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# Friend of Rap Brown Dies With 2nd Man in Auto Blast

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BEL AIR, Md., March 10—Ralph E. Featherstone, a leading black militant, and an unidentified Negro were killed late last night when an explosive device shattered the car Mr. Featherstone was driving.

The explosion occurred two miles from the courthouse where pretrial hearings were being held for Mr. Featherstone's close friend, H. Rap Brown, who is charged with arson and incitement to riot.

The state police said that the explosive device was being carried in the car and that it was apparently resting on the floor between the feet of the unidentified passenger.

Both feet and both arms of the passenger were blown off. This indicated, according to Dr. Werner Spitz, deputy medical examiner of Baltimore, that the man was leaning over the device when it exploded.

### Blacks Disbelieve Account

Local blacks remained skeptical, preferring to believe that the two men were victims of an ambush laid by the Ku Klux Klan or some other white extremist group.

For several hours this morning, rumors spread that the unidentified man was the defendant, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown, a former chairman of the Militant Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, has not attended the pretrial hearings. His counsel, William M. Kunstler of New York, said he did not know Mr. Brown's whereabouts.

Hours later, Mr. Kunstler said he did not believe that the unidentified man was Mr. Brown. But the police mean-

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while were apprehensive that the false reports of his death might incite black militant reprisals and riots in Baltimore, Washington and around the country. Gov. Marvin Mandel alerted the Maryland National Guard.

Mr. Kunstler demanded an indefinite adjournment of the pretrial proceedings, declaring that feelings in predominantly white Harford County, already hostile to his clients, were now so turbulent among both the white and black communities that a fair trial was impossible.

### Delay Granted

Circuit Judge Harry E. Dyer Jr. granted an adjournment until Monday so that Mr. Kunstler and Mr. Brown could attend Mr. Featherstone's funeral in Washington.

But Judge Dyer refused a defense motion to transfer the trial to Cambridge, Md., the scene of the 1967 riots that Mr. Brown was accused of provoking. Judge Dyer said he saw no evidence of the prejudicial climate contended by Mr. Kunstler.

Judge Dyer himself inspected the remnants of the death car and later told reporters he believed the explosive device was being carried inside the vehicle and had gone off accidentally.

However, Mr. Kunstler, who also visited the wreckage at the state police barracks, rejected any inference that Mr. Featherstone had knowingly transported explosives.

He said he had known Mr. Featherstone for years, adding, "I don't think that sort of thing was Ralph Featherstone's bag."

Besides, he said, the Featherstone car was heading away from Bel Air, moving south past the outskirts of the town, when it was blown to pieces on U.S. Highway 1.

"Why should they be leaving town if they came here to blow something up?" Mr. Kunstler asked.

### Near Police Barracks

Mr. Featherstone was about a mile north of the state police barracks when the explosion occurred.

Mr. Featherstone had borrowed the car from a friend, Miss Jean Elizabeth Wiley, and

had driven the car up from Washington last night. Mr. Kunstler said he and his aides were unaware of Mr. Featherstone's presence here.

Miss Wiley said Mr. Featherstone left Washington in the company of a man she identified as William (Che) Payne, a former S.N.C.C. worker in Alabama and Mississippi.

Another friend confirmed that Mr. Payne wore his hair short and had a thin horizontal mustache. These features were borne by the dead passenger, according to the medical examiner, who pointed out that a more detailed description was impossible because the lower face had been shattered.

### Names on Cards Differ

"He did not have a bone in his body that was intact," Dr. Spitz said. "He was a Negro male in his late 20's or early 30's, and his body had an athletic build."

The short hair and a slightly receding hairline that did not taper in the front, convinced police that the man was not Mr. Brown, whose hair is bushy, with a hairline pointed in the front.

The state police said a variety of names were found on identification cards carried by the dead passenger. These included a draft card made out to William Henry Rogers of Selma, Ala., born 1947, and a bank card made out to a Rev. C. B. Robinson of Atlanta. A birth certificate and a bank card both more the name William H. Poyné.

Earlier, as Judge Dyer, defense lawyers, prosecuting attorneys and newsmen crowded around the crumpled remains of the car, state police officials were loudly accused by two local black militants of pulling a fast one.

The blacks, Walter Lively, former executive director of the Urban Coalition of Baltimore, and Clarence Davis, of Aberdeen, said the investigation had barely started before the police announced that the explosive device was carried on the floor of the car, implying that this was with the full knowledge of the occupants.

"The men would have had to be fools to allow it to explode accidentally," Mr. Lively protested.

At the request of the state police, Mr. Lively had viewed the bodies at the Baltimore Morgue. The police were anxious to get him to announce to the news media as soon as possible that the unidentified man was not Mr. Brown.

Mr. Lively said the state police "pleaded with Davis and I not to exploit the incident." He said the unidentified man was a stranger to him.

### Accuse 'Birchers or Klan'

Both he and Mr. Davis seemed convinced that the pair were ambushed "by Birchers or the Klan" and they suggested that the marks of a tire skid behind the explosion site indicated that another car had overtaken the Featherstone car and someone had thrown the explosives into it.

But the State Police said they had found two witnesses to the explosion and that the only other car on the road at 11:45 P.M., the time of the blast, was driven by one of the witnesses. This car had just passed the Featherstone vehicle and was pulling into a side road when the explosion came, a blast so powerful that it seemed to lift the second car off the road.

Parts of the unidentified man's body were found 100 yards from the explosion.

When he learned of the explosion early today, Mr. Kunstler told newsmen it would be "absolute madness" to continue the trial under the circumstances. He said he had telephoned Mr. Brown's wife in New York and told her to tell her husband to stay away from Bel Air until calm was restored.

Mr. Brown's presence is not required here until jury selection begins next week. Mr. Kunstler intends to challenge the jury as unrepresentative of the community.

Mr. Kunstler complained today that there were only three Negroes among the first panel of 50 prospective jurors summoned to the courthouse by Judge Dyer and then dismissed until next week.