

*'We're Going to Shoot ... King in the Head and
Frame a Jailbird Just Like They Had Kennedy'*

Man Who Overheard Plot Says the Crime Syndicate Assassinated JFK, Dr. King

President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were both murdered by members of an organized crime syndicate and Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray were framed for the killings, a statement by a convicted narcotics dealer charges.

The statement, which is filled with dozens of names and dates and places, partially checks out, according to an independent investigation by the NATIONAL TATTLER.

The ringleader of the alleged plot against Dr. King is quoted in the statement as saying "in a very clear voice that he was going to shoot that damn (expletive deleted) King in the head and frame a jailbird just as they had Kennedy."

That ringleader, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation sources contacted by TATTLER, is a known mobster dealing in drugs, guns and other illegal activities.

The statement, which was written by Robert Byron Watson and his mother, has been in the hands of federal and police authorities since 1971, but was "discarded" without explanation.

Dr. Ralph Abernathy, Dr. King's successor, civil rights leader Dick Gregory, and Georgia state legislator Hosea Williams have telegraphed President Gerald Ford, telling him of the existence of the Watson statement and of C.H. Andrews, whom they say is willing to testify concerning his alleged role in the King assassination if granted immunity from prosecution.

CORETTA KING, widow of Dr. King, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, head of operation PUSH in Chicago, have joined the growing chorus of leaders who have called for the reopening of the investigation into Dr. King's death.

U.S. Atty. Gen. Edward Levi ordered a review of the case concerning Dr. King's death put together by the FBI, in the wake of the disclosure that the FBI conducted a seven-year campaign to discredit Dr. King prior to his assassination.

And President Ford himself has suggested a new investigation of the "developments" in the assassinations of President Kennedy and Dr. King

By **TOM LUTZ**
Of the Tattler Staff

since it was disclosed that the FBI undertook a harassment campaign of Dr. King. (President Ford, then a congressman, was a member of the Warren Commission, which determined that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, murdered President Kennedy.)

The statement by Robert Byron Watson is admittedly self-serving in that it "explains" how the young man became involved in drug dealing. Watson's father, Robert Willard Watson, worked for the Fulton (Georgia) County Sheriff's Department for nearly

20 years and was killed in the line of duty on the last day of 1966.

According to Watson's statement, he became involved with the men he allegedly overheard plot Dr. King's death when he was only 14 years old.

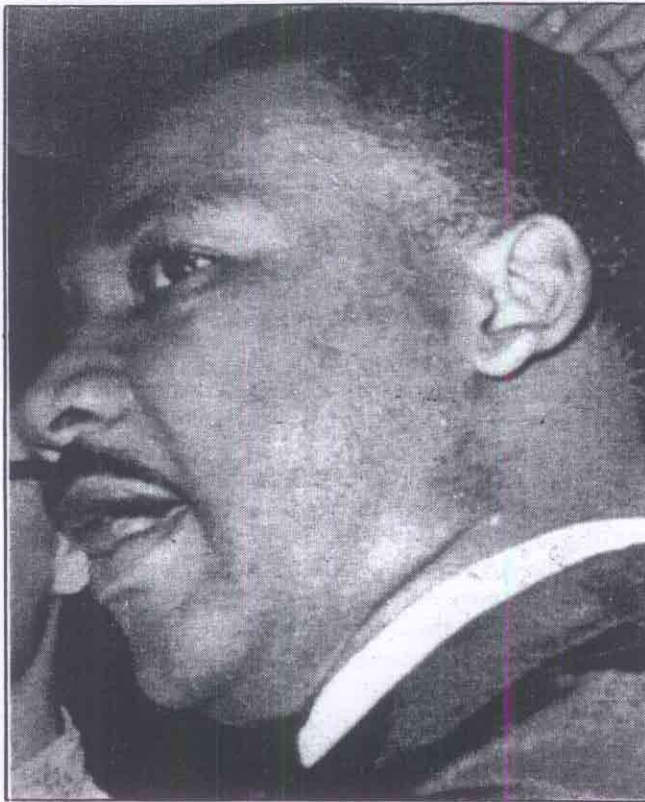
"Being a severe asthmatic, thus spending all my time indoors as a child, I devoted most of my time to the study of archaeology, anthropology, paleontology, history, art history and geology," the statement says. This interest brought him in contact with some men who ran an art gallery in Buckhead, Ga. It was at the art gallery that Watson claims he overheard the assassination plot against Dr. King.

"ON THURSDAY, the week



DR. RALPH Abernathy (right), Dr. King's successor as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and civil rights leader and comedian **Dick Gregory** (left) have contacted President Ford, informing him of Watson's information and urging immediate action on the charges.





DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

just prior to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, I was going to work at the (name deleted) gallery after school," says Watson's statement.

"As I walked into the foyer I could hear the TV on and men talking in the room which was adjacent to the small foyer. Mr. X (the ringleader who is called a mobster by the FBI) came out of this room and met me before I could walk in, almost immediately after I first walked into the front door. Mr. X seemed overly nervous for some reason, almost as if he didn't want me to be there ... He stood there and asked me to go get him some cigarettes and gave me extra money to buy something for myself to eat.

"I didn't want anything to eat so I bought the cigarettes and went back. The front door was ajar so I went in. Since the foyer was carpeted and the TV was still on, no one seemed to hear me. I stopped suddenly as I was just about to enter the den to the right where the men were.

"I HEARD MR. X saying in a

very clear voice that he was going to shoot that damn (expletive deleted) King in the head and frame a jailbird just as they had Kennedy. The TV was on the news at that time which was telling of Dr. King's leading the strike by the garbage workers in Memphis that day. Mr. X's voice said that they would kill Dr. King exactly one week from then to the day and about the same time of day.

"After hearing that, I decided it was best if I went and had something to eat as Mr. X had suggested earlier. This I did and in about a couple of hours I returned to the gallery and attempted to appear as normal as possible. About this time, my mother picked me up. No one appeared to suspect that I knew anything about what was said in the den by them.

"When I got into the car with my mother, I told her that Dr. King was going to be killed. She asked me how I knew but I would not tell her until Dr. King had been murdered ... I told her the place, day and time Dr. King would be murdered as well as

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how he would be murdered. Just as I had said, he was shot in the head."

Following Dr. King's death, Mr. X and those who allegedly plotted his death "left the country" and did not return until James Earl Ray was apprehended. Mr. X (whose real name is given in the Watson statement) told Watson that he might "never come back" before he left the country at that time.

"My mother and I believed that if they knew that I had overheard the conspiracy, they would have us killed. We decided the best thing for us to do if they came back was to go back to the (name deleted) art gallery and act as if we knew nothing," Watson's statement says.

UPON THE RETURN of the mobster and his associates, Watson was warned by them that "bad things happen to people who overhear the wrong things and tell the authorities. He said their car could be blown up, they could be shot, their house could catch on fire. He said that they could even get into trouble with the authorities and all sorts of accidents could happen to people. We didn't go back out there after that."

From 1968 and until June of 1970, Watson and his mother sat on their story. It was then, however, that they decided to tell the proper authorities. They flew to Washington, D.C., at their own expense and asked to see President Nixon. Unable to have



an audience with the President, they were interviewed at length by the Secret Service, whose agents asked Watson if he had seen a psychologist "as I must be crazy."

According to Watson, the Secret Service told him and his mother to "forget the whole



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thing." One guard at the White House did suggest, however, that Watson tell his story to the Atlanta office of the FBI, which Watson did upon his return home. The FBI agents to whom he spoke gave him no satisfaction, other than to confirm that Mr. X was a gangster and known to the FBI, according to Watson's statement.

From there, Watson turned to an attorney, who eventually, got Watson in contact with attorney Bernard Fensterwald, the lawyer who defended Watergate figure James McCord and has long had an interest in political assassinations.

"Mr. Fensterwald has done extensive investigation on these people and has substantiated evidence to support my story," Watson's statement says.

The statement continues:

"AFTER WE turned the information in, it evidently got back to the wrong people as 'the syndicate' approached me and told me that it had been decided that my mother and I would be killed."

The man who threatened Watson was Mr. X, along with two other men. "These people told me that it would do no good for me to inform on them to the government as they had people in government - high in government. They told me that if I would cooperate with them, they would not kill my mother and me."

According to Watson, the gangsters opened yet another art gallery as a front to running drugs from Asia. Watson was sent on buying trips to Asia,

JESSE JACKSON, head of Operation PUSH, has joined other civil rights leaders in demanding that Watson's charges that members of crime syndicate assassinated both President Kennedy and Dr. King be completely investigated by authorities.

DR. KING'S widow is strongly supporting the pleas of leaders such as Dr. Abernathy and Jesse Jackson that the late civil rights champion's death be further probed and cited Watson's statement as proof the investigation should go on.

where the mobsters forced him to spend \$25,000 of his father's life insurance money, and they used the goods he purchased to hide heroin.

"Before leaving for the U.S. from Asia," Watson's statement says, "I did learn one valuable piece of information from Mr. Z (an associate of Mr. X) as he told me that President Kennedy was killed because he was conspiring with the Communists."

When Watson returned to the U.S., four armed and masked men broke into his mother's home and threatened to murder Watson if he informed on the "syndicate operation" that was running the drugs from Asia. Watson and his mother were saved, according to his statement, when a high school friend knocked on the back door of their home. "We reported this to the police, but the men were never caught," the statement says.

Shortly thereafter a package arrived from Thailand for Watson. It was a magazine wrapped in brown paper from Bangkok, in which a shipment of heroin was placed.

WATSON WAS living in Chamblee, Ga., at the time that the package arrived "trying to hide out from the gangsters as I

was completely unnerved by everything at this point," the statement reads.

His mother called him when the package arrived, but Watson did not go and pick it up, claiming in his statement that he had adequate reading material where he was living at the time and did not need the magazine. Both he and his mother, he claims, did not know the package contained heroin.

Shortly after the heroin arrived at his mother's home, a "dozen narcotic agents surrounded our home and came in on her ... with drawn guns ... The agents later raided the apartment where I was staying and took me to jail for importation of heroin from Bangkok, Thailand through the U.S. mail," Watson's statement says.

From then on, Watson claims he was involved in gun running,

witnessed a machine-gunning assassination of a man by one of the gangsters with whom he had become involved, and was further involved in drug running.

One of the mobsters "was flying from Atlanta with Thompson 45 sub-machine guns that the syndicate was getting from the military here in the States and flying through the Southern United States, through Mexico and down to Columbia where he would land at Carta

Hoena, Columbia. He would leave the machine guns there and pick up a load of cocaine and pot."

WATSON CLAIMS that he left the United States in 1974 and travelled to Chile, where he was befriended by a high official in the Chile government who arranged for the cocaine shipments that were picked up in Carta Hoena, Columbia.

According to Watson, this Chile government official was paid

through his New York attorney, who was a personal friend of Richard Helms, the former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, which helped overthrow Salvador Allende, the ex-President of Chile.

When he returned to Atlanta from Chile, Watson claims, he worked as a paid informant for the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration, but that he was "set up" and busted for selling drugs by agents of DEA.

In July of this year, Atlanta Public Safety Commissioner A. Reginald Eaves announced that he was probing Watson's charges.

James B. O'Keefe, assistant to the special agent in charge of the Atlanta office of the FBI, said the bureau had Watson's statement in 1971. "It was referred to the Justice Department, and we have not been advised to investigate it further since that time."

POLICE INVESTIGATORS

earlier this year told reporters that Watson's material had "not been able to verify that there was a conspiracy, nor to prove that there wasn't" one.

Public Safety Commissioner Eaves noted that part of Watson's story had been corroborated.

A similar check by TATTLER of the names and location of many of the people mentioned in the lengthy statement tends to corroborate what Watson claims.

James Earl Ray Still Contends He's Innocent

James Earl Ray, the man who confessed to assassinating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has contended for six years he didn't murder the Nobel Prize winning civil rights leader — and, he says, others were involved in the crime.

Ray contends he was coerced into signing the confession to the killing, coerced by his own attorney, famed lawyer Percy Foreman, who believed him guilty and wanted to save him from the electric chair. Ray was sentenced to 99 years after signing the confession — a “deal” that was worked out with the prosecution.

One of Ray's present attorneys, Robert Livingston, charges that the U.S. Department of Justice and the State of Tennessee are covering up attempts to reopen the King case for the Central Intelligence Agency.

RAY'S POTENTIAL involvement in the assassination, according to his present story, is that he purchased a gun alleged to be the murder weapon on instructions from a man he knew only as “Raoul,” whom he met in Montreal while an escapee from the Missouri State Penitentiary. Ray says “Raoul” wanted the gun as a sample to show a potential customer in a gun running deal.

Ray says he didn't shoot Dr. King, and that he wasn't even at the scene of the crime.

While he has never spelled out what his role in the assassination might have been, Ray has hinted that it might have

been planned by persons from New Orleans.

In an evidentiary hearing this year, Ray's latest legal advisors attempted to prove that he was coerced by Percy Foreman into making the confession. That hearing ended, much to the surprise of courtroom observers, with a ruling that Ray understood what he was signing. The ruling is now on appeal, where it is felt Ray's guilty plea will be tossed out and he will be retried.

IF RAY DOES get a new trial, it will probably begin some time early in 1976. Issues that will be raised at that trial, if and when it does come, include:

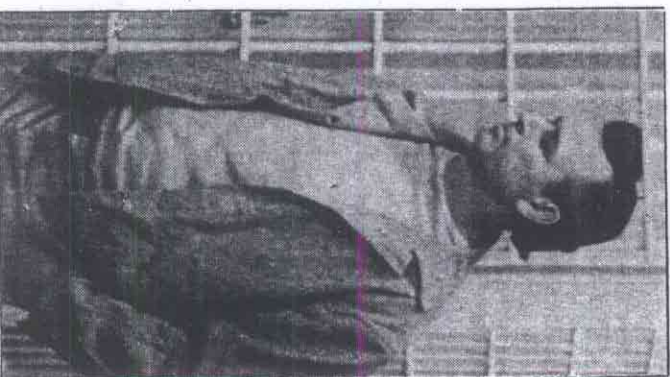
- Whether or not Ray was in the rooming house across the street from the motel where Dr. King was shot. No witnesses have claimed that shots were fired from the bathroom window of the rooming house, as the prosecution contends they were. Charles Q. Stephens, whose testimony identified Ray as fleeing the rooming house, was apparently so drunk at the time that such an identification is now in question. Stephens' lady friend, who was living with him at the time, says that the man she saw running from the bathroom was much smaller than Ray and had different color hair. She was promptly placed in a mental institution by the state.

- Two witnesses have been found to back the testimony of Dr. King's chauffeur, Solomon Jones, that the civil rights leader's killer fired from bushes

behind the rooming house.

- Whether or not the bullet that struck down Dr. King was fired from the rifle supposedly bought and used by Ray. The FBI was unable to establish that. Ballistics experts for Ray's defense are convinced that such an identification of the bullet is scientifically possible, but they don't think the bullet will match up with the rifle because, if anyone was firing from the bathroom of the rooming house, he would have been required to stick the rifle through the wall to get the proper firing angle. (It is also material to note that the trees that were blocking the view from that window were cut down a few days after the assassination.)

- **ORIGINALLY**, Dr. King had planned to stay at a Holiday Inn, but then-director of the FBI J. Edgar Hoover leaked the fact that King would be staying at a white owned motel. This caused a switch in King's plans and arrangements were made for him to stay at the black-owned Lorraine Motel, where he met his death. The day before Dr. King arrived, a man appeared at the Lorraine Motel and identified himself as an advance man for Dr. King. The man had Dr. King's room switched from the first floor suite the Lorraine Motel management had prepared for him to the second floor room overlooking the swimming pool. It is a complete mystery to the King organization who the “advance man” was; they didn't send him, that's for sure.



JAMES EARL RAY ... still behind bars, he maintains he was innocent in Dr. King's slaying and says the 'confession' he signed was done under duress.

- The critical question of where Ray got the more than \$12,000 he spent after his escape from jail until he was arrested in London.