

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

James Earl Ray Draws 30 Days In Punishment Cell For Escape Attempt

By ROBERT KELLETT
James Earl Ray, whose reputation as an escape artist diminished this week, was stripped of his "honor prisoner" status yesterday and ordered to spend 30 days in a disciplinary cell.

The convicted killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was taken before a three-man disciplinary committee for his abortive Monday morning escape attempt from Brushy Mountain Penitentiary near Petros, Tenn.

He declined to discuss the attempt and told the board: "You already know what happened. There's no point in me saying anything."

The committee at the prison handed out punishment that was standard for unsuccessful escape attempts.

Ray will be in the disciplinary building for 30 days and will lose his job serving meals and cleaning up in Building C, where he had lived, and will lose all privileges for 30 days.

After 15 days he will get an hour a day to exercise in the corridor of the cell block. After

the second 15 days he will be moved to the administrative area of the prison with some of his privileges — such as radio and television in his cell — restored.

"In about 90 days, the case will be reviewed and if his attitude and conduct warrant, he might be released back into contact with the other men," said Warden Moore.

In Building C, where cell block doors remain unlocked most of the time, the 43-year-old Ray had the freedom to associate with about 30 to 35 men, the warden said, but usually "was a loner."

One man who Ray had associated with recently, Roy Morelock, 49, was accused of helping Ray in his escape attempt and was assigned similar punishment yesterday.

Serving a life term from Greene and Sullivan counties as a habitual criminal, Morelock reportedly moved into Ray's cell Sunday.

"He was able to do this because the regular assigned officer to that area was off Saturday and Sunday, and the relief man in there was not fa-

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

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miliar with cell assignments," Mr. Moore said. "That's just another indication to us that this thing had been planned for a long time and that Morelock planned to go with him.

"He needed this guy because he was assigned to this (plumbing and maintenance) inside detail."

Prison officials theorized that Morelock furnished Ray the tools he used to loosen concrete blocks and slip into an air chamber behind his cell, and to break off a bar at the end of the chamber after bending a fan blade.

From the ventilation system, Ray went to a steam tunnel where guards later found a crowbar, two or three chisels and hacksaw blades. Tunnel temperatures up to 400 degrees forced him back into the prison yard where he was captured. Morelock did not leave the cell, officers said.

In Ray's cell, guards found a "quiet effective" dummy formed by stuffing "some insulated underwear with towels and socks and other clothing he had, and spreading a blanket over the whole thing," said Mr. Moore.

The dummy was topped by a homemade wig of pasted hair clippings which Ray gathered in the Building C barbershop where he had worked, the warden said.

Had Ray been able to endure the heat of the steam tunnel, he would have found it blocked by concrete at the other end, Mr. Moore said.

"It would have taken him some time to dig around it or bust the concrete out, but he had some tools to do it."

Beyond the tunnel and the wall which surrounds the cell blocks, Ray would have been among other prison-related buildings surrounded on three

sides by high mountains and rough terrain.

"He's always had the ability and the reputation of a fast track man," said Mr. Moore. "At his age and all the time he's been in a cell, I don't know if he could have made it over one of these mountains at all. Brother, it's rough."

The escape attempt, he said, will prompt "some changes in the cell blocks and some lock changes. Some maintenance equipment that has been kept in some of the blocks is going to be moved out. You always profit by your mistakes."

The unsuccessful escape attempt marked the fourth time Ray has tried to break away from a major penal facility. His one successful attempt was in April 1967, when he hid in the back of a bread truck at the bakery of the Missouri State Penitentiary, where he was working while serving 20

years for armed robbery. He was still at large when Dr. King was murdered April 4, 1968.

Two escape attempts at the Missouri prison ended in clumsy failure.

In one, Ray attempted to scale a prison wall with an improvised pipe pole. The pipe broke, leaving Ray slightly injured and with six months to serve in solitary confinement.

His other attempted escape shared some characteristics with this week's failure. Ray reportedly put a dummy in his bed on that occasion, used a transom pole to climb to a window 12 feet above his cell and used a pair of wire cutters to cut a 12-by-14-inch hole in the metal mesh. He then crawled along the top of an interior wall and hid in a fan ventilator. When he walked out of the ventilator the next night, a guard was waiting to greet him.