JACK ANDERSON

Time Backs This Column's Report on Dr. Martin King

WASHINGTON — Now that the lid has been lifted on intimate aspects of Dr. Martin Luther King's life this column can reveal details which good taste dictated we withhold at the time of his murder. After the Nobel prize winner was gunned down on the balcony of his Memphis motel on April 4, 1968, the FBI began painstakingly piecing together the complex strands of his life in hopes this would lead them to his killer. The FBI's work was made easier by the fact that it already had a substantial file on Dr. King compiled through a series of wiretaps started in 1963 at the direction of Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy.

This electronic snooper, originally reported in this column in 1968, illuminated some dark corners in the civil rights leader's private life.

(Bill Lynch is on vacation.)

The FBI reports showed that the minister's dynamism and courage had made him enormously attractive to many women.

One of these was the "wife of a prominent Negro dentist in Los Angeles," said a report dated Feb. 20, 1968. This information was furnished by a confidential informant who said Dr. King had been having an "illicit affair . . . since 1962 with the woman.

"The source related an incident which occurred some time ago in a New York City hotel, where King was intoxicated at a small gathering," the report said. "King threatened to leap from the 13th floor window of the hotel if this woman would not say she loved him."

The dentist was known to be furious about the reported liaison. In fact, the information given the FBI sugested that the wife's baby might have been fathered by Dr. King.

Sifting each fact in the murder case, the FBI found that James Earl Ray, the suspected killer, had been in Los Angeles shortly before he returned east to stalk Dr. King. Could the jealous dentist, the FBI wondered, have hired Ray to slay King?

This column, at about the same time, learned the name of the dentist and we flew immediately to Los Angeles. There, in an emotional interview, the wife told us her relationship with King was "merely a friendship." Her husband loyally backed her up.

We asked her whether she had called Dr. King and she responded sharply, "I didn't call him. He called me." She said, however, he had telephoned frequently and that on at least one occasion she had seen him off at the airport.

She said Dr. King had confided in her that the FBI was watching him. But she steadfastly denied any intimacies.

Our interview and checks around Los Angeles convinced us that the dentist could not have had anything to do with Ray. The FBI came to the same conclusion.

BILL BUCKLEY'S PARTNER

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