

Panel Shreds Ray Defense

By T.R. Reid

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Using probing interrogation based on extensive investigation and a telltale laundry ticket, the House Select Committee on Assassinations yesterday tore holes in the story James Earl Ray has used as his defense in the killing of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

The committee's questions and evidence indicated strongly that Ray, traveling alone, stalked King through three southern states before the assassination in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

The questioning established that Ray can produce neither a witness nor evidence to substantiate the existence of Roual, the mysterious

smuggler whom Ray blames for the King shooting.

The hearing brought out that Ray, who confessed to the King murder in 1969 and then recanted, did not tell his lawyers then about the alibi defense he set forth Wednesday when he gave the committee his version of the case.

And the committee said it had "substantial evidence" to show that Ray financed his travels before and after the King shooting through bank robberies, rather than with the help of conspirators. The committee did not present all of that evidence yesterday, however.

Ray was visibly shaken by the day's developments. At one point

he hinted that he was ready to "take responsibility" for the assassination. But after the 5½-hour session, he was still denying that he killed King.

In effect, yesterday's hearing gave Ray the trial he has been demanding for years. The committee had arranged it that way.

The presiding officer, Rep. Richardson Preyer (D-N.C.), ran the session in the manner of the trial judge he once was. Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), a veteran criminal lawyer, conducted a cross-examination that exposed contradictions throughout Ray's story.

The hearing was televised across

See RAY, A4, Col. 1

RAY, From A1

the nation, and it contained enough drama and excitement to match any TV mystery.

The most stunning moment came as Stokes was trying to demonstrate, through questioning, that Ray had deliberately followed King in the two weeks before the assassination.

A central point of dispute concerned whether Ray, who bought a 30-06 rifle in Birmingham, Ala., on March 29 or 30, 1968, then traveled from Birmingham to Atlanta, where King lived.

In Wednesday's statement, Ray took special care to insist that he did not go to Atlanta after buying the rifle.

When Stokes asked about that yesterday, Ray held to his story. "I know I didn't return to Atlanta," he said.

Ray leaned back from the microphone and added quietly: "If I did, I'll just take responsibility for the King case right here on TV."

Stokes then called for committee exhibit F-59. This was a poster-sized reproduction of two laundry receipts showing that "Eric Galt"—the alias Ray was using—dropped off some clothers for cleaning at a laundry in Atlanta on April 1.

Stokes read from an affidavit supplied by the clerk at the Atlanta laundry. In it, Stokes said, the clerk described James Earl Ray as the "Eric Galt" and said he came to the shop on April 1.

The laundry tickets seemed to surprise Ray and his lawyer, Mark Lane. Lane began shouting at the members about an earlier committee document which Lane said was "false." Ray pondered the tickets and said, "I think this is an important area."

After examining the evidence during the lunch break, Ray said that the laundry tickets and other evidence the committee produced to show that Ray went to Atlanta after buying the rifle "must be mistaken."

"I went into the laundry, but not on April 1," Ray said.

The Birmingham-Atlanta trip laid out by Stokes was part of a pattern of travels in which Ray went to Selma, Ala., Atlanta, and finally Memphis when King went to those cities.

"Isn't it true," Stokes asked calmly, ". . . that you were in the process of following the movements of Dr. King?"

"No," Ray answered.

Stokes led Ray through a recreation of the extensive travels that Ray says he made in the company of Roual, the smuggler. In answers to repeated questions, Ray could think of three people who might testify as to Roual's existence. Ray could name only one of the three.

Stokes then read a summary of a statement from that witness saying he had not seen anyone in Ray's company.

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 1978

PIEDMONT LAUNDRY

Jackson 5-8393
 Atlanta, Georgia
 Name: Eric Galt
 Address: 1st St
 Source: _____ Mark: _____

| DESCRIPTION | PRICE |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| 3-PC SUIT | |
| 2-PC SUIT | |
| 1 COATS <u>Beck ck</u> | <u>65</u> |
| 1 TROUSERS <u>Ray</u> | <u>65</u> |
| OVERCOATS | |
| SHIRTS | |
| 1 TIES <u>1/2 R w/ tan 9/10/20 ST</u> | <u>25</u> |
| JACKETS | |
| DRESSES | <u>155</u> |
| BELTS | |
| SKIRTS | |
| BLOUSES | |
| SUITS | |
| COATS | |
| SWEATERS | |
| BLANKETS | |

RETURN TO
 CAYTON
 755
 3

PIEDMONT LAUNDRY

Jackson 5-8393
 Atlanta, Ga.
 Name: Eric Galt

| SOURCE | MARK | MARKER | LOT | PIN NO. |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-----|---------|
| <u>83</u> | <u>ESB</u> | <u>10</u> | | |

REG M T W T F S
 NO STARCH LT. STARCH ON HANGERS HVY. STARCH FLUFF DRY folded

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 3 Shirts (2-B) | Dresses |
| Drawers | Blouses |
| Undershirts | Slacks |
| Pyjamas | Slips |
| Union Suits | Gowns |
| Sex Pr. | Shirts |
| Handkerchiefs | House Coats |
| Polo Shirts | Uniforms |
| Shorts | Belts |
| Pants | Coat |
| Coat | Jackets |
| Jackets | Overall Comb. |
| Overall Comb. | Both Robes |
| Both Robes | Both Towels |
| Both Towels | Wash Cloths |
| Wash Cloths | Laundry Soap |
| Laundry Soap | Handkerchiefs |
| Handkerchiefs | Shirts |
| Shirts | Pillow Cases |
| Pillow Cases | TOTAL |

STARCH

Blow-up of Atlanta laundry tickets, shown at hearing, indicated Ray was in Atlanta when he said he wasn't.

Reviewing Ray's alibi defense, which Ray says will prove that he was nowhere near the site of the shooting when King was killed, Stokes noted that, despite Ray's meticulous memory for other details, he could not provide any specifics to support the alibi.

Ray reiterated that he was at a gas station blocks from King's motel when the shot was fired. But he told Stokes, "I can't give you the exact name. I've never checked that out."

Under questioning, Ray said the story wasn't checked because he didn't tell his defense lawyers about it in 1969. He said he feared they would pass it on to the FBI if he told them.

Ray then said his lawyer, Lane, had found two witnesses to support his alibi. Lane said one is dead. He said he provided information about both to the committee. Stokes seemed familiar with these witnesses, but did not discuss what they had to say.

Rep. Floyd Fithian (D-Ind.) then questioned Ray about how he financed his zigzag odyssey through a dozen states and five countries between April 1967, when Ray escaped from a Missouri prison, and June 1968, when he was arrested in London for the King killing.

A 1977 FBI report, which concluded that Ray killed King and that Roual did not exist, had left open the question of Ray's finances.

Fithian said the committee would present "substantial evidence" to show that Ray and his brothers conspired to rob a bank in Alton, Ill., two months after Ray's prison break. That robbery, never solved, netted \$27,000.

Ray admitted he was in the Alton area on the day of the robbery, but said he knew nothing about it. Lane, who battled the committee throughout the hearings, made his most vociferous objection of the day at that point, saying Fithian's statement was "outrageous and irresponsible."

Fithian did not present the evidence yesterday.

Yesterday's hearing consisted mainly of an exciting confrontation pitting Stokes, an artful cross-examiner against Ray, a slippery witness, and Lane, a rasping, contentious defense counsel.

In scenes straight out of Perry Mason, Stokes would lead Ray into some positive assertion about Ray's activities. Stokes would then produce documentary evidence disputing Ray's testimony. Ray would then explain his actions anew, taking into account the new evidence.

At one point, Ray testified that when he left Los Angeles in March 1968, he was heading for New Orleans to meet Roual.

Stokes then produced a change-of-address notice that "Eric S. Galt" had left in Los Angeles, indicating that his mail should be forwarded to Atlanta.