

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Poor Sales Of First Work On Ray May Daunt Others

By CHARLES EDMUNDSON

The bonanza dreams of five writers who planned books on James Earl Ray, confessed slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., are fading in light of a reported slight sale of the first volume to appear.

Charles Holmes, who acted as public relations advisor for Sheriff William N. Morris during Ray's imprisonment and trial, said last night that so few copies of the first book have been purchased that the publishers are reported to have called it off the book stands.

Clay Blair, once editor of the late Saturday Evening Post, had his "The Strange Case of James Earl Ray" on the bookshelves a week after Ray pleaded guilty here March 10. An "instant book," it was nearly all rewritten before the verdict was in. Only a few pages had to be tossed off and inserted on the afternoon Ray was allowed to plead guilty.

What was meant to be only a first run of 300,000 copies of the paperback turned out to be the only run.

William B. Huie, who paid \$35,000 for Ray's handwritten version of part of what happened, was supposed to have had his "He Slew the Dreamer" in the bookstores in both paperback and hard cover in May. He told The Commercial Appeal yesterday the book will now appear only in hard cover and not until January.

Ray has filed a suit, awaiting trial in United States District Court at Memphis, charging that Mr. Huie conspired with Ray's first two attorneys, Arthur Hanes of Birmingham and Percy Foreman of Houston to capitalize on commercial aspects of the world famous case.

The change of plans for Mr. Huie's book is believed to be partly due to the poor showing of the Blair book and partly to questions raised in Ray's suit.

James D. Squires, a reporter for the Nashville Tennessean, was scheduled to have had a book out only two weeks later than the Blair book. But the presses will never roll for that one. Mr. Squires, however, wrote the book and collected a liberal advance.

George E. McMillan of Atlanta was commissioned by Little, Brown & Co. to write "Portrait of an Assassin." It is still expected to be published.

Gerold Frank author of "The Boston Strangler" and other best sellers, several of which have been made into movies, never meant for his book, to be published by Doubleday, to appear until 1971. He thinks his book, designed to go into Ray's mental processes and the social conditions influencing him, will have a more basic appeal than some of the others. His reported advance was \$100,000.

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

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