Objectives

- Describe the wounds and medical care provided following the attempted assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Describe the wounds and medical care provided with assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
September 19, 1958

- King visits Harlem to promote his first book
  -- *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*
- Today Show appearance
- Rally in front of Hotel Theresa in Harlem
- Thousands filled streets
- New York Governor election year
  -- W. Averell Harriman vs. Nelson Rockefeller

September 20, 1958

- King at book signing at Blumstein’s Department Store (W. 125th street)
- 3:30pm – Izola Curry attacks King
  -- Ivory handle Japanese penknife
  -- .32 caliber automatic pistol in raincoat
The Stabbing

- “Is this Martin Luther King?”
- “Yes”
- Curry brings hand up in an arc
- King yanks left arm up to block
- Knife cuts left hand and blade plunges into his chest

Izola Curry

- 42 year old African American
- Loner
- Favored rhinestone-rimmed glasses, dangly earrings, flashy garb
- Known for public rants against street preachers
- At rally, haranguing against communists, Caucasians and preachers like King
- FBI received letters demanding why communist agents were out to get her
The Stabbing

- Bystanders knock Curry down
- “I’ve been after him for six years!”
- “I’m glad I done it!”
- Apprehended by Walter Pettiford and security
- Rants about NAACP being communist organization

King, Post-Stabbing

- Alert
- Penknife in chest
- King: “That’s all right. Everything is going to be all right.”
- Arthur Spingarn, National President, NAACP
- Bystanders debate removing knife
Post-Stabbing

- 3:30pm – Mrs. Constance Jenning – Harlem Hospital
  -- “Man stabbed, need ambulance right away”

- Minutes later
  -- Ronald Adams – Driver
  -- Mrs. Russie Lee – Licensed Practical Nurse
  -- Speed down 7th Avenue to store
  -- Lee reiterated to leave knife in his chest

Harlem Hospital

- 900 beds
- Public hospital
- Nominal supervision of interns and residents
  -- “Free rein to manage patients on their own”
- Inadequate resources
- For trauma – public hospitals considered superior
- Harlem surgeons wrote authoritative articles on management of trauma
  -- Penetrating wounds to the heart
Harlem Hospital ED

- First responder
  - Charles Felton, MD – 1st year resident
  - Examines heart and lungs
  - ECG
  - Reassures King
- Surgeons arrive

Harlem Hospital ED

- Emil Naclerio (1915 – 1985) – Thoracic Surgeon
- “Pandemonium”
- Surgeons from other NYC hospitals arrive
- Governor Harriman arrives
- More than 40 individuals offer to donate blood
- Sidewalks and streets packed
Harlem Hospital ED

- Unofficial but ironclad protocol
  -- Requires Director of Surgeons to be present
  -- Dr. Aubre de Lambert Maynard (Little Napoleon)
    - At Saturday matinee – La Parisienne
    - After movie – Manhattan General Hospital for rounds
    - Hospital administrator informs him
    - Needs police escort into Harlem Hospital
    - Governor Harriman – “Where have you been?”

The Operation

- More than one hour after arrival
- Stable
- “Little Napoleon” on scene
- Cordice and Naclerio ready to proceed
- Chief resident, Leo Maitland, performs cutdown IV into arm
- Receives anesthesia from Dr. Helene Mayer and CRNA, Goldie Brangman
  -- GOE – Gas (nitrous oxide) – Oxygen - Ether
The Operation

- 2 incisions: 1 intercostal and 1 vertical
  - “Cross-shaped scar he would joke about the rest of his life.”
- Enter chest between 3rd and 4th interspace
- Ligate internal mammary artery
- Knife penetrates manubrium
- Tip just short of aorta and innominate artery
- Maynard invites colleagues into surgical suite
- Wait for Maynard to scrub-in

The Operation

- Offer Maynard honor of pulling knife out
- First attempt – Tears glove
- Clamps placed on knife – Maynard removes
  -- Two failed attempts
  -- Finally out
- No need for tubes or drains
Aftermath

- King recovery uneventful
- Maynard – multiple newspaper articles
  -- Fabricates his role
- Naclerio and Cordice silent for decades
- Story “set straight” years later

Memphis, Spring 1968

- Striking Memphis sanitation workers
- Nearly all black
- Trouble brewing for years
- Among lowest paid city employees
- No medical insurance, workers compensation or overtime pay
- Twice city refused to recognize their union
- King takes on the cause
  - Arrives March 18, 1968
  - Agrees to return to lead a “Big March”
  - Monday, April 1, 1968 – Southern Christian Leadership Conference announces King’s return to Memphis
March, 1968 – The Assassin

- Thin, pale, meek man with thick horn-rimmed glasses and wrinkled brown suit enters Aeromarine Supply, Birmingham, Alabama, March 29, 1968
- Alias – Harvey Lowmeyer
  - Deer hunting in Wisconsin
- Examines and buys Browning .243 Safari-Grade rifle with Premier Redfield 2 x 7 scope
- By 5:00pm, Lowmeyer calls back requesting Remington, model 760, .30-06 caliber rifle with scope
  - “I want to hunt bigger game”
  - Picks it up March 30, 1968

The Weapon

- Lowmeyer had difficulty loading .243 bold action rifle
- .243 good for varmints and small deer
- Pump-action Gamemaster model 760 .30-06 caliber rifle much more powerful
  - Remington – “Fastest hand-operated big game rifle made”
  - .30-06 bullets nearly twice as heavy as .243
  - Travels 2,670 feet/second
  - Drops less than 0.01 inch at 100 yards
  - Soft point bullet – intended to expand on impact
  - 2000 pounds of energy
  - Can kill a man at 1500 yards (King 66 yards)
**The Assassin**

- **March 30, 1968 – Eric Galt (second alias)**
  - Neatly dressed middle aged, checks into decaying green and white rooming house near hippie district in Atlanta
  - Drove white Mustang
- **April 3, 1968**
  - Along highway toward Birmingham he stops at secluded spot
  - Retrieves rifle from trunk
  - Dials scope to maximum 7 power
  - Sights rifle in with 2 dozen rounds
  - Drives past Birmingham toward Memphis

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**April 3, 1968**

- King arrives in Memphis, Wednesday afternoon
- Met by Solomon Jones, a driver for a local funeral home that provided a white Cadillac
  - Memphis police security detail
- Taken to Lorraine Hotel (owner African-American)
- Arrived just ahead of fierce storm
- Usually stayed in room 306 – Hotel’s finest
  - Room occupied
  - Stays in 202 (ground floor)
  - Moved to 306 next morning (second floor)
Security

- Half block away, 484 S. Main Street
- Law enforcement team in Fire Station No. 2
- 150 feet away
- Memphis police (African American)
  - Detective Ed Redditt
  - Patrolman W. B. Richmond
- FBI, Military Intelligence
- Observed with binoculars through newspaper covered windows
- Memphis police tactical (TACT) units 5 blocks away

Around the Lorraine Hotel

- Across the street – retaining wall and a slope overgrown with weeds and trees leading up to rear of 2 adjacent 2-story brick buildings
- Covered passageway between the buildings
- They fronted on S. Main Street, next block over from hotel
- 1st floor commercial
- 2nd floor rooming house (Mrs. Brewer’s)
- Largely populated with vagrants and winos
- Border of Memphis’ black community
April 3, 1968

- Ralph Abernathy and King go to Lorraine Hotel to rest
- Abernathy addressed crowd at Mason Temple
- Convinces King to come (exhausted)
- Gives famous “I’ve Been to the Mountain” speech
  - King referenced stabbing in speech
    - Sneezing would have killed him
    - Essentially becomes his eulogy

April 3, 1968

- Eric S. Galt arrives in Memphis after 7-hour drive
- Gets haircut and buys shaving kit
- 7:15am – white Mustang with Alabama plates pulls into New Rebel Motel, 3466 Lamar Avenue
- Wearing “expensive dark suit”
- Checks into room 34
- Lights still on at 4:00am
Mrs. Brewer’s Rooming House

- April 4, 1968
- 3:00pm – 3:30pm
- Trim white man in early thirties with dark hair, blue eyes and thin nose, wearing dark suit, asks for a room
- “Too nice for the neighborhood” / “Unnerved her”
- Requested to rent for a week
- Checked in as John Willard
  - (third alias)

8/9/2018

Mrs. Brewer’s Rooming House

- Shows him one room – does not want, just needs “sleeping” room
- Shows only available “sleeping” room – 5B
  - Overlooks alley between buildings and has view of Lorraine
  - Dilapidated conditions
  - Previous tenant died in the room
- Communal bathroom down the hall
- 30 minutes later buys pair of Bushnell binoculars
- Tenant in next room noted Willard spent a lot of time in the bathroom
April 4, 1968 – Room 306 – 5:30pm-6:00pm

- Reverend Billy Kyles, with Martin Luther King, preparing to go to dinner at Kyles
  - Ralph Abernathy – next door
- King talks to those in courtyard below
  - Chauncey Eskridge (SCLC General Counsel)
  - Aides – Andrew Young, James Bevel, Jesse Jackson, Hosea Williams, Ben Branch
  - Solomon Jones - driver
- Last Words to Ben Branch
  - “I want you to sing for me tonight. I want you to do that song “Precious Lord. Sing it real pretty.”

April 4, 1968 – Room 306 – 6:01pm

- Shot rings out
- Kyles sees King’s body on balcony in pool of blood
- “Oh my God, Martin’s been shot!”
- “Hit the ground!”
- Abernathy cradles King in his arms
  - “I looked down at Martin’s face.”
  - “His eyes wobbled, then for an instant he focused on me. ‘Martin, it’s all right. Don’t worry. This is Ralph. This is Ralph.’ ”
- Memphis police undercover agent, Marrell McCollough, puts towel over wound
First Responders

- King shot in lower right jaw by single round
- Within 2 minutes, first call from motel telephone operator to Memphis police dispatcher
- Several minutes later ambulance arrives
- EMS squad had no life support
- King taken to St. Joseph’s Hospital

St. Joseph’s Hospital

- Single gunshot wound (30-06) to right lower face
  - Bleeding profusely
  - Smashed mandible, pierced his neck, tore through jugular vein, and severed spinal cord before coming to rest in his scapula against the skin
- CPR and ACLS initiated
- Intubated
- IV’s started
- Initial assessment – no vital signs
- 7:05pm – pronounced dead by ED physician and neurosurgeon
Autopsy – 4/5/68

- J.T. Fransisco, MD – County Medical Examiner
- Dr. Sprunt – Assistant
- Phil A. Canale – District Attorney General
- Cause of Death: “Gunshot wound to spinal column, lower cervical, upper thoracic”
- Anatomic Diagnosis – GSW to body and face with:
  - Fracture right mandible
  - Laceration of vertebral artery, jugular vein, R subclavian artery
  - Fracture C-7, T-1
  - Laceration of spinal cord (lower cervical, upper thoracic)
  - Submucosal hemorrhage – larynx
  - Intrapulmonary hematoma – apex, RUL

Autopsy - Narrative

- Direction of the wounding was from front to back, above downward and from right to left
- The severing of the spinal cord at this level and to this extent was a wound that was fatal very shortly after it’s occurrence
- My assessment - If survived – ventilator-dependent quadriplegic
Where Did the Shot Originate?

- Boarding House
  - Bernard Lee, secretary and bodyguard, Army
  - Marrell McCollough
  - Chauncey Eskridge
  - Billy Kyles
  - Jesse Jackson
- Elsewhere
  - Ralph Abernathy – Thought from outside door
  - Andrew Young – Bushes above retaining wall across street
  - Solomon Jones – Saw someone/thing moving in bushes

After the Shot

- Police and firemen rush out of Firehouse No. 2
- Most dropped over 8-foot retaining wall
- Running away from S. Main Street
  - Road on which rooming house fronted
  - Fortuitous for assassin
After the Shot

- 6:03pm dispatcher announces over the air
- Police going toward Lorraine
- 6:06pm – order 2-block area to be sealed off
- 6:08pm – description of shooter and car broadcast
  - By this time likely in another state
    - Arkansas - 6-7 minutes
    - Mississippi – 15 minutes

After the Shot – Rooming House

- Willie Anschutz hears shot – opens door
  - Man carrying something long in a blanket with hand over his face
  - “I thought I heard a shot”
  - “Yeah, it was a shot”
- Charlie Stephens heard shot from bathroom
  - Sees man leaving bathroom carrying 3-foot long package wrapped in “newspaper”
After the Shot

- Guy Canipe, owner Canipe Amusement Co., ground floor
- Sees white man in dark suit walking south on sidewalk (direction of Mustang)
- Bernell Finley sees him drive away in Mustang
- Seconds later, 2 TACT 10 officers arrive
- Other officers arrive
- Find long bundle in front of store – old green blanket wrapped around large pasteboard box with zippered bag
- Murder weapon found, also in 15x20 in. blue plastic overnight bag:
  - Binoculars
  - Nine .30-06 bullets
  - Clothing, toiletries, transistor radio
  - *The Commercial Appeal* – reporting King at Lorraine

The Crime Scene – 5B

- Chief of homicide, N. E. Zachary
- Dresser pushed away from open window
- Straight-back chair next to window
- Binoculars strap on floor
- Viewer had to lean partially outside
The Crime Scene -- Bathroom

- Shooter would have to stand in cast-iron tub
- Clear shot
- 66 yards
- Window open, screen mesh pushed out
- Scuff marks in tub
- Partial palm print on wall
- Tiny indentation on windowsill
  - “As though rifle rested there”

The Chase

- FBI investigating
- Laundry tag traced to L.A. – Eric S. Galt
- White Mustang found in Atlanta
  - Registration Eric Starvo Galt
  - Description similar to John Willard
- New Rebel Motel, Memphis – Eric S. Galt
- Eric Galt in Memphis day of murder
- Hair and fabric fibers match
- Handwriting matches Lowmeyer
- Fingerprints lifted: Galt is James Earl Ray
The Chase

- April 19, 1968 – James Earl Ray – FBI Most Wanted List
- Raymond George Sneyd (4th alias) - Canadian passport application matches Eric S. Galt’s writing
- Arrives in Toronto April 8, 1968
- Arrives in London May 6, 1968
- Ray caught in London at customs, June 8, 1968
  - Has .38 caliber Japanese-made revolver

The Chase

- Confront with his real name
- “I feel so trapped”
- 65-day manhunt for assassin of Martin Luther King ends
- Extradited to U.S.
- Convicted of murder
- Life in prison
QUESTIONS?

Sources