

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

'Some Feared New Trial'

Ray Possibly Kidnaped, Attorney Says

Jack Kershaw, James Earl Ray's Nashville attorney, said last night there is a "possibility that should not be ignored" — that Ray was kidnaped from Brushy Mountain State Prison, instead of escaping.

Kershaw attributed such a possible kidnaping to people who might be "disturbed" at the prospect that Ray could get a new trial and develop new evidence concerning the 1968 slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ray has been serving a 99-year sentence for the slaying, on a guilty plea.

Ralph Abernathy, a close associate of assassinated civil rights leader Dr. Martin King Jr., also doubted Ray's escape saying he believes the escape is a move to set Ray up to "be destroyed."

I am greatly outraged over this news. I firmly am convinced, beyond a shadow of a

doubt that Ray has not escaped but is part of a plan," the Rev. Mr. Abernathy said.

KERSHAW SAID HE has had "rumblings" of such concern since he has been working with Ray in an effort to get a new trial.

"I can't be specific, but I have a rapport with certain elements that have indicated their concern with Ray's having a new trial," Kershaw said.

He said he has had contacts with "the underworld — the Mafia," and identified some of those who possibly wanted Ray out of prison as "the (Ku Klux) Klan, the FBI or CIA, black groups jealous of King's power and those violent black groups who were opposed to King's methods."

KERSHAW DID not say specifically why any of these groups would be interested in

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kidnaping Ray. But the Nashville attorney has contended in recent months that Ray himself did not shoot down King and said at one point "there had to be some sort of conspiracy" behind the assassination.

Asked how Ray could be kidnaped from a maximum security prison like Brushy Mountain, Kershaw noted incoming mail is not opened, and said it would be easy for interested people to send money into the prison to pay other inmates to kidnap Ray.

He implied Ray may not have gone along willingly with the other five inmates in the escape party.

"I AM WONDERING if the escape was engineered by him, or whether he had to go along with the situation, but this is pure speculation on my part," Kershaw said.

He added it was important to note that "Ray has said he wants to acquit himself, not convict anyone else. That shows his concern with reprisals."

When he was first notified of Ray's escape, Kershaw expressed "total surprise and shock."

"I TALKED with him this week and he indicated nothing of this nature," Kershaw said then. "His plans were definitely oriented to a new trial with renewed confidence.

"This must have been a hysterical, spur of the moment thing. I was getting him out of prison, but not this way."

Later, Kershaw came up with the theory of a possible kidnaping.

IN WASHINGTON, James H. Lesar, the attorney who represented Ray before the Supreme Court, said he wasn't

really surprised at Ray's escape. Lesar said Ray felt he had no alternative.

"After seven years of constant struggle to gain a hearing and reopening the case in court, I think he simply concluded the courts' claims to justice were farcical, that he had no alternative but to escape," Lesar said.

Lesar added Ray's escape "could have been avoided if the courts had at any time during the past eight years done what they were obligated to do, to give him the trial he deserved."

Lesar represented Ray in a plea to the Supreme Court to set aside a circuit court decision that affirmed a federal district court verdict, in effect sanctioning Ray's conviction.

Jerry Ray, the younger brother of Ray, said last night he does not believe his brother will succeed in his escape attempt.

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