

Mrs. King's Slaying

A Report of Black Death 'Troop'

Dayton, Ohio

The Dayton police and the FBI were searching yesterday for a close friend of the man charged with killing Mrs. Martin Luther King Sr.

The man, sought for questioning in connection with the killing, was identified as Walter E. Brooks Jr., an associate of Marcus Wayne Chenault. Chenault, 23, is accused in the shooting death of Mrs. King and a church deacon and the wounding of a parishioner.

In Atlanta, hundreds of mourners paid final respects yesterday to Mrs. King in the Ebenezer Baptist Church where she was slain Sunday.

The line of mourners for Alberta King, matriarch of the King family, stretched past the crypt of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., her slain

son who lies entombed about 150 feet from the entrance of the church.

In an interview published yesterday in the Dayton Journal-Herald, a man subsequently identified as Brooks was quoted as saying he and Chenault were part of an organization called "The Troop." Its avowed purpose, he reportedly said, was to kill black ministers and civil rights leaders whom members of the group felt had deceived and falsely led black people.

The Dayton police also said they are investigating a possible link between the killing of Mrs. King and the mysterious deaths of two black ministers here in the last two months. Police officials said they will go to Atlanta to question Chenault, who is being held without bond.

The Rev. William Wright, 56, was killed by a sniper May 12, and the Rev. Eugene C. Johnson Jr., 30, was shot and killed June 3. There have been no arrests in the cases, the police said.

The new developments gave some credence to reports of a conspiracy to kill black leaders. FBI agent Palmer Baken said the federal officers are investigating "to see if there was a conspiracy."

After the shootings in Atlanta, rumors spread through the black religious community here that ten to 20 ministers had been marked for death.

The rumors were taken seriously when it was reported that the police, in a search of Chenault's apartment in Columbus, found a list of ten national religious and civil

rights leaders also marked for death. That list reportedly included Dr. Martin Luther King Sr.

In the interview published here, Brooks said he met Chenault when both were students at the Ohio State University. He said that he was supposed to have accompanied Chenault to Atlanta, but that his friend left without him.

Brooks also said that Dr. King Sr. had been the original target.

In Atlanta an attorney for Chenault said the young man has denied belonging to any organized group.

Attorney Randy Bacote said Chenault told him he had "never been a party to any group, organization or following."

New York Times