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Dayton, Ohio, Neighbors
Of Killer Are Surprised

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ATLANTA, June 30—When the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. confronted the young black man who had, only an hour or so before, shot the aging minister's wife to death, he reportedly asked the assailant why he had done it.

The quiet, calm 21-year-old Marcuh Wayne Chenault Jr. sat in a hospital room before being taken to jail and answered: She was, he said, "one of the enemy."

And who, Mr. King asked, is the enemy? "Christians," replied the young black man.

Beyond that, almost nothing is known about what motivated Marcuh Chenault, an apparently intelligent but unprepossessing college student from a black middle-class family in Dayton, Ohio, to shoot Mrs. King and a church deacon to death.

Mr. Chenault came to Atlanta, he told the police, because his god had told him to kill the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. Instead, he said, he shot Mrs. King because she was close to him.

Those who knew Marcus Chenault in Dayton were baffled and shocked when they heard the news.

Ohio State Student

Young Chenault, chubby, bespectacled and described as "a nice kid" by hometown neighbors, had lived with his parents in a modest and well-kept middle-class neighborhood on the predominantly black west side, at 2808 Oak Ridge Drive, a quiet residential street; later he moved to an apartment near the campus at Ohio State University at Columbus. He was a junior who initially pursued an engineering curriculum but subsequently changed his major.

There is some contradiction in accounts of the accused slayer's history. Many of those who knew him found him a model young man—bright, affable, sensible.

But in recent months, that image began to change. Two months ago, he was arrested and fined \$25 for playing "very offensive home-made tapes" from a stereo system mounted in his apartment window. According to court records, the comments that blared into the street were extremely obscene.

Neighbors near his apart-

ment also recalled he had on occasion preached out the window over the stereo system.

His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Wayne Chenault Sr., closeted themselves in the house with law enforcement officials and turned away visitors.

Several young women who appeared at the house, cousins of young Chenault, were stunned when they heard the news, calling it "impossible."

A neighbor, Ernest R. Johnson, said the Chenault family moved into the house six or seven years ago, coming from Kentucky. The senior Chenault is an employe of the Atomic Energy Commission laboratory in Miamisburg, Ohio, 15 miles south of Dayton, reportedly working as a plant tour guide. The accused man's mother is a registered nurse.

The Chenault family—Marcus Jr., a brother now in the Air Force and a sister—were said by neighbors to be religious, church-going people, although not in an ostentatious way.

Mr. Johnson said of the young Chenault: "He was a wonderful, he was a fine young man, he talked sensible, he was a good boy. I guess something just went wrong with him."

Another neighbor, a young man who said he attended school with Mr. Chenault as a teen-ager, described him as fairly obscure, never seeming to become involved in anything in particular, simply "an ordinary guy."

Another neighbor, Mrs. Lilia Austin, said M. Chenault always seemed modishly dressed, although on occasion he had been seen wearing a dashhiki, the African robe popular among some American blacks, and teased his hair into a modest Afro.

His landlord in Columbus described him as quiet, with few visitors.

Mr. Chenault apparently had not been at the apartment for a few days, however, and had reportedly been in Dayton.

He left there by bus yesterday bound for Atlanta to accomplish the mission that, he said, his personal deity ordered him to perform.