

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Talked of Bounty on Dr. King

Convict's Story About Ray

By a Special Correspondent
of the Post-Dispatch

DALTON, Ga., April 24 — A man convicted of murder here said yesterday that James Earl Ray once confided to him that he (Ray) would collect a \$1,000,000 bounty put up by a "businessmen's association" to kill the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

Faymond Curtis, being held at Whitfield county jail pending action on an appeal, said that he and Ray were told at the Missouri Penitentiary at Jefferson

City from a "new man just in off the street" that "the businessmen's association has a \$1,000,000 bounty out for Martin Luther King."

Curtis said Ray smiled and said, "Well, if there's \$1,000,000 out on King, I believe if I ever get out I'll collect it." Curtis said that the subject of the Rev. Dr. King came up "a couple of times" in subsequent conversations with Ray in the prison yard.

The discussions occurred, Curtis said, about a week after

the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

Curtis said that he had no idea what the "businessmen's association" was. Curtis, who like Ray is 40 years old, said that he first met Ray in 1955 when they shared a cell for seven months in the Jackson county jail at Kansas City. Curtis said he again met Ray when both were at the federal penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kan.

At the Missouri prison, where both were serving sentences for armed robbery, Curtis said Ray referred to the Kennedy assassination by saying, "Boy, probably somebody made a nice little penny off of that, I sure wish it was me."

Curtis described Ray as "a likable sort of person," but one who did not associate freely with other inmates. "But if this was a plot to assassinate King, Ray would go to his grave with his secret," Curtis said.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has charged Ray with conspiracy in connection with the Rev. Dr. King's assassination April 4 in Memphis, Tenn., declined to comment yesterday on reports that agents were searching the Los Angeles area for a blond woman who dated Ray.

The woman, about 27, was reported seen with Ray in the bay

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Associated Press Photo
Raymond Curtis, a convicted murderer in Georgia who says he was a close acquaintance of James Earl Ray. Ray is being sought in connection with the killing of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

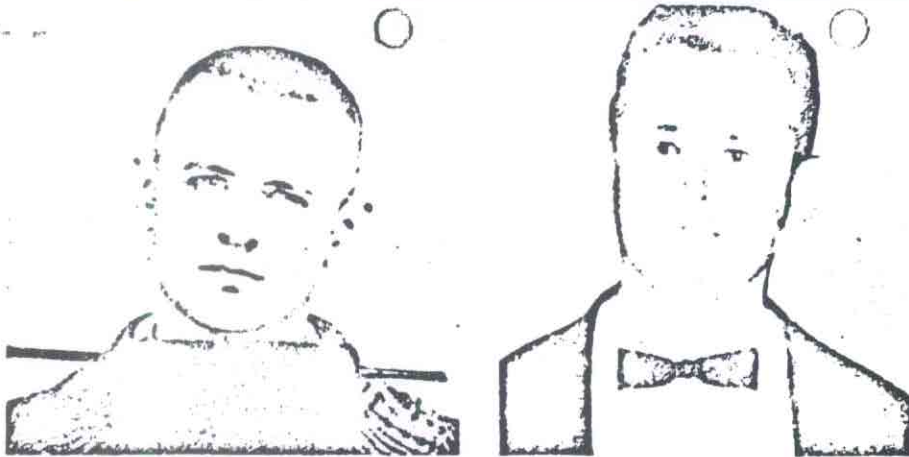
Ray

FROM PAGE ONE

of a Hollywood hotel where he was staying about three weeks prior to the Rev. Dr. King's death. This has led to the conjecture that the woman accompanied Ray when he allegedly drove to Memphis.

Ray is believed to have arrived in the Los Angeles area shortly after escaping from the Missouri Penitentiary April 23, 1967, by hiding in a bread truck. He had made two previous attempts to escape from the prison, where he was serving a 20-year sentence for two armed robberies and automobile theft in St. Louis.

Warden Harold R. Swenson noted that Ray was visited by a brother, John, the day before his escape. Swenson said, however, that there was no evidence to show John Ray had anything to do with his brother's escape.



JAMES EARL RAY (left in 1960 photo), an escapee from the Missouri state penitentiary, was identified by Attorney General Ramsey Clark as Eric Starvo Galt (right 1968 photo) against whom a federal complaint has been filed in connection with the fatal shooting of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (UPI Telephoto)

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PAGE 1, Section B

Kirksville Daily Express
Kirksville, Mo.

Says Ray Planned to Collect King 'Bounty'

DALTON, Ga. (UPI)—Fugitive James Earl Ray once said he would collect a "million-dollar bounty" put up by a mysterious "businessmen's association" for the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., according to a prison friend.

Ray, an escapee from the Missouri state prison, has been charged with conspiracy and murder in the assassination of King at Memphis April 4.

Raymond Curtis, in jail here awaiting an appeal of a murder conviction, said he had served with Ray in jail once and in prison twice and the matter of King first came up shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.

"Well, somebody made a pretty penny on that," Ray told Curtis after hearing of Kennedy's death.

About a week later, in the yard of the Jefferson City prison, Ray said a "new man just in off the street" told them "The businessmen's association has a million dollar bounty out for Martin Luther King."

He said Ray smiled and said "If there's a million dollars out on King, I believe if I ever get out I'll collect it."

Curtis said the subject of King came up "a couple of lines" thereafter. Curtis finally

was freed and Ray fled the prison last year by hiding in a bread truck.

Curtis said he had no idea what the "businessmen's association" was. Authorities said Tuesday they were pursuing several reports—some circulating in prisons—that there was a "contract" out for King's death.

"I didn't think much about it at the time," said Curtis. "In prison, you hear all sorts of hellacious ideas." FBI agents have questioned him about his talks with Ray.

Curtis said Ray never mentioned racial matters. "He didn't have any prejudice. He didn't care if a man was white or colored," Curtis said. "He was only interested in money."

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