

Had No Grudge, Suspect Tells British Court

Another Hearing Set for July 2 On Extradition

LONDON (UPI) — James Earl Ray today denied in court that he assassinated the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. He said he did not even bear him a grudge.

Ray's voice was squeaky at first but when his British defense attorney asked him: "Did you kill Dr. Martin Luther King?" His reply was firm, quick and almost matter of fact: "No sir."

Ray entered a Bow Street Magistrate Court for an extradition hearing chewing gum and flanked by two Scotland Yard detectives. The jaw muscles beneath his stubble of beard twitched as he heard himself described as the "single hand" that killed King in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4.

Called Sole Participant

Barrister David Calcutt, the British attorney acting for the United States, accused Ray of executing the "calculated, brutal and senseless murder" of King with a rifle which bore his fingerprints.

"In my mind this was the single hand work of this defendant," Calcutt said.

In his own testimony Ray told the court he had never met King.

"I have never had any kind of grudge against him," he said.

Ray, his dark brown hair neatly combed, hunched forward to the iron-railed prisoner's dock as Calcutt called a U.S. fingerprint expert who testified Ray's fingerprints were on the rifle that killed King. The expert was George J. Stonebrake of Silver Spring, Md., who has been with the FBI for 27 years.

Seen Entering Bathroom

Ray was obviously nervous as Calcutt told of Charles Q. Stevens, a resident of the Memphis boarding house from which the state of Tennessee contends that Ray shot King.

He said Stevens saw Ray enter a bathroom and that then he heard the shot which killed the civil rights leader.

(In Memphis, Stevens was reported to have dropped out of sight. He had occupied room No. 6 of Mrs. Bessie Brewer's rooming house. Authorities say Ray was in Room 5. Mrs. Brewer also has dropped out of sight.)

There are two extradition counts against Ray. Tennessee wants him on the murder charge. Missouri wants him for breaking jail in 1967 while he was serving time for first-degree bank robbery.

Ray's British defense attorney, Roger Frisby, contends that the slaying of the controversial civil rights leader was a political crime which is not covered by U.S.-British extradition agreements.

Magistrate Frank Milton set See RAY, Page A-1



JAMES EARL RAY
Denies Killing

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Killing of Dr. King Denied

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 another hearing for Tuesday, July 2. Ray, who was wearing a blue sportshirt and a dark jacket, was ordered held without bail.

Ray, who has been silent since his arrest at London airport June 8 on charges of having illegal passports and carrying a pistol, rose after his lawyer announced to a stunned court:

"I call my client."

Ray, flanked by two Scotland Yard detectives, marched to the witness stand.

One of the detectives guarding him against possible assassination attempts shifted between him and the main body of the court.

"I think you should sit here

and take the oath seated," Magistrate Milton said.

The attorneys and the magistrate then discussed under what name Ray should be sworn in. He was arrested as Ramon George Sneyd. It was decided not to swear him in at all but merely to have him answer his counsel's questions.

"Are you the man arrested at London Airport June 8?" Frisby asked.

"Yes, sir," replied Ray.

"Did you know Martin Luther King personally?"

"No, sir."

"Did you have a grudge against him?" Frisby asked.

"No, sir," Ray said. He spoke quickly and clearly and showed little emotion.

Then Frisby asked: "Did you kill Dr. Martin Luther King?"

And with no change of expression and almost matter-of-factly came the denial.

"No, sir," Ray said.

The court clerk, using a fountain pen, took the procedure down in shorthand and then read it back to Ray. He asked if it were correct and Ray said, "Yes, that's correct."

The clerk then asked Ray if he would like to sign his statement.

Ray suddenly leaned forward in the chair, looked slightly surprised and said, "Well, how would I sign it?"

The comment uttered with a trace of Southern accent drew mild titters from the courtroom.

Won't Sign Document

There was more consultation between the magistrate and Frisby and Frisby then said Ray should not sign the document.

The chief Scotland Yard superintendent, Thomas Butler, said the accused slumped to a seat when told during an interview that he was suspected of being Ray, wanted for murder with a gun and other crimes in the United States.

But Butler said Ray made no admission of guilt.

"The accused had been stand-

ing up, but at this he suddenly slumped down in the seat behind him, put his head in his hands and said, 'Oh, God!' Butler said. "After a moment or so he added, 'I feel so trapped.'"

Calcutt identified Stevens as the witness who saw Ray enter a rooming house bathroom overlooking the motel where King died, heard a shot fired from the bathroom and saw Ray come out of the room a minute later.

Calcutt said Ray bought the murder rifle with a telescopic sight and fired the fatal bullet from the window of a Memphis boarding house.

King was hit as he stood on a motel balcony. Investigators said the shot was fired from the bathroom window in the rooming house across the street.

Third Court Appearance

As Ray stood — showing no apparent emotion — in the prisoner's dock, Calcutt looked at him and said: "This tragic death was the work of this criminal."

Calcutt described the crime as "the working of a single hand."

Today's was the third British court appearance for the 40-year-old escaped convict from Missouri since Scotland Yard detectives arrested him at a London airport June 8 and charged him with possessing false passports and a loaded pistol. He was traveling under the name of a Toronto policeman, Ramon George Sneyd.

One hundred policemen guarded Ray at the hearing. He rode to the court in a black police paddy wagon.

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