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King Suspect Says He's Biblical Jacob

By Austin Scott

Washington Post Staff Writer

ATLANTA, July 1—"My name is Servant Jacob," said the short, boyish defendant who stood before the court accused of killing Mrs. Martin Luther King Sr. He spoke clearly, without noticeable emotion:

"I'm a Hebrew. I was sent here on a purpose, and it's partly accomplished."

Those words, spoken today during a short, heavily guarded arraignment, were the first publicly uttered by the accused assassin since he rose from a church pew during an intonation of the Lord's Prayer on Sunday, shouted something about killing Christians, and shot three church-goers, two of them fatally.

The 23-year-old black man from Ohio who is charged in the deaths of Mrs. King and a church deacon, says he is no longer Marcus Wayne Chenault of Dayton and no longer recognizes his earthly parents. He is, he says, serving "the God of Jacob."

His attorney said Chenault feels he really is Jacob, not just someone called upon to take up the name of Jacob, but really Jacob of the Old Testament.

"Did God plant the mind of Jacob in him? Did the spirit of Jacob come into him? I don't know," said attorney Randy Bacote. "He says he is Jacob. There is no



Associated Press

Marcus Wayne Chenault, right, before his arraignment in Atlanta on murder charges.

question in my mind he considers himself "Jacob."

And, Bacote said, he asked to plead nolo contendere (no contest) because Spiro T. Agnew entered that plea to a charge of income

tax evasion just after he resigned as Vice President.

"When I first saw him it was uppermost in his mind," said Bacote, who refuses to say who retained him to represent Chenault.

"He said, 'Agnew pleaded nolo contendere, and put himself on the mercy of the court. I want to plead nolo contendere and place myself on the mercy of the court

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and this nation and the whole world will see I will get no mercy."

Bacote tried to enter that plea to two counts of murder and one of aggravated assault, saying it was the only one that made sense from a legal point of view at this early stage of the proceedings.

Final charges have not been decided on, he said, and a nolo contendere plea can be changed to either innocent or guilty later on.

City Court Judge E. T. Brock refused to accept it, however, and instead entered pleas of innocent on all counts.

Chenault was held without bail for action by a Fulton County grand jury.

He has been quoted as telling the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Sr. that he shot Mrs. King "because she was a Christian and all Christians are my enemies." He has also been quoted as crying out when church members subdued him, "Don't hit me, don't hit me. The war did this to me, the war did this to me."

Substantially the quotes are true; he did make those statements, Bacote said in an interview. But he has also stated that he never served in the armed forces, the attorney said. It is possible he was shouting, "The Lord did this to me."

"His god, the God of Jacob, informed him to come to Atlanta for the urpose of confronting Dr. Martin Luther King Sr.," said Bacote. "He said he was aware of what he was doing, he was aware he was doing some shooting, but he was not aware that he had killed anyone."

When informed that he had, the attorney said, "His reaction was that it was done. There was no remorse, no outburst of happiness. It was done."

Bacote said Chenault knew who Mrs. King was before he began firing. "His statement was the senior King was too far on the other side. Someone told him there's Mrs. King playing the organ, and a minute after that everything took place."

The attorney said he would not comment on when Chenault received the message from his god, except that he had gleaned from several statements that "Evidently it was some time ago, within this year."

Atlanta police say they have no evidence of conspiracy, although Mayor May-



United Press International

Marcus Chenault, father of the suspect in Mrs. King's slaying, talks to newsmen at Dayton, Ohio.

nard Jackson, who believes Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in April, 1968 was a conspiracy, says he doesn't know. Chenault's own statements are conflicting.

"He impressed me to be sincere in his statements; I think he believes what he's saying," said Bacote.

"He said he didn't belong to any organizations or groups . . . He also stated no one knew what his mission was, he placed no confidence in any other person, he had to do it himself, no living person aided or assisted him."

Yet the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, who was visiting one of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff members in jail after leading a series of demonstrations last week, said that when Chenault was brought in, he was "very positive" about a conspiracy.

"He said I was on the list," Abernathy said. "He said there was a conspiracy to get us all . . . To get all the civil rights leaders."

Bacote said Chenault told him he recognized Abernathy and the man he was visiting, the Rev. Hosea Williams, when he saw them in

the jail. He had seen them in photographs, Bacote said.

Abernathy said Chenault's first words were, "Oh, there's Abernathy. If you want to live, you'd better get that reverend off your name."

"I said that he was in jail and couldn't hurt anybody. He said, 'That's all right, there is a group that'll get you,'" Abernathy said. He described Chenault as a "a joyful person. He seemed a happy fellow."

Bacote said Chenault told him, "There are certain Christian leaders who are perpetrating a false religion, Christianity, and they have to answer to that."

"He didn't mention any non-Christian religion. He didn't mention any religion he might have been other than Hebrew. Hebrew meant a black follower of the God of Jacob, as distinguished from a Jew."

Jacob was a biblical character who bought his brother's birthright and was given the name Israel by God, with whom he communicated.

Asked if Chenault appeared to be a fanatic, Bacote said "He doesn't appear to be a fanatic to me, he appears to be dedicated to a purpose . . . He impressed me as being 100 per cent in tune with his purpose. He is outgoing to me, I think he is outgoing to all the law en-

forcement officials who deal with him. He is not trying to hide anything. He is thoroughly in tune with his purpose and doesn't mind talking about it."

Asked whether Chenault accepts the system of justice that now has custody of him, Bacote replied: "He recognizes the fact that he believes this Christian nation will ultimately purge him — destroy him. He doesn't believe he will get justice. He cites Agnew's case as Vice President."

After Chenault read the account of the killings in this morning's papers, "he smiled and said, 'There are many distortions,'" Bacote said.

Chenault, former student in education at Ohio State University in Columbus, used a loudspeaker system to preach sermons to neighbors. He was fined \$50 for disorderly conduct apparently stemming from one of his window sermons, police said.

Sally Gallagher, a cashier at a cafeteria in suburban Upper Arlington, Ohio, where Chenault worked this spring, said she had told the manager she believed the youth was "a psycho," UPI reported.

"(He started on the black racist business a few days before he quit," Mrs. Gallagher said. "He said all leaders of the black movement didn't know anything. He said he was going to quit school. He was jiving all the time."

"It's just a paradox," said Ernest Johnson, a neighbor of the Chenault family in Dayton, "his parents didn't raise him that way. I mean if he ran the streets or was wild it might be easier to comprehend. Sometimes I thought he was a sissy. I don't mean that in a bad way. It's just that he was always to himself."

Mrs. King's body is scheduled to go on public view Tuesday at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where her husband has been pastor for more than 40 years.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s grave is just behind the church, and throughout Sunday evening, people trickled in to stand for a moment of silent tribute.

A sign proclaiming the site in the future home for the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change bears a 1966 photo of King walking black children to school in Grenada, Miss., the day after black children had been beaten by whites opposing desegregation.

A block and half down Auburn Avenue, beneath a sign that still bears King's name as founder, the big windows of the South Christian Leadership Conference office display a set of

stickers reading, "Abolish the Death Penalty."

During those same hours, the two-story, rambling King home received a steady procession of friends.

Mrs. Jimmy Carter, wife of Georgia's governor, spent much of the day there. The mayor was in and out, as was Rep. Andrew Young, (D-Ga.), once King's right-hand man at the SCLC.

"He made it through the death of his son, because she was there to help him . . . They're a real strong family and they're a real support to each other."

Dr. King said shortly after the killing that there was "no bitterness" in his heart. Later he commented, "The man's crazy, there's nothing that can be done with a fellow like that."

Of Mrs. King, Young said, "Daddy King called her Bunch, which was short for honeybunch."

"She grew up in church life . . . her role almost always has been a support role. The church was much more a base for (Martin Luther King Jr.'s) activities than anyone ever realized. That was the way he stayed in touch with masses of black folks, day in and day out, and she tended home base."

" . . . if Martin was going to Selma or Birmingham, she knew ministers all over, and she would call them up and say, 'Look, I want you to get behind this.'"

The presence of Rev. Calvin Morris, executive director of the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change, in the pulpit Sunday may have saved the life of the elder King.

"He was sitting with the rest of the congregation because he had to leave early to catch a plane," Morris said. "He was to preach in New Jersey and asked if I would preach for him."