

Alternate Firing Site in King

By T. R. Reid

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A criminal pathologist told a House committee yesterday that medical evidence cannot determine precisely where the shot that killed Martin Luther King Jr., was fired from.

Dr. Michael Baden, a prominent pathologist who examined medical records in the King case for the Select Committee on Assassinations, testified yesterday in public hearings on the assassination that, based on his findings, the assassin might have shot from one of two places.

One location is the second-floor bathroom of a rooming house in Memphis across the street from the motel balcony where King was standing when he was killed by a single rifle shot. The other is a bushy area about 10 feet from the rooming house.

James Earl Ray, the ex-convict who confessed to murdering King, was in the rooming house bathroom at the time of the shooting, according to witnesses. Most law enforcement officials who worked on the case have concluded that the fatal shot came from there.

But Ray has now recanted his confession, and his attorney, Mark Lane, has suggested that the shot might have come from the bushy area. Baden's testimony yesterday leaves open that possibility.

Accordingly, Lane was elated at the end of yesterday's hearing, where Baden was the only witness. "They've given away their whole case," Lane told reporters. "They can't prove that the shot came from the bathroom."

Some members of the committee and the committee's counsel, G. Robert Blakey, urged reporters after the session not to emphasize the uncertainty about the source of the fatal shot. "We'll have more evidence proving this came from the (bathroom) window later on," said Rep. Samuel Devine (R-Ohio).

But such evidence will apparently not be forthcoming for three months at the least. Under the committee's schedule, the King hearings will run through this week and then be reconvened in mid-November.

Testimony for the remainder of this

Killing Held Possible

week should raise further questions about the case because the only scheduled witness is Ray himself. In Ray's testimony, which will be televised beginning at 9 a.m. today on WETA-TV (Channel 26), the convicted assassin is expected to argue that he was framed.

Ray has already been questioned ex-

tensively by committee members and staff aides. According to those who heard that questioning, Ray now says he was nowhere near King's motel at the time of the shooting on April 4, 1968.

Rep. Harold Ford (D-Tenn.) said yesterday that Ray has admitted pur-

chasing a 30.06 rifle—the type of gun that fired the fatal shot—and registering at the rooming house across from King's motel. But Ford said Ray denies he was there when the shot was fired.

As a preliminary to what could be a sharp confrontation between Ray and

the committee, Ray's lawyer, Lane, called a press conference yesterday to denounce the committee for spying on the convicted killer's brother, Jerry Ray.

Lane repeated the charge he had made last week that an informer for the committee had purloined papers from Jerry Ray and secretly intercepted his conversations. To prove that, Lane played a tape of what he said was a telephone call between the informer and a committee staff aide. Lane said an associate of his had secretly recorded the call.

The committee had denied wrongdoing in its investigation of Jerry Ray, but has declined to answer any specific questions about Lane's charges.

Ray, who is serving a 99-year prison term for the King murder, has been trying to win a new trial on the charge, and has promised to reveal details about conspirators who planned the killing—but only if he is granted a new trial.

At yesterday's session, Baden, New York City's medical examiner, reported the findings of a three-member medical panel that reviewed King's autopsy and medical records at the



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Pathologist Michael Baden, standing at left, uses photographs of King's clothes during his testimony.

committee's request.

Standing with a pointer before larger-than-life pictures of the bullet wounds on King's face and neck, the doctor discussed the shooting with a clinical specificity that almost caused nausea.

"We see here," Baden said, pointing to a drawing of King's face, "the entrance penetration and the bursting explosive-type injury of the mandible, or jaw bone, caused on impact . . . by the high velocity of the missile . . . there are many fragments of bone."

Baden said King was hit by a single 30.06 bullet that ripped into his right cheek just below the corner of his

mouth and then tore out of the bottom of his chin. The bullet re-entered King's body at the base of his neck, directly below the right ear, smashed his ribs and spine, and came to rest just under the skin in his left upper back.

Coupled with eyewitness testimony on King's posture at the time, Baden said, the bullet's path shows it must have been fired from slightly above King and to his right. That could put the shooter either in the bathroom or the busy area, he said.