions.

Heard Shot

Stephens said he heard the shot.

"I was in the kitchen working on a radio. When that explosion went off, it sounded like a German 88. I went to the door and

walked out into the hall. I could see the man at the offset in the hall. He had in his hand something wrapped in a newspaper."

The killer climbed a flight of 25 steps to reach the rooming house office on the second floor. He fled the scene by going down 20 steps at 418½ South Main. The 16 units are connected by a walkway.

What the man who registered did between 3:15 p.m. and 6:01 is cloudy.

He did not lie down on the bed. There is evidence he sat on the edge of it. He also moved around the room which has a well-worn wardrobe and a single window with yellow and green floral curtains. The curtains had been placed on top of a nearby mantle, possibly to avoid obstructing his view.

From the window, there is a clear view of room 306 at the Lorraine motel. It was Dr. King's room, but the window is at such an angle that it would be difficult to shoot out of it.

Between 3:15 p.m. and 5 p.m., no one recalls seeing "Willard."

Stephens said around 5 p.m. the man went to the bathroom and stayed about 25 minutes. Apparently, he now had the weapon.

"Willie Anchutz—the man in No. 4—tried to get in the bath and then knocked on my door. I told him that was the man who had rented No. 5. He (Anchutz) returned to his room."

There was bright sunshine at 6:01—24 minutes before sunset—when the killer fired the rifle.

The second-floor bathroom window holds a commanding view of the Lorraine motel at 406 Mulberry.

If King had looked up and to the west from the balcony outside his room—room 306—he could easily have seen his assassin.

He was looking down and talking to friends in the courtyard below when struck.