

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Interviews May Resume Today at Ray's Option

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PETROS, Tenn. — A haggard James Earl Ray, in close confinement after a weekend of freedom, may resume interviews this morning with congressional investigators and his Nashville attorney, if Ray chooses.

Warden Stonney Lane of Brushy Mountain State Prison said yesterday that staffers from the House Assassinations Committee are here, and Atty. Jack Kershaw of

Nashville will arrive about 8 a.m. today. Ray will be permitted to talk to them if he so chooses, Lane said.

IN THE aftermath of the spectacular escape of Ray, convicted killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and five other inmates Friday night, C. Murray Henderson, state correction commissioner, said several plans are being considered to lighten security at the fortress-like prison.

Among the new security arrangements, he said will be a

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12-foot outer perimeter fence beyond the prison's stone walls, and a new guard tower near the spot where Ray and the others scaled the wall.

In Nashville, Gov. Ray Blanton said he has requested President Carter and U.S. Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell to take over the responsibility of keeping Ray in custody in a federal institution. But Lane said he feels Brushy Mountain is "still capable" of holding the escape-prone Ray.

AFTER A COMPLETE physical examination in the prison infirmary, Ray was placed in Cell Block D, the prison's "administrative segregation" or maximum security unit. He was joined in his cell by Earl Hill, one of the escapees identified as a lead plotter in the jailbreak along with Ray and Douglas Shelton, 32, the only one of the group still at large last night.

Inmates in D block lose their jobs on the prison grounds and are not permitted to go to the dining hall or outside exercise areas. They may leave their cell for 30 minutes a day for exercise inside a walkway in the cell block.

Robert Lehner and Edward Evans, staff investigators for the House Assassinations Committee, which is probing the slayings of King and President Kennedy, arrived at the prison yesterday afternoon. They discussed details of the escape with Lane and other correctional officials.

COMMITTEE STAFFERS have questioned Ray several times in recent months in an effort to determine whether others were involved in King's murder, to which Ray confessed in 1969. Kershaw is seeking to get Ray a new trial for the slaying.

Henderson said increased security measures at the prison, in addition to the fence and a new guard tower, will include shoring up with steel and concrete a mountain embankment that forms part of the prison's side wall. Already the guard tower nearest Friday's escape route has been manned, Henderson said, though it previously was occupied only during "emergencies" and was unmanned when Ray and the others went over the wall.

In a joint press conference with Henderson on their return to Nashville from the prison, Blanton was highly critical of a 1970 federal court decree that, in effect, ordered the state to relax the solitary confinement in which Ray was being held. Since then, Blanton said, Ray has made three escape efforts.

BLANTON SAID HE telephoned Bell at 2:30 a.m. yesterday to inform him of Ray's recapture eight miles from the prison, and at that time re-

quested the federal government to take over his custody. He repeated the request in a letter to Carter.

"I don't expect any instant response," Blanton said. "There may have to be some court action."

He said Ray has become a national figure, the subject of a congressional investigation, the state is under federal court order as to how he shall be confined, and "it's unfair to the taxpayers of Tennessee to continue to bear the expense of confining him under these conditions."

AFTER 54 HOURS of freedom, in which he managed to scramble only 10 miles, the Ray, 49, was run to ground by bloodhounds in the early hours yesterday morning. He fell exhausted on the dark mountainside and with his remaining strength tried to squirm under a pile of rotting leaves.

"You might get over the wall" at Brushy Mountain, Lane said, "but you still have another huge wall to get over" — the rugged mountain wilderness that rings the prison.

Ray and two companions — Shelton and Hill — had been free nearly 50 hours when bloodhounds caught their trail Sunday night near a strip mine. They ran in different directions.

OFFICERS QUICKLY found Hill hiding in a thicket. Then fresh bloodhounds — 14-month-old sisters named Sandy and Little Red — were placed on the trail.

For three hours they raced westward along and across the ankle-deep New River, at times so close to their quarry the handlers could hear him crashing through the woods ahead.

Sandy reached him first, about 2 a.m., tugging at the leash held by prison guard Sammy Joe Chapman.

"JAMES, ARE YOU all right?" Chapman asked.

"I'm okay," replied Ray, covered with mud and sand. "I feel good."

Five other guards arrived as Chapman cuffed Ray's hands behind his back.

RAY WAS RETURNED to the prison in a Tennessee Highway Patrol squad car. On

the ride back to the prison, Lane told Ray photographers were waiting there, and asked if he would accommodate them.

Ray, who has been selling interviews to newspapers at \$2,000 each, said he preferred not to.

But as the car sped through the gates, a reporter shouted: "Is that Ray?"

"I'M NOT HIS mother," Ray shouted back.

Prison spokeswoman Becca Cottrell said Ray looked "like a pig wallowing in a sty" on his

return — caked with mud, hair wet and matted, cut from briars and very hungry.

Lane said Ray was doggedly silent about his flight, but he learned that Ray, Hill and Shelton moved at a slow pace for short distances, mostly at night. The prison is surrounded on three sides by 3,000-foot hillsides, covered with trees under which are rattlesnakes, moccasins, assorted insects and sawballs — thorny rose-bush vines.

THE SEARCH involved at least eight helicopters at one time and 200 law enforcement officials with six teams of bloodhounds. In addition, hundreds of area residents went into the hills with shotguns for the excitement of the chase and the possibility of collecting the \$25 bounty for each fugitive.

Seven hours after Ray was caught, Donald Ray Caylor, 24, was arrested by police in Oak Ridge. Caylor, a holdup artist serving 51 years, was the only fugitive to make it out of the craggy mountains.

Lane said Shelton was penned up in the New River area where Ray was caught, and it would be only a matter of hours before he was taken, thus keeping intact Brushy Mountain's record of no successful escapes.

"WE STARTED with seven, we're down to two," said Joel Plummer state safety commissioner, before Caylor's recapture.

Two others were captured Sunday: Larry Hacker, 32, of Hamilton, Ohio, serving 28 years for armed robbery and safe cracking, and Hill, 34, of Erwin, Tenn., convicted murderer and rapist and a former cellmate of Ray's.

Another fugitive, David Lee Powell, 27, of Chicago, serving 100 years for murder, was recaptured Saturday.

JERRY WARD, serving 20 to 40 years for bank robbery, was shot and captured as he scaled the prison wall, the last man to go over, Friday night.

Henderson said speculation that authorities at the prison helped Ray escape is "absurd, irresponsible and absolutely untrue."

"We'll make a full investigation," he said. "If I'm wrong, the evidence will prove it."

LANE, IN AN evening press conference last night, said he does not believe there was any outside conspiracy involved in the escape, nor that prison personnel assisted it in any way.

He said he is still investigating questions surrounding lack of proper security during the escape, but no prison guards have been suspended or disciplined.

Lane said the pipe used in the escape over the northeast wall apparently was obtained by Shelton.

"SHELTON WORKED on the plumbing gang and Ray and Hill were cellmates," Lane said. "Shelton and Ray were not close friends, but there were often in close contact with each other inside the prison compound."

Henderson said in an interview here yesterday that he had concluded before Ray's capture that there was no conspiracy from outside to help him escape.

"Had there been a conspiracy, the whole thing would have been better organized," he said. But he added: "If anything had happened to Ray, we would never have been able to explain it."

HENDERSON SAID he thought only three of the group who scaled the wall actually planned to escape, and Ray was one of them.

"I think the others just saw the ladder against the wall and decided to go too," he said.

"I am personally confident they (Ray and two others) worked out the plan to escape while inside the prison walls. We didn't find anything in

Ray's pockets when we captured him to make us think otherwise."

BLANTON WAS preparing to send Tennessee National Guard troops into the search when Ray was recaptured. The governor was full of praise for state and local law enforcement personnel who participated in the manhunt.

Although FBI agents were present at Brushy Mountain, Blanton said he told Bell Friday night the state would take responsibility for controlling the search within Tennessee and he asked only that the FBI seal the state's borders.

"I said that while he (Ray) is in Tennessee, he's ours and we'll handle the problem," Blanton said. "And we did."

LANE SAID RAY will be kept in "administrative segregation" for three days while a hearing on his escape is in progress to determine whether he should be prosecuted for the escape. If convicted, he could be held under administrative segregation and have his chances of being considered for parole delayed until some time early in the next century.

At present, he is eligible for parole consideration in 1998.

During the hearing, he will remain locked up, though he can talk through the bars of his cell to other prisoners. His meals will be brought to the cell, and he loses his \$22-a-week job in the laundry.

HENDERSON INDICATED Ray will be kept at Brushy Mountain as long as he is in state custody.

"Had this happened out at the main prison (in Nashville), two blocks to a bus line and he blends in with West Nashville

Displaying the escape ladder at his Nashville press conference, Henderson said it was made of common water pipe found around any institution. He said it could have been smuggled in sections to the wall and assembled there, hidden in clothing, athletic equipment or trash cans on the way out.

THE INVESTIGATION into the prison's security is in the hands of the Correction Department and the TBI.

One central question in the probe will be why no guard manned the tower nearest the northeast corner of the prison recreation yard, where the convicts scaled a 14-foot wall about an hour before dusk Friday.

Prison officials have said the post is manned only during emergencies, but declined to specify what constitutes an emergency.

ANOTHER QUESTION is whether guards, distracted by a prison yard fight, were neg-

ligent in allowing six inmates to slide over the mountain stone wall before firing on and wounding the seventh.

"They should never have gotten over that wall," said Deputy Warden Herman C. Davis. "Any time anyone goes over that wall, it's someone's fault."

A live wire carrying 2,300 volts hangs a foot over the wall. Henderson said rough weather last winter had caused minor rock slides near a cliff where it was anchored, leaving a gap on that side through which the men slipped.

"ISN'T IT STRANGE that in a maximum security prison, something like that wasn't

Costly Catch

How much did it cost the state of Tennessee to track down James Earl Ray after he fled Friday night from Brushy Mountain State Prison?

Nobody knows for sure, but Gov. Ray Blanton estimated yesterday that overtime and other expenses for state personnel will total at least \$173,000.

spotted?" Henderson was asked.

"I agree," he replied.

There had been some speculation that a power failure at the prison might have rendered the wire ineffective, but Henderson said the power cutoff happened after the breakout and lasted only a few minutes.

WITH REFERENCE to his letter to Carter and his request to Bell, Blanton told his press conference: "If he (Ray) is going to be a federal case, he ought to be a federal prisoner."

Michael Aun, a spokesman for the U. S. Bureau of Prisons in Washington, said the bureau had not been notified of Blanton's request officially.