

BECTION LIES AT DEATH'S DOOR

Mystery Deepens As Clues Crop Up In Becton Case

Police Working Tirelessly, Weigh Theories of Jealousy, Robbery, Underworld Job Inside Work and Other Angles in Effort to Unravel Mystery

INVESTIGATION FAILS TO ESTABLISH MOTIVE
New Information Likely to Lead to Momentary Apprehension of Suspect; Congregation and Followers Pray for Life of the Evangelist

By JOSEPH H. RAINEY

Mystery shrouds the attempted assassination of Evangelist G. Wilson Becton.

As the "Gospel Feast" evangelist lies near death's door an awed public is asking who committed the dastardly crime?

Rev. Becton was kidnapped and shot through the head by two white thugs as he drove up in his luxurious automobile, late Sunday night, in front of Tindley Tea Room, 1506 Christian Street. Fifteen minutes elapsed before motorcycle police found him stretched out in the rear of his car, the motor running, in back of the Children's Hospital, Bainbridge street near 18th.

While doctors are feverishly working over the unconscious body his followers are congregated in his tabernacle fervently praying for his recovery.

Sacrificial dollars are being taken up nightly to pay the evangelist's hospital expenses and dimes are being consecrated by the members of his party.

Police are working 24 hours daily in an effort to fathom the mysteries enshrouding this most unusual kidnapping and attempted murder.

Several conflicting theories have been advanced by the police but yet no definite motive has been established.

Was it caused by a woman's jealousy?

Was robbery the motive?

Was it the result of some untold story of a "dark past?"

Was he interfering with the smooth functioning of other churches?

Was it the work of racketeers, who desired to close his mouth?

Was it an inside job?

Police were of the opinion late Wednesday that new developments have been established in the case and an arrest is expected momentarily.

Little by little police have been piecing together the few clues that have been given them. At first it was reported that Becton had waged a war on the number game but investigation shows that this is untrue. If anything he had boosted the digit game by telling the people to count the Father one, the Son two and the Holy Ghost three and then pray over those three numbers.

A woman, however, has been reported (Continued on Page 3, Col. 3)

Becton Bulletin

Officials at Graduate Hospital stated early last night (Wednesday) that pneumonia had set in the lung of Rev. G. Wilson Becton. He was in a critical condition at the time the TRIBUNE went to press.

Mystery Deepens In Becton Shooting

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to be talking very freely about the case and it is rumored that this woman whispered in the tune of "big money" a proposition into the ear of one of the members of Becton's troupe.

PLOT SUSPECTED

Certain ministers in Philadelphia, the woman is reported to have told the man, were willing to pay a large sum of money to get rid of the dapper dancing evangelist. His services have for the past two weeks been drawing large portions of the congregations from certain local churches. A year's stand was planned by Becton and the pastors agreed that some method must be used to encourage him to leave town or at least to close his services.

Further credence can be put in this rumor when it is considered that several people who were in the neighborhood of 15th and Christian st's., less than 10 minutes prior to the tragedy and saw a stocky Negro woman and a Negro man talking to two white men as they stood in front of the American Store on Christian st. at 15th.

As Becton's car rolled past these four people, the man was seen to point towards the car and then the man and woman disappeared in the darkness south on 15th st. as the two white men advanced towards the car.

FORCE AIDES OUT OF CAR

It was at this stage that Rev. Alfred A. Campbell, pastor of New Mount Zion Church, of New York, Becton's assistant, and Becton's secretary, Simon Roulhac, were forced out of the car by the white men as they held guns against their ribs. The gunmen immediately jumped into the car, one at the driver's wheel and the other in the rear seat and as the automobile roared off the shot was heard that pierced the left temple of the evangelist.

Becton himself claimed immediately after being admitted to the Graduate Hospital, where he now lies in a semi-conscious condition, that the only reason more bullets were not fired at him was that he slumped in the seat and acted as if he were dead.

Physicians in the hospital claim that the operation, which was performed on him early Monday afternoon to probe a portion of the bullet from his brain, was successful but they also say that he "lies between life and death" and anything may happen.

QUESTION TROUPE

That police feel that someone connected with the troupe may be connected with the case is quite evident when it is considered that for hours daily during the last three days members of the troupe have been questioned at length and their finger prints taken.

Another clue that may bear fruit is the fact that Broadway A. C., where the revival services are being conducted, was not leased by Becton and his Gospel Feast Party but by the Christian Business Men's Association of this city of which J. C. Chappelle is president. An attempt was made to lease the arena for a year but only a 6-months stand was arranged.

Chappelle will be remembered as the former president of the Other Fellow's Club, which gave a ball at the Strand recently that caused much discussion. Since then he has resigned that office to engage in religious work.

In an effort to solve the riddle it is even suggested that perhaps Becton was not on the level with some of his backers and that they decided to take matters into their own hands.

WAS SOMEONE JEALOUS?

For years Becton, who is separated from his wife, has been reputed as a man who did little socializing with women. However, those who know him intimately say that this is not true and that he has been friendly with many women and that it is possible some jealous admirer may have concocted a plan to send him to the "great beyond".

Those who have frequented the jazz-time services of the evangelist, who boasted when he was last here of having more than 100 suits in his wardrobe, know that women sit in all parts of the church, cast longing eyes at him as he skips across the rostrum and talk of him in the most endearing terms. Police consider it quite possible that one of his feminine admirers thought she had reason to have his life suddenly blotted out.

ROBBERY MOTIVE DISCARDED

The robbery motive has practically been dismissed by detectives due to the fact that nothing on his person was disturbed by the gunmen. Roulhac had the night's receipts and the thugs saw him take the bag of money out of the car when he alighted. They made no attempt to grab it.

It is said that Becton has been in tough spots in his days because of attentions paid to women in cities in all parts of the country and it is not improbable that out of the past came some incident that caused someone to feel justified in pulling down the final curtain on the man's life.

All these things are probable as well as possible and it is from all these angles that the police are carefully and strenuously studying the case.

VISITORS FLOCK TO HOSPITAL

In the meantime men, women and children in all sections of the city are flooding the hospital and this newspaper office inquiring concerning Rev. Becton's condition. Never in the history of the

Graduate Hospital, officials of that institution claim, have they been swamped with thousands of inquiries about anyone individual.

One person standing in the hospital as inquiries were being made was heard to say, "That fellow must be Jesus Christ".

So great was the demand for information about Becton at the TRIBUNE office that it was found necessary to post a bulletin in the front window every 3 hours informing the public of his condition.

FOLLOWERS PRAY FOR RECOVERY

Weeping and moaning was audible in many parts of down town the night of the affair. Naudain street, in back of the hospital had so many people lined up in it a few minutes after the evangelist was rushed there that a large squad of police found it difficult to control the mob.

People refused to leave the street in front of Becton's temporary home and hundreds of them remained there until daylight Monday morning. Finally they left by ones and twos when they were told that Rev. Becton was not seriously hurt and would recover quickly. This, however, did not satisfy some of the most ardent believers in Becton and they remained to wait and pray.

More than 15 minutes elapsed after the kidnapping before Becton was found. Patrolmen, motorcycle police and mounted police were scouring South Philadelphia in an effort to locate Becton's car when two men, ignorant of the fact that he had been taken away came upon the scene and told police they had just seen his car on Balmbridge st. near 18th. They recognized it by the cross on the radiator. Police rushed to the scene, found the minister with blood streaming down his face from the bullet wound, halted a passing car and rushed him to the hospital.

In the meantime finger print experts were sent for and for several hours they worked on the machine.

SANG "THEY'LL BE WAITING FOR ME"

It was a strange coincidence that at services the night of the attempted killing Becton had his congregation sing eight verses of the hymn "They'll Be Waiting For Me". The singing of this hymn so impressed the evangelist that he had the organist stop playing the organ as the congregation's soft voices blended.

Detectives Charles Belgroves, Hilary Johnston and Richard Anderson have had little sleep since the shooting and they claim that in a short time the gully parties will be brought before the bar of justice.

Services continue to be carried on at the Broadway. MacDavis, Becton's

business manager, told the writer that the services will not be in charge of any one man but in charge of the Gospel Feast Party.

Large crowds were present on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights and prayers were offered for the wounded man. Evans Myrick, the long leader of the troupe, took charge on Monday night and Rev. Campbell on Tuesday night. So emotional were the services on Tuesday night that several of the women worshippers swooned and remained in an unconscious condition for 10 or 15 minutes.