

'I Could See A Guy And He

By Richard H. Weiss
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

When a huge explosion rocked the breakfast-time quiet of Claytonia Terrace in Richmond Heights this morning, some residents thought it was an earthquake. But others knew right away that it was a bomb.

Windows rattled. Dishes shook in the

cupboards. Pieces of debris were scattered across lawns, some of them landing in the back yard gardens of the two- and four-family brick flats.

In front of one of the flats at 1115 Claytonia, smoke and fire rose from the shattered remains of a black, late-model Cadillac. Residents rushed from their homes to see a man they knew as a quiet, hard-working produce stand

operator lying in the streets, his legs blown off.

The man was John Paul Spica, who died from the force of the explosion caused, police believe, when a bomb beneath the driver's seat of his car exploded at 8 a.m. Neighbors say it was a sight they will never forget.

Louis Ferretti, who lived next door to Spica at 1111 Claytonia, recalled: "I

Didn't Have Any Legs'

was getting out of bed when I heard this explosion. I could see a guy lying where he's lying now and he didn't have any legs."

Ferretti's brother George, who lives in the flat above his brother's, described the explosion as "a big flash. There was no question it was a bomb. I came running out and he was just falling out of the car. We all began

running around asking each other what are we going to do, what are we going to do? We were just hysterical."

George Ferretti said he regained his composure, went into his house, got a blanket and threw it over the body. Someone else called the police and fire departments.

A woman who lives in the
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Neighbors

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neighborhood said the explosion sounded like an earthquake. "The earth started shaking," said the woman, who asked that her name not be given. "I ran out looked at him and said, 'He's still alive, he's still alive, go out there and help him.'"

The gruesome scene quickly drew a horde of spectators. Some of them, who said they live more than a block away from the scene of the bombing, said their windows and dishes were rattled from the force of the explosion.

Word spread quickly. One woman who lives on the other side of Highway 40 brought her two preschool-age children to see what had happened.

Spectators were kept away from the car by a police barricade. But debris was scattered for yards. The radio from the Cadillac was blown about 15 yards away. A man's shoe was lying in the front yard of a duplex. Police combed the neighborhood for evidence.

Spica apparently was not well known by his immediate neighbors. Louis Ferretti said he believed Spica had lived in the neighborhood three or four years. "He used to go to work, come home and that was about all I knew of him," he said.

He said he had once asked Spica why his Cadillac bore Illinois license plates. Spica told him that he wanted to save taxes, Ferretti said.

George Ferretti described Spica as a very quiet man. "During the summer he'd wake up at 5 a.m. and go to his produce stand," he said. "You'd never see him. I never had a conversation with him."

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POST-DISPATCH

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1979

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Hoodlum Is Killed In Car Bomb

John Paul Spica, a convicted murderer and reputed hoodlum, was killed today when a bomb planted under his automobile exploded on Claytonia Terrace, a quiet residential street in Richmond Heights.

One policeman at the scene said it appeared that a bomb containing at least 10 sticks of dynamite had been placed beneath the car, which was parked in front of an apartment that Spica occupied with his girlfriend at 1115 Claytonia.

The bomb went off soon after 8 a.m., just instants after Spica got into his car, a black 1977 Cadillac coupe. He is believed to have been on his way to work at a produce stand that he operated at Shaw Boulevard and Vandeventer Avenue.

Spica had been mentioned last year in a House Assassinations Committee report as a possible link in the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Robin Ferretti, who lives at 1111 Claytonia, told the Post-Dispatch that she had walked down the sidewalk with Spica when they accidentally encountered each other on their way out the doors of their residences. Mrs. Ferretti said that her car was parked two autos behind Spica's and that she was behind it putting things in her trunk when the blast occurred. The open trunk lid shielded her from the force of the blast, she said.

George Ferretti, a brother-in-law of Mrs. Ferretti who lives at 1109

Blast

Claytonia, said he heard the bomb and ran outside. There he found Spica's body slumped in the driver's seat of the car, partly fallen out the open door.

The impact scattered wreckage over a broad area of the block, damaged other autos and shattered several windows, including one in the second-floor duplex apartment where Spica lived.

Police said Spica's girlfriend, Dina Bachelier, apparently was in the apartment at the time. Witnesses said she ran down to the street, sobbing hysterically, but then ran back upstairs.

When police arrived, she refused to answer the door, and officers had to enter the apartment by climbing up a ladder to an outside porch.

Miss Bachelier's automobile was parked across the street from Spica's, and police quickly checked it, too, for explosives before allowing anyone to get close to it.

Police said Spica's teen-age son arrived at the scene soon afterward and

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Bomb

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identified the body for authorities.

Spica, who was 42, had been mentioned in the House Assassinations Committee report last year as a possible — but unsubstantiated — link between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and James Earl Ray, King's convicted assassin.

Spica served a term for murder in the Missouri Penitentiary at the same time that Ray was there in the 1960s, and the House Assassinations

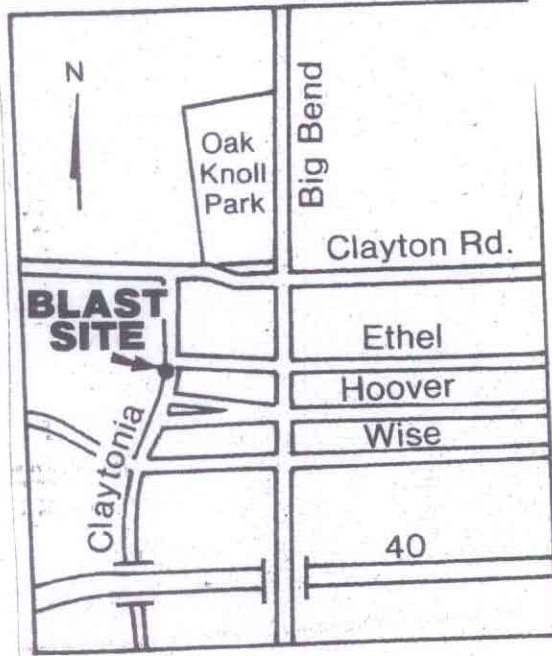
Committee said it was possible that an offer to kill King had been transmitted through Spica to Ray. Spica was the brother-in-law of Russell G. Byers, a Rock Hill businessman who the committee said was reported to have received an offer of \$50,000 for King's assassination.

Spica was convicted in the 1962 fatal shooting of John J. Myszak, a Normandy real estate dealer, who was shot down outside a friend's house.

Spica was accused of arranging the killing after he was approached by Myszak's wife, Marie, who wanted her husband murdered.

Spica was sentenced to a life term, but was paroled in 1973.

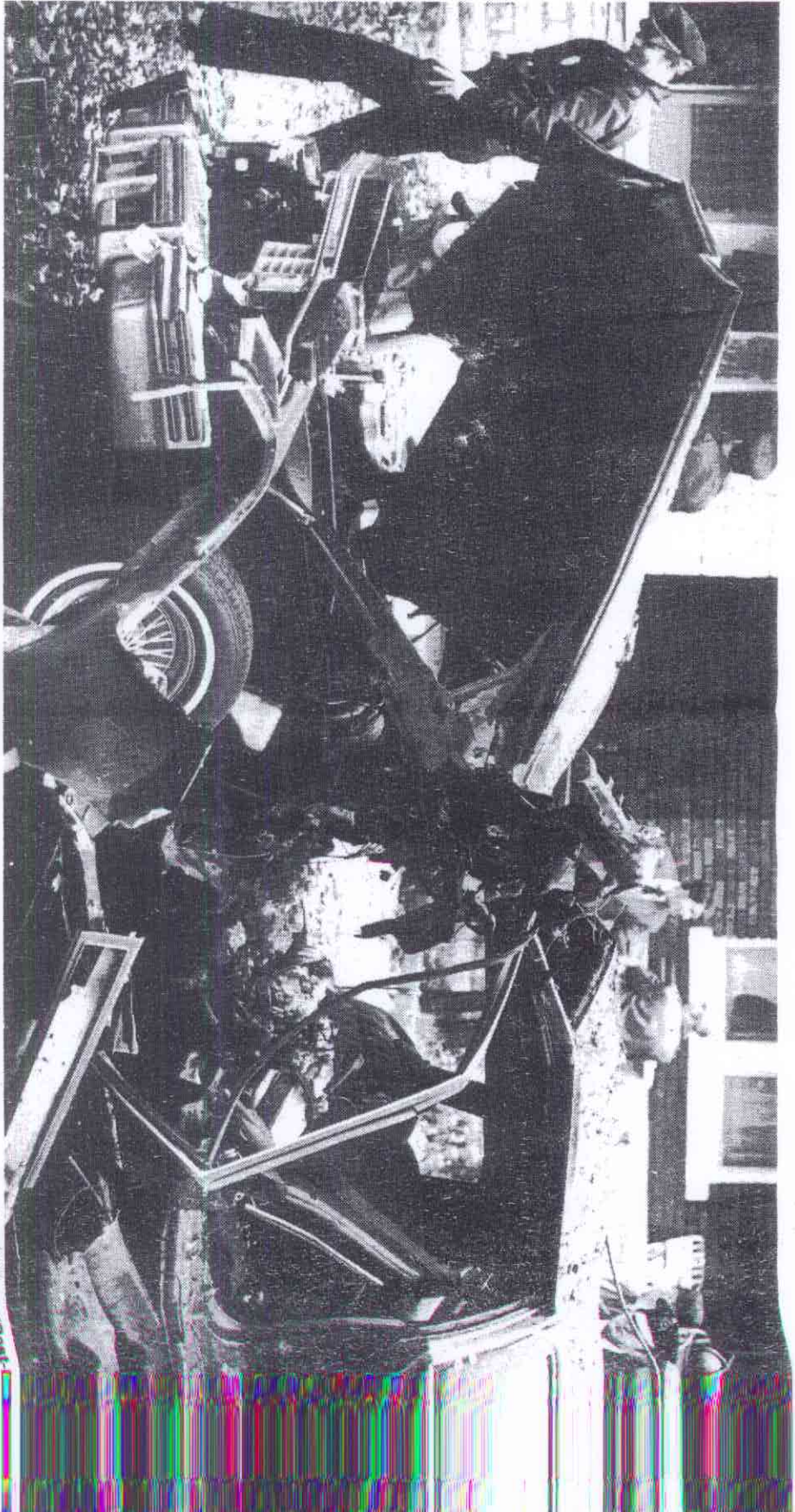
Spica's automobile bore Illinois license plates registered in the name of Glenn Spica of Springfield, Ill. Police said Miss Bachelier's automobile, a blue Buick, also carried Illinois plates and was registered to her at an address in East Carondelet, St. Clair County.



Neighbors said Spica and Miss Bachelier were quiet and had attracted no particular attention.

Ralph R. Anderson, Richmond Heights police chief, said his department was unaware of Spica's residence and had no reason to place him under surveillance.

(Information for this story was gathered by Ralph Williams, William Freivogel, Richard H. Weiss and John J. Hynes of the Post-Dispatch staff. It was written by Cleon Swayzee II.)



Death Car

Police searching for evidence around the shattered wreckage of John Paul Spica's late-model Cadillac. Investigators said Spica

was killed when a bomb, apparently placed under the car, blew up when Spica started the engine about 8 a.m.

Larry Williams/Post-
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