

Pal says Ray was \$ hungry

DALTON, Ga. (UPI) — A prison buddy of James Earl Ray said Tuesday that when Ray heard there was a "million-dollar bounty" on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he smiled and said, "I'll collect it."

Ray, a 40-year-old fugitive from the Missouri State Prison, is accused by the FBI of assassinating Dr. King in Memphis on April 4.

In the Dalton jail, Raymond Curtis, 40, awaiting appeal on a murder sentence, said he has known Ray in the Kansas City Jail, in Federal prison at Leavenworth, Kan., and in the State prison at Jefferson City, Mo.

He described Ray as likeable, addicted to "dope" a "loner" and a man concerned only with money.

On the day President Kennedy was assassinated — Nov. 23, 1963—Curtis said he, Ray, and about 150 other prisoners were in an exercise yard when they heard the news.

He said Ray remarked, "Well, somebody made a pretty penny on that."

About a week later, Curtis said, he and Ray were in the yard when "a new man just in off the street" told them "the Businessmen's Association has a million dollar bounty out for Martin Luther King."

ments of any kind in a group," Curtis said. "He was a loner."

Ray couldn't "make a long conversation unless he was planning something," said Curtis. "If he was planning something, you could bet they'd be thorough plans."

Ray, he said, master-minded things "that would be small things outside, but were pretty big jobs in prison"—such as the theft of eggs and drugs and cigarettes.

He said Ray told him that if he ever wanted to kill someone, he would buy a gun under a false name and have everything ready for an escape. "He used to talk a lot about escaping to New

Zealand, Brazil and Argentina," Curtis said.

"I wouldn't consider him dangerous" Curtis said.

"He didn't look for trouble. "Of course, I'm not saying he wouldn't shoot you if you ran up on him now."

Asked about Ray's habits, Curtis said, "He talked about beer — he liked beer, I knew that." He said he never heard him talk about dancing, but that he "did a lot of weightlifting" at Jefferson City.

"I never heard him do much cussing. I just saw him get mad once and that was in a poker game. He liked to play poker. His favorite game was lowball.

"He talked about having lots of women. None spe-

cial. He'd pick'em up and leave'em," Curtis said.

"You could pick him out of a crowd of 2,000 men in the prison yard. He would be off to himself walking and his mind would be somewhere else."

Curtis, convicted of shooting a man in the hold-up of a poker game here last year, said when he heard of King's Death he did not connect it with Ray because he didn't know Ray had escaped prison.

If others were in the plot with Ray, Curtis said, Ray "would go to his grave with the secret."

"From what he said, I would consider he was an expert with a gun, Curtis said.

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