

# Mob Links Studied In Killing Of Spica

John Paul Spica's reputed underworld ties to an Illinois vending machine company will be studied intensively by police investigating his death Thursday in a bomb blast in front of his Richmond Heights home.

Authorities said that at least two investigative crews involved in the case would concentrate on the B&H Vending Co. a Fairmont City cigarette and vending machine company in which Spica, once convicted of conspiracy to murder, was said to be a part owner.

The principal owner of the company, police say, is Anthony Giordano.

Giordano is said to be the leader of the St. Louis underworld and to have strong ties with organized crime figures across the country.

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

Spica in recent years operated a produce stand at Shaw Boulevard and Vandeventer Avenue. But police believe that he had maintained close ties with the St. Louis underworld and was active as well in mob-linked vending and

amusement machine operations.

Spica was killed about 8 a.m. as he was getting into his automobile in front of the apartment where he lived at 1115 Claytonia Terrace.

Investigators have determined that the blast was caused by four to eight sticks of dynamite planted under his automobile.

State records show that neither Spica nor Giordano is listed as an officer of either the B&H Vending Co. or the Plaza Amusement Co. Records show both are owned by the BGG Corp., the principal officers of which are

James Giammanco, president, and Dina Bachelier, secretary.

Giammanco is a nephew of Giordano. Miss Bachelier was Spica's girlfriend. He was living with her in her apartment near where the bomb blast occurred.

Miss Bachelier was at home at the time of the blast. She was seen briefly outside, crying hysterically, but ran back into the second-floor apartment and refused to talk with police.

Police said they were unable to talk with Miss Bachelier on Thursday but see BOMBING, Page 7

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hoped that they could meet with her today.

Meanwhile, police were searching for the driver of a yellow pickup truck seen leaving the scene immediately after the blast. A Wellston policeman who was the first person to reach Spica Thursday said he saw a bearded man in a yellow pickup truck drive away from the scene moments after the explosion.

Patrolman Nick Sturghill said in an interview that he was suspicious of the driver partly because the truck almost hit his car and partly because "when you're a policeman, you are always watching who is leaving the scene of a crime."

Police emphasized that the truck may just have been passing the scene at the time.

"The explosion probably scared the hell out of the guy," said Lt. Col. Harry Slaten, who is heading the Major Case Squad investigation of the bombing. "But we are asking him to come forward."

Sturghill said he was driving west on Clayton Road just west of Big Bend Boulevard on his way to court in Clayton when he heard the powerful explosion and saw the smoke rise from it.

He immediately turned onto Claytonia Terrace and hurried toward the scene. He encountered the pickup truck when he was within a few feet of the smoking car. "The guy almost took off my left headlight. I got the idea he was trying to get out of the area," said Sturghill, who was driving his personal car.

He said the pickup was a late-model truck and that the driver was a middle-age white man with a brown beard. There was no one else in the truck.

Sturghill said he found Spica lying outside the passenger door of the car, which had been blown open by the explosion.

Sturghill said, "He was trying to say something, his eyes were open. But I couldn't make out what he said.

"I called for a pillow and blanket. I put the pillow under his head and laid it in my lap and covered him with a blanket."

"But his eyes began to get that look on them. Have you ever seen a man die? The eyes get that glazed look. He was dead within four minutes."

Investigators also planned to interview Spica's parole officer with whom he was scheduled to meet.

"We know he had a criminal background, but we're keeping an open mind on what we're looking into," Slaten said.

Twenty-five persons from the Major Case Squad, Richmond Heights Police Department and the U. S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms are working on the investigation. Slaten said four men, starting this morning, would be assigned "to nothing but the vending company."

Spica, 42, had been mentioned as a possible, though unsubstantiated, link between King and James Earl Ray, King's convicted assassin.

Spica served a term for conspiracy to murder in the Missouri Penitentiary during a time in the 1960s that Ray was also serving time. 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 was said to have received an offer of \$50,000 to kill King.

Spica was convicted for the 1962 fatal shooting of John J. Myszak, a Normandy real estate dealer. Spica was accused of arranging the killing and sentenced to life but was paroled in 1973.

Earlier this year, Giordano was linked by law enforcement authorities to organized crime activities involving the funneling of millions of dollars annually from Colorado to the St. Louis underworld. Authorities believed that the activities included large-scale fencing and counterfeiting operations.

Giordano in 1977 was granted an early release from federal prison where he was serving a four-year sentence for violating anti-racketeering laws.

(William Freivogel, Kevin Horrigan and Becky McReynolds gathered information for this story.)