

JAMES EARL RAY FLEES A PRISON IN TENNESSEE WITH 5 OTHER CONVICTS

Convicted Slayer of Dr. King Uses Ladder of Wire to Scale Wall

By United Press International

PETROS, Tenn., June 10—James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., broke out of the Brushy Mountain state prison with five other convicts tonight and fled into the mountains of northeast Tennessee.

Bloodhounds were set immediately on the trail of three of the fugitives, but it was not known if Mr. Ray was one of the three.

Seven convicts tried to escape, but one of them was shot off the wall of the fortress-like prison and captured.

The captured convict, Jerry Ward, was taken to a hospital in Oak Ridge for treatment. A hospital official said he was shouting, "James Earl Ray got out! Ray got out!"

Third Escape Attempt

Mr. Ray had twice before tried to break out of Brushy Mountain, the state's maximum-security prison. He was serving 99 years for the murder of Dr. King in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

"The escape occurred during the evening recreation period," about 7 P.M., central daylight time, according to Brooks Parker, a spokesman for Gov. Ray Blanton.

"The prisoners escaped using a homemade ladder made out of lightning conduit [wire]," Mr. Parker said. "One has been captured and there are still six at large. One of them is James Earl Ray."

The convicts who made it over the wall with Mr. Ray were identified as Larry Hacker, Earl Hill Jr., David Lee Powell, Donald Ray Taylor and Douglas Shel-

ton. Details of the crimes for which they were serving sentences were not known in each case, but Mr. Parker said three of them had been convicted of murder.

In Washington, President Carter telephoned Attorney General Griffin B. Bell and asked to be kept informed on the progress of the search for Mr. Ray, a White House spokesman said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation officially entered the search at 10:20

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James Earl Ray during interview
in Tennessee prison last month.

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P.M., the spokesman said. A spokesman for Mr. Bell confirmed that the Attorney General had consulted with the bureau director, Clarence M. Kelley, who then ordered agents to assist the Tennessee authorities.

Mr. Parker, the spokesman for Governor Blanton, said that in addition to the Federal agents 125 correctional officers, many highway patrolmen, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation agents and "local law enforcement officers from Morgan County" were participating in the search.

Brushy Mountain, an 85-year-old prison, is about 40 miles northwest of Knoxville.

Dr. King, a Nobel Prize-winning civil rights leader, was felled by a single shot as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

An intensive manhunt soon focused on Mr. Ray, then a fugitive from the Missouri State Prison. He was arrested at Heathrow Airport in London on June 5, 1968.

On March 10, 1969, after changing attorneys several times and winding up with the noted Houston defense lawyer, Percy Foreman, Mr. Ray entered a guilty plea and was sentenced to 99 years. There was no testimony.

Almost from the moment he entered prison, Mr. Ray began protesting his conviction, saying his attorneys had railroaded him. He contended he had been working for a man named "Raoul," who he thought was a gun runner, and had been set up to take the blame for the killing.

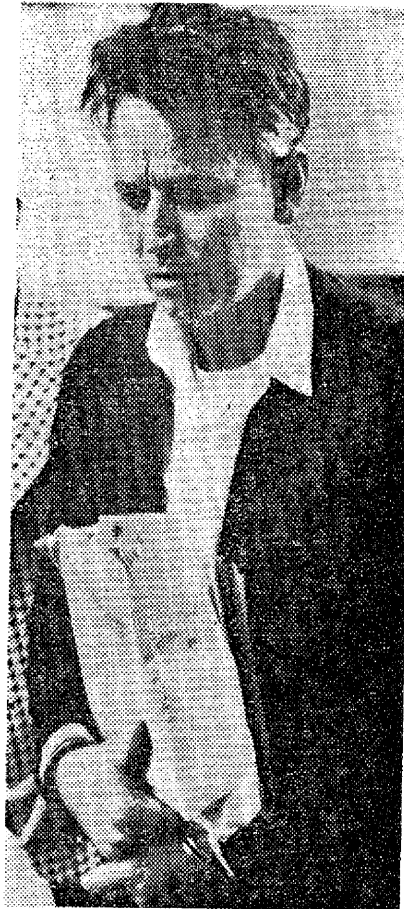
The Government said Mr. Ray had killed Dr. King with a rifle aimed through the bathroom window of a flophouse. The rifle was found in a bag by the door of the building.

Mr. Ray's attempts to get a new trial were rejected by one court after another, although there were many unexplained facets to the case. One of the questions was where he had got the money to flee to Europe after the killing.

Mr. Ray told investigators from the House Assassinations Committee, in five meetings at the prison this year, that he had not fired the shot that killed Dr. King.

He said the mysterious "Raoul" had told him to go to a movie that afternoon. When the shot was fired, Mr. Ray said, he was getting the spare tire of his car fixed.

In May 1971, Mr. Ray left a dummy in his cell bunk at Brushy Mountain, hacked



Associated Press

Mr. Ray being returned to his cell at Shelby County Jail in Memphis in 1974 after meeting with lawyers.

through a bar, broke fan blades and crawled into a ventilation tunnel. He reached the prison yard behind his cellblock, removed a manhole cover from a steam tunnel and tried to crawl through the tunnel.

But it was 400 degrees inside and he quickly came back out. Guards, alerted by the noise of his escape, were waiting for him.

That escape attempt was believed to have been planned for several months by Mr. Ray and his cellmate, Roy Morelock, who was serving a life term as a habitual criminal.

Guards found a hacksaw, a crowbar and three chisels in the steam tunnel.

On Feb. 5, 1972, Mr. Ray crawled from his work area, with a makeshift hacksaw in hand, and was trying to saw a hole through the ceiling of a room to reach the roof when guards found him.

Mr. Ray, now 49 years old, was a fugitive from the Missouri state prison when Dr. King was killed. The authorities in Missouri said he had made at least four previous escape attempts there.

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