

# Jerome Johnson Depicted By Those Who Knew Him

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Jerome A. Johnson, identified by the police as the man who shot Joseph A. Colombo Sr., turned up yesterday in the recollections of a frightened woman who said he had forced her to live with him and of a detective and a coed in New Jersey who knew him as a fascinating campus drop-in.

The frightened woman, who asked that her name be withheld, was found at a West Side address where Johnson was reported to have lived recently. She said she met him at the same Rutgers University campus where officials said he used to hang around.

He presented himself as a lawyer, the woman said, and offered to help her with a "minor" police problem. One day he showed up at her apartment,

she said, and that was the start of "three months of torture." From time to time, she was beaten and raped, the woman said, and threatened with an ax, machete or sword.

The woman, who said detectives had interviewed her yesterday, told of Johnson's talking into the night, contending he was "God" and admiring Italians.

When she heard the news of the Colombo assault and of the killing of a man named Johnson as the assailant, the woman continued, she knew instantly that it was he, not another Johnson.

In New Brunswick, N. J., a campus detective at Rutgers, James Wolfe, spoke of Johnson

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**ASSAILANT'S RESIDENCE:** Hotel Christopher, 180 Christopher St. in Greenwich Village, where Jerome A. Johnson, who shot Joseph A. Colombo Sr., was said to live.

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as a spellbinding conversation-alist who first fascinated, but then frightened, some of the coeds. There he was known as "the Pisces man" because of his constant talk of astrology. He put on a skit about Scorpio and death, and eventually drifted away after students complained.

Kathy Moreno, former graduate student, recalled Johnson's wandering about the campus and dorms. "He'd say he was the Pisces man as a way of picking up chicks," Miss Moreno said.

But after several incidents last year in which girls became frightened, Miss Moreno said, he disappeared.

"The girls were very glad to get rid of him," she said.

Other traces turned up in Greenwich Village where a police detective recalled arresting Johnson June 4 on drug-possession charges, and a shopkeeper reported Johnson wrote a bad check June 18.

Anthony Monopoli, owner of the Monopoli at Fourth Street and the Avenue of the Americas, who received Johnson's bad check had clearly remember him yesterday as "clean, well-mannered, nicely dressed."

The check, for \$27.12, was for a Mexican belt and an assortment of colored candles — "peace, love, that sort of thing"—Mr. Monopoli recalled. It was drawn on the account of Bark Book Distributing, Inc., a concern at 1133 Broadway, where no executives were available yesterday.

"He carried a camera," Mr. Monopoli said, touching on a detail that appeared repeatedly in recollections of several persons who said they knew Johnson.

The city police detective who arrested Johnson on June 4 was Charles Zambri of the Charles Street station in the Village. He was called with his partner, Detective James Walsh, to the Christopher Hotel, a five-story building at Christopher Street and the West Side Highway frequented by truck drivers and itinerants.

"The desk clerk thought he recognized a man pictured in an F.B.I. homicide flier [wanted poster] from California," Detective Zambri said.

Fingerprints eventually disproved this, he added, but in the meantime the suspect, who was registered at the \$6-a-night hotel as Jerome A. Johnson, was booked on drug charges. The detective said hashish and marijuana were found in a brown leather briefcase Johnson carried, but these charges were dropped later by the District Attorney's office on the ground of an illegal search.

"I remember his as very cooperative, not trouble at all," the policeman said.

Johnson stayed at the hotel only one night, a clerk said yesterday.

In his briefcase — Johnson's only bit of luggage — was found a number of pictures, the detective said, only one of which he recognized, that of Hitler. The police in New Brunswick, where Johnson had lived most his life, also reported finding a picture of Hitler in the home still maintained at 88 Throop Street by his mother, Mrs. Ethel Johnson Smith.

Detectives were working around the clock to trace the significance of such scraps of information from the 24 years of Johnson's life. In that period,

before he died in a burst of gunfire inflicted by a man the police suspect was a Colombo bodyguard, he had run up a police record of seven arrests in New York, New Jersey and California.

The arrests were for such charges as burglary, forced rape and robbery in the last four years, with the police records thus far unclear on the outcome of most of the cases. Records list the occupations supplied by Johnson as "playwright and astrologer," according to New Brunswick police.

Los Angeles police records list two aliases for the man: Addison Barry Rand and Addison Johnson.

Recollections presented thus far agree on a number of points, that Johnson—a black—was a natty dresser, greatly interested in cameras and the zodiac, with a gift for small talk that he frequently put to use with young women, particularly white women.

None of the persons interviewed thought that Johnson had been heavily involved in politics or militantly involved in the civil rights movement.

**Called Good Con Man**

"He was the most excellent con man I ever met," Detective Wolfe of the Rutgers force said. "He could take any role and play it well."

The detective said reports that Johnson had assaulted a Rutgers coed eventually began circulating, but no formal charges were ever made.

Miss Moreno recalls him as wearing a white plastic yachting cap and frequenting a New Brunswick theatrical group, Brecht West, whose doors on Albany Street were locked yesterday.

"He was always around," she said. "He was very nice. He wasn't rude . . . but he became enough of a nuisance."

The terrified New York woman who said that Johnson had terrorized her said that she had called the police on three occasions to have him ejected, but he always returned. Sometimes he would jump out from a dark corner, press the machete to her body and warn her against calling the police, she said.

He left for good about three weeks ago, the woman said, when her former lover, a man named Ed, returned to live with her.

The woman said Johnson talked at length of many things. Society was against him because he was black was one theme, she said. The Italians was another, she said, recalling that he said something to the effect that: "The Italians are really with it—they understand silver."

Johnson would talk about things that made no sense, the woman said, as well as of his desire to make a lot of money. He would say that society owed him this, she added.

Another tenant in the building recalled Johnson as a man who "seemed to have delusions of grandeur."

"He spoke of the wickedness of society. . . . I thought he was crazy," said the man who described himself as a worker in a mental institution.