

NEWS WISCONSIN
SON 7-24-77

Assassinations Panel To Open St. Louis Office

The House Select Committee on Assassinations, which is charged with the investigation of the deaths of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., will set up an office next month in the St. Louis area.

It will be manned by Madison County sheriff's deputy, Conrad (Pete) Baetz, who is taking a year's leave of absence from his post as public information officer at Edwardsville for Sheriff John Maeras.

It has not been determined whether the office will be in St. Louis or in nearby Illinois, Baetz said. His leave will begin Aug. 1 and he will be in Washington for three weeks of briefings.

Primarily, Baetz will be working in the investigation of James Earl Ray, the convicted killer of King. Ray was born in Alton, and lived for several years in St. Louis. Baetz will attempt to learn whether Ray had accomplices from this area and whom they might have been.

Baetz, 30 years old, was born in Alton and now lives in Wood River with wife Madilyn. He is familiar with the geographic area where Ray spent many years of his life.

Baetz has been interested in the case for several years and has spent time researching it. Since February, he has been working part-time with committee investigators on an unpaid basis, and recently was invited to join the investigative unit of the committee.

He said he expected to return to his regular deputy sheriff duties in about a year, where he holds the rank of sergeant. Baetz, whose father was a well-known criminal lawyer, was a legal technician with Army Intelligence before joining the sheriff's department seven years ago. He has taken several college courses but does not have a degree.

The House Select Committee has been beset for the last year with internal disputes. Its chairman is representative Louis Stokes, (Dem.), Ohio.