

Ray Considered Model Prisoner,⁷ Records of Leavenworth Reveal

By STEPHEN M. AUG-
WASHINGTON (AP)—Prison records show James Earl Ray, charged with murdering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was considered a model prisoner while in the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan.

By the time Ray was released on April 5, 1968, he had earned—in addition to time off for good behavior—an extra 45 days early release for meritorious conduct.

He served two years and nine months of a three-year, nine-month sentence imposed by a Kansas City federal court for forging postal money orders.

NOTHING COULD be found to show how Ray earned the extra 45 days early release—and Bureau of Prisons officials refused to make his record public.

In contrast to his Leavenworth record, Ray currently is an escapee from the Missouri State Penitentiary and received a general discharge rather than an honorable discharge from the Army in 1948 because of ineptness and lack of adaptability, the FBI has reported. While in the Army he served three months at hard labor for being drunk and resisting arrest, the FBI said.

OTHER THAN HIS good behavior at Leavenworth, his record at the federal prison reveals little of Ray the man.

One of his former prison caseworkers barely remembered him—except that he recalled the face when the FBI distributed pictures after charging Ray with violating King's civil rights. Authorities in Tennessee have issued

the murder warrant against Ray.

Records also show:

—Ray signed a parole waiver although he would have been eligible for parole 18 months before his release.

—Leavenworth psychiatrists apparently had little interest in Ray. Aside from routine examinations when he was imprisoned there July 7, 1955, there is no indication he was given—or needed—psychiatric help. His attitude was described as good.

Although released in April, 1958, Ray was subject to parole supervision until Oct. 2, 1958. Had he served his full prison term, he would have been freed March 31, 1959.

Ray worked for a time in the Leavenworth bakery, fire department and paint shop.

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The FBI circular on Ray lists among his occupations baker and color matcher. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which catalogs jobs, has no such occupation as color matcher, and FBI officials would not elaborate on their description.

Leavenworth, where most prisoners are housed one to a cell, handles mostly adult prisoners who have had prior convictions.

Ray had already served two prison terms before Leavenworth—one in California for burglary and another in Illinois for armed robbery.