

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Ray's Escape Attempt From Petros Fails

PETROS (AP) — James Earl Ray, serving 99 years for the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., made what the prison den termed a well-planned unsuccessful attempt Monday to escape.

Ray got out of his cell at Brushy Mountain Prison, Tennessee's maximum security facility, but was turned back by a hole in a steam pipe tunnel.

"It was a well-conceived escape attempt and one he obviously had planned a long time," said warden Robert Moore.



Ray

"First, he removed a concrete block in his cell and got out into an air chamber — a ventilating area behind the cell block. He crawled along the air chamber to the end and sawed one bar and broke another with a crowbar.

"He pulled himself through the hole and got out into the prison yard behind the cell block. Then he went to the steam tunnel which leads to our steam plant about 100 yards outside the prison.

... obviously got too hot for him in the tunnel — our engineer tells me it gets up to 400 degrees Fahrenheit in there — and he had to come back out.

"Some guards in the cellblock next to Ray's heard the noise when he was sawing through the bar, checked and found Ray missing and sounded an alarm."

Moore said guards notified him at 3 a.m. of the escape attempt and that Ray was found in the prison compound yard at 3:15.

Even if Ray had gotten to the end of the steam tunnel, Moore said, he would have run into more trouble.

"There is concrete and bars at the end of the tunnel and if he could have stood the heat he would still have had to saw his way through the bars," Moore said.

Moore said Ray, who pleaded guilty to the sniper slaying of

King outside a Memphis motel on April 4, 1968, got help in his escape bid from his cellmate, Roy Morelock, 44, of Greene County.

Moore said Morelock, serving a life term as a habitual criminal, was a prison maintenance man and apparently supplied Ray with a hacksaw, crowbar, hammers and chisel he use in the escape bid.

"Morelock had access to such tools as these and he obviously intended to escape with Ray," Moore said. "Our guards caught up with the attempt so fast he

didn't have time to get out of the cell."

"You know, Ray escaped from the Missouri State Prison before he was arrested for the King murder," the warden recalled. "I think he escaped through a tunnel there."

Moore became warden of Brushy Mountain prison in East Tennessee in early March. About two weeks later he held an open house for newsmen and at that time he described Ray

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Brushy's most famous inmate, as a "model prisoner."

Ray himself granted the first interview since his arrest and

conviction in Memphis in March 1969 for the King killing.

"I do not cause trouble here," Ray told a reporter. "I work six hours a day, seven days a week. My job is serving food to my cellmates, which requires two hours at each meal."

He said he had gained 20 pounds since being transferred from the main prison in Nashville 14 months ago to Brushy and now weighed 175 pounds.

Moore said both Ray and Morlock had been moved from what he called a working area of the prison to its maximum security section. They were put in separate cells.

Ray has sought several times to obtain a new trial in the King killing, contending he was pressured by his lawyer into pleading guilty. Each time he has lost, the latest rejection coming in Memphis Feb. 27.



Over And Out

Brushy Mountain State Prison Warden Robert H. Moore holds a piece of concrete James Earl Ray chipped through the wall of his cell to gain access to a heating vent through which he attempted to escape Monday morning. The convict was recaptured in the compound at the maximum security prison at Petros shortly after climbing through this hole above his bunk.