

Young Man Of Great Potential, Says CAA Aide Of Dead Man

"I consider this a great waste because in my estimation this was a young man with a great deal of potential."

Juliette Whitaker, a Community Action Agency worker here, was talking about Melvin Burch, the gunman shot and killed by police yesterday.

MISS WHITAKER SAID she had known Burch about two years and considered him "essentially a very gentle man." But she said he recently told her he was upset at what he felt was continued police harassment of young black men.

"He said he was just tired of getting pushed around," she said. Miss Whitaker talked with Burch and two companions yesterday prior to the time Burch was shot as he left the St. Cecilia's school building.

Police records show that Burch at one time was involved with the Black Panther Party. Miss Whitaker said she knew this.

She said Burch told her he had enrolled in college last fall but when she saw him in February he told her he had quit, saying it was "too slow and that there were people out on the streets who needed him."

RECORDS ALSO SHOW that in October, 1971, Burch, then living at 608 N. Shipman, was shot in the right leg by an unknown man in the area of Seventh and Monson and required hospitalization.

Burch, an Army veteran, told police at the time that he and the man had been drinking one night and the next night were walking

along an alley when the man said, "We're going to wipe you out yet, and I could even cripple or kill you."

Burch said the man then shot him

Police records also show that Burch was charged with disorderly conduct in August, 1970, and with aggravated assault in December, 1970, involving an incident with police.

In March, 1970, the home where Burch was living at 205 S. Saratoga was hit by fire that caused \$2,000 damages. Burch and his wife and child were out of town at the time, a brother told police.

While fire investigators were checking the cause of the fire, Burch reported to police that some \$1,700 worth of items had been stolen from the house, including two guitars, weight-lifting benches, a TV set and stereo tape player.

In August, 1970, Burch was fined \$25 on a disorderly conduct charge stemming from an incident at the St. Mark's Medical building.

POLICE SAID THEY WERE investigating a report of a disturbance there and that Burch came out of the building calling the policemen pigs and yelling "black power." He was arrested.

In August, 1971, Burch was found innocent of a forgery charge, even though he swore in the courtroom at both the judge and his defense attorney.

In another trial on a similar charge a month later, Burch indicated by testimony that he had worked here for the local United Front office, a civil rights group.

Burch was a native of Arkansas.