

## FIGURE IN 'HIT' MURDER TIED TO DEATH OF JAZZ CLUB OWNER

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Harold Jackson Jr., who escaped prosecution for the 1979 murder of Grosse Pointe promoter Guy **Willetts** by testifying against others, was implicated in court testimony Wednesday in another killing, that of jazz club owner **Henry** Normile Jr.

**Willetts**, 51, and Normile, 34, owner of Cobb's Corner Bar, were murdered five days apart in early 1979 while Jackson was trying to arrange large, unsecured loans for both men.

Both were shot to death, Normile Jan. 27 in his Cass Corridor apartment adjoining his bar, and **Willetts** Feb. 1 in a car outside the Soup Kitchen Saloon near the Renaissance Center.

Both killings were highly publicized, and police tried to link them but failed.

WEDNESDAY, HOWEVER, convicted murderer Milton Hunt testified in U.S. District Court in Detroit that Jackson and Charles McLellan of Farmington, a former **Willetts** employe, had asked him in August 1978 to kill **Willetts** and Normile.

Jackson, former co-owner of Berman's Chop House in downtown Detroit, moved to Atlanta in 1979. He could not be reached for comment. McLellan denied knowing or talking to Milton Hunt and said he never approached anyone to kill **Willetts** or Normile.

Police questioned McLellan about **Willetts'** slaying the day of the murder but released him a few hours later without charging him. McLellan had driven **Willetts** to the Soup Kitchen the afternoon of the murder and told police that **Willetts** went there expecting to get a \$38,000 loan arranged by Jackson.

INSTEAD, HIRED KILLER Lonnie Thomas shot him twice in the head with a .45 caliber automatic pistol. McLellan said he had left **Willetts** in the car and was inside the restaurant when the shooting occurred.

Hunt's testimony Wednesday came in a lawsuit brought by **Willetts'** former associates to collect on a \$2.5 million insurance policy they purchased on his life. The All American Insurance Co., of Chicago, defendant in the lawsuit, has refused payment.

With interest, the insurance proceeds are believed to total about \$3.5 million now. The policy was held by **Willetts'** company, OTAC -- the Oceanic Trade Alliance Council International.

HUNT, 31, who has spent all but a few months of his adult life in prisons, testified that two men he knew initially only as "Harold" and "Charles" offered him \$5,000 down payment and \$15,000 later if he would kill the two men or find someone else to do it. He said he rejected the offer, in a meeting at Harold Jackson's office on W. Grand Blvd., because he wanted all the money in advance.

Hunt said he was approached in August 1978, about a week after he was paroled from prison, where he was sentenced for an armed robbery. He was released because fellow inmates doused him with paint thinner and set him afire, and the parole board reasoned that he was too badly disfigured and crippled to be a threat.

But later that year, Dec. 23, a man was killed in the Bon Ton Bar on Detroit's west side. Hunt and his brother, Joseph, were arrested and convicted of the murder.

MILTON HUNT, an inmate in the Riverside Correctional Facility at Ionia, testified Wednesday that he told Detroit homicide detectives in July 1979 about being approached to kill **Willetts** and Normile. He said he offered the information in exchange for a promise that police would reinvestigate the case against his brother. Milton insists that Joseph is innocent.

Milton Hunt's lawyer, Frank Rhodes III, confirmed that he attended three meetings between Hunt and Detroit police detectives and that Hunt identified artists' drawings of the men who made the \$5,000 offer. One was Jackson, Rhodes said. Rhodes could not remember the identity of the second man.

Hunt testified that it was McLellan. He said he recognized both men from sketches printed in newspapers and drawings shown him by detectives.

ONE OF THE DETECTIVES, Hunt said, was Gilbert Hill, now inspector in charge of the homicide department. Hill said, however, that although he recalls Hunt's murder case, he does not recall talking to Hunt about the **Willetts** and Normile murders. He promised to check homicide files, where he said a notation of any such interviews would have been placed.

Jackson was the key witness in the **Willetts'** murder trial. Police arrested three of **Willetts'** OTAC associates but released one without charges. The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office dropped charges against another, Mat Alfei, for lack of evidence, and a Detroit Recorder's Court jury acquitted the third man, John Kiley.

Jackson's story to police and at the trial was that **Willetts'** business partners promised him \$100,000 if he would get someone to kill the Grosse Pointe filmmaker and business promoter. He testified that Kiley paid him \$5,000.

Jackson said he hired Lonnie Thomas to kill **Willetts**.

He testified in 1979 that he was a cocaine customer of Normile's, but said police never questioned him in that case, which has gone unsolved. He said he introduced Normile to a banker friend, to help get him a loan. According to Normile's friends, he expected Jackson to get him a \$40,000 loan without having to put up collateral.

OTAC was **Willetts'** brainchild. He formed the corporation to sign up exhibitors at \$100,000 each for a cruise to the Middle East. The venture failed in December 1978.

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