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Personality in the News

Percy Foreman

By Joe Schula

Associated Press Writer

HOUSTON, Tex. AP — Attorney Percy Eugene Foreman, who is prepared to take part in the trial of assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King, has experience with assassination cases.

The 66-year-old Houston lawyer defended Jack Ruby for four days following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the slaying of Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963. Ruby killed the accused slaying of the president.

"You know I don't let people tell me what to do in a case," Foreman told Ruby in a letter advising he was withdrawing as defense attorney.

Foreman, 6-foot-4 and 250 pounds, successfully defended Mrs. Candace Mossler and her nephew, Melvin Powers, in a sensational murder trial in Florida. Reputedly, his fees from the Mossler case increased his already great wealth by a considerable amount.

Once compared to Clarence Darrow, Foreman replied, "I've tried more murder cases in a year than Darrow did in a lifetime."

Born in a log cabin near Livingston in piney woods Southeast Texas, Foreman was one of a county sheriff's eight children.

During his 41 years of legal practice, Foreman has been called "flambouyant," "a study in contradictions" and a "cad and a louse."

Two law enforcement officers once beat up Foreman after he won a murder case acquittal. A month earlier, 200 Texas officers had given him a diamond-studded watch after his successful defense, without fee, of four policemen accused of brutality.

"Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do," Foreman said of the beating incident.

The colorful attorney has been acquitted on charges of adultery, operating a policy racket and using abusive language. He has paid fines for letting weeds grow too high on his property, and he paid 228 parking tickets at once, getting 105 dismissed.

Foreman was once beaten by the widow of a man whose accused slayer he freed. Another time, he was struck by the purse of a woman whose husband he represented in a divorce action.

"In such cases, what was once love turns to hate and they can't hate themselves so they hate the lawyer," Foreman said.

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