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Second Class post

'Please clear my name: I did not kill Dr. King'

Florida man denies role in assassination

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The black man linked by a white Memphis businessman to the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. denies he had anything to do with the shooting, which rocked America and the world April 4, 1968.

Frank Holt has told *The Tennessean* he wants to clear his name — and a polygraph exam he took yesterday appears to support his claim of innocence.

"I didn't do it — oh, no, no, no, no," Holt said, shaking his head, when questioned by *Tennessean* reporters who tracked him

through public records to a homeless shelter in Orlando, Fla., Friday afternoon. Holt, now 62, flatly denied any involvement before, during or after the civil rights leader's assassination.

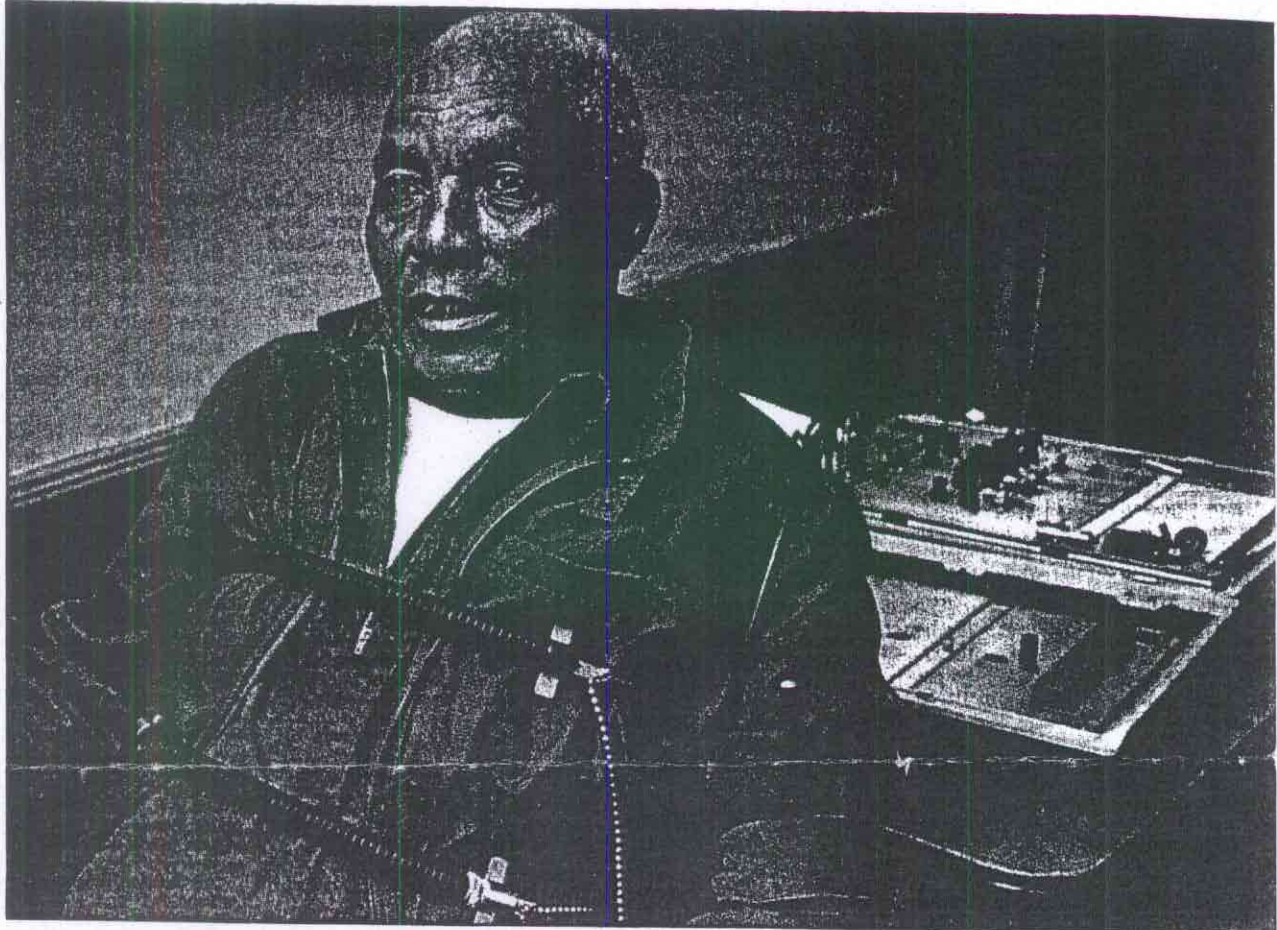
He said he was often a customer at Jim's Grill, a restaurant operated by Loyd Jowers, the man who now claims to have arranged the King assassination. Jowers, who now lives in Martin, Tenn.,

poses a convoluted conspiracy story, in which money changed hands to hire a man other than James Earl Ray to kill King.

Jowers conspiracy claims have drawn international attention since *The Observer* of London first brought them to light a week ago. ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson traveled to Memphis last week to interview Jowers for the *Primetime Live* program, which was broadcast nationally Thursday.

However, Jowers and four Memphis residents tied to him say they cannot tell what they know without immunity from prosecution. Lawyers involved have tried to control the flow and interpretation of information about the claims.

However, one witness, Willie Atkins, 63, told *The Tennessean* that Jowers told him repeatedly Holt was the triggerman. Holt's name has circulated among reporters in Memphis for several days. Shelby County District Attorney General John Pierotti said



P. Casey Dale

Frank Holt, a former Memphis resident, relaxes after taking a polygraph examination.

he, too, has heard Jowers name Holt as the triggerman.

But Holt, who worked as a produce packer in Memphis in 1968, contends he barely knew Jowers and has no knowledge of a plot to kill King, arranged by Jowers or anyone else.

"Jowers is lying," Holt said. "Jowers ain't give me no money."

Holt said he knew Frank Liberto, the now-deceased Memphis produce dealer whom Jowers has named as the man who paid him a large sum of money to arrange the assassination.

Holt said he had heard Liberto tell a number of produce workers, shortly before King's death, that King "was going to start

trouble and the only way to stop trouble is to kill the s.o.b., then it won't be no trouble."

But, Holt said, he never discussed any assassination plan with Liberto, Jowers or anyone else.

King, who launched the Southern civil rights revolution with the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott in 1955, had gone to Memphis to help striking city sanitation workers in spring 1968.

Friday, Holt said that he was at Jim's Grill, Jowers' small cafe on Memphis' South Main Street, when King was shot as he stepped onto the balcony of the nearby Lorraine Motel.

He said he did not hear a shot and was

unaware of the shooting until a police officer came into the restaurant and told patrons King had been shot. Holt said he was told to leave the grill, which he did, and walked home.

Holt, who has spent his life as a manual laborer, appeared stunned when reporters told him Friday that some people in Memphis are saying he was hired and paid to shoot King.

"I want to clear my name," Holt said after learning of the accusation that he shot King, a hero to most black Americans.

Holt agreed to take a polygraph test at the request of *The Tennessean*, and the newspaper flew him to Nashville for a test yesterday, at the office of private investiga-