

NYT
4-13-68

King Funeral Usher a Busy Man; Who Gave Him Job Is a Mystery

ATLANTA, April 12 (AP)—Despite the security precautions surrounding Vice President Humphrey, a white man who did much of the ushering at the funeral of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was not present by design of the arrangements committee.

The King family thought he was a Secret Service man, the minister in charge of arrangements thought he was an aide of some Governor, and presumably the Secret Service figured he had clearance.

But it was learned today that the prominent usher was an encyclopedia salesman named Floyd (Buddy) Ayers of Stone Mountain, Ga.

It was Mr. Ayers who seated former Vice President Richard M. Nixon and who led Senator Robert Kennedy to a pew with the words: "Come right this way, Robert, we have security here."

The words were overheard by an Associated Press reporter who first met Mr. Ayers when the salesman attended a murder trial with James Venable, a lawyer who heads the National Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Inc.

Mr. Ayers busily seated many of the dignitaries at the funeral before sitting down himself. He gave up his seat to the basketball player Wilt Chamberlain later and stood near the coffin of Dr. King.

Federal Government sources

confirmed the identification made by the reporter. It was learned that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had studied Mr. Ayers and had concluded that he was merely seeking the limelight in his actions at the funeral.

Dr. King's brother, asked about the incident, said he had thought the man probably was a Secret Service agent.

The Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker, who had charge of arrangements, said the white man who ushered was, he thought, an aide to a Governor.

He said the man came in with the party of one of the Governors and "other dignitaries knew him." Mr. Walker thought he might even have been with the wife of Gov. Winthrop Rockefeller of Arkansas—who was accompanied by a body-guard-aide, but not by Mr. Ayers.

The F.B.I. declined comment, but a spokesman pointed out that the F.B.I. had nothing to do with security arrangements at the funeral service.

The Secret Service chief here, A. B. Wentz, declined comment. Mr. Ayers himself could not be reached for comment.

His wife, telephoned by a newsman who asked about her husband's actions at the funeral, said: "You'd better talk to him about that. I don't think he would want it in the newspaper."

Bomb Kills Rail Worker
CHICAGO, April 12 (UPI)—A Penn Central Railroad employe died today after the police said a discarded homemade bomb he had found near the railroad tracks parallel to the Chicago Skyway on the Far South Side exploded in his hand. As far as the police could determine, Edward Cummings, 26 years old, of Chicago, a maintenance worker, found the metal device filled with explosive powder near where he was working.