

The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Friday, April 28, 1978

King Slayer 'Witness' Released From Hospital

From The Commercial Appeal
Jackson, Tenn., Bureau

BOLIVAR, Tenn. — A 62-year-old mental patient who claims to have seen the murderer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. moments after his assassination, Grace Walden, has been released from the Western Mental Health Institute here.

Institute Supt. Dr. Morris Cohen said Mrs. Walden was released Tuesday to a sheltered boarding home in Memphis and is receiving care from the University of Tennessee Mental Health Center.

Cohen had expressed fears earlier this month that Mrs. Walden's release might be "impeded" by renewed publicity spawned by the 10th anniversary of King's death in 1968.

Mrs. Walden claims to have seen a man running down the hall of a boarding house in Memphis moments after King was shot to death while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel across the street. Mrs. Walden said the man she saw was carrying a shotgun and does not fit the description of James Earl Ray, King's convicted assassin.

Mrs. Walden's story received widespread attention earlier this month when a number of ministers in Memphis for the anniversary of King's death called for her to be released from the mental hospital as part of a push to renew the investigation of King's death.

Ray now claims that he pleaded guilty to the charge under pressure from his attorneys. His numerous attempts to win a new trial have been unsuccessful. Mrs. Walden was interviewed earlier this year by a congressional committee probing the King assassination.

Cohen said Mrs. Walden was released after spending about nine months in the hospital's community preparation unit. She had been a patient at the hospital since July 1, 1968. She was transferred to the state hospital from the psychiatric unit at John Gaston Hospital in Memphis.

Slaying 'Witness' Freed at Bolivar

BOLIVAR, Tenn. (AP) — A 62-year-old mental patient who says she saw the man who killed Martin Luther King Jr. 10 years ago has been released from Western Mental Health Institute.

Grace Walden was released Tuesday to a sheltered boarding home in Memphis, hospital superintendent Dr. Morris Cohen said. Her confinement had been criticized by clergymen who reject the official account of King's April 4, 1968 slaying.

Cohen said Mrs. Walden will continue to receive care from the University of Tennessee Mental Health Center in Memphis.

Mrs. Walden, who lived in a Main Street hotel where the King assassin fired his fatal shot, says she saw a man running down the hotel hallway after King was shot to death on the balcony of the nearby Lorraine Motel.

On the 10th anniversary of King's death earlier this month, a group of clergymen issued a statement demanding Mrs. Walden's release.

Among those signing the statement were the Rev. Jesse Jackson of Chicago, a former King aide, and the Most Rev. Carroll Dozier, Roman Catholic bishop of Memphis.

MEMPHIS PRESS-SCIMITAR, FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 1978

I purposely didn't send you observance stories (speeches, Marches) & didn't save any myself. Because this was the only item of moment in observance oratory.

30 ***** The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Tuesday, April 18, 1978

ASSOCIATION: Mark Lane said yesterday a House assassinations subcommittee told Jerry Ray it is investigating whether Ray was involved with his brother, James Earl Ray, in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King. "They said 'You're a killer; you were involved in the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King,'" the lawyer and writer of a number of books on assassinations told reporters after a closed session. Lane said subcommittee lawyers did not use such stark language, however. He quoted them as saying the subcommittee considers Jerry Ray as "someone who may be capable of criminality."

4/29/78

Harold,

I have your letters postmarked 4/25.

I'm glad for your illumination on Redditt. Wayne seemed to think Ed on CBS-TV, not merely local. I doubt WREG-TV (Ch. 3) would have a copy.

Will pass along your ideas on Crawford to Wayne, who'll be by today for his birthday.

Best,
Phil.

Dear Phil,

5/2/78

This is to amplify or explain my interest in the observance oratory and to cue you and Wayne in on the realities about Gracie.

While I have no doubt that Gracie was put away quietly and without public or really due process to keep her unavailable (from press to defense counsel), there was no need to keep her salted after the guilty plea.

Wayne may remember that during the evidentiary hearing, when it was impossible for me to take the time, he obtained some of the court records and I gave them to Jim, who put them into the hearing record.

There came a time when I wanted the story out. I therefore gave it to Paul ~~Kim~~ Valentine of the WxPost. Paul is a good person and a good reporter. He went down to Tenn., looked and asked and in about 1973 printed a story stating that the only reason Gracie was and had been in the mental hospital is that there was no practical alternative. As I recall it this meant that she could not care for herself and there was nobody who was willing to or had any obligation to. She simply isn't all there. Would she have been living with Charlie otherwise?

Lane, who is aptly described by another as a ~~walking~~ ^{walking} encyclopaedia or misinformation, knowing nothing about the case and not being willing to take the time to learn, saw Gracie as exploitable. So, he exploited, unconcerned about fact or anything else.

For whatever it is worth to you, and for my own reasons I will not expand on it now, the account of what Gracie can say is spurious. Only a Lane would believe it and he does because he wants to. He knows she is not competent to testify anyway.

Also for your and Wayne's information, except for the quote of Lane, which I have seen in the same words elsewhere, the story on the plight of Jerry Ray is accurate. It also is typically incomplete, as anything connected with Lane is. In fact, Lane is his own kind of incompleteness as a person.

What is omitted is that aside from his initial responsibility for the committee and then its direction, he is directly responsible for Jerry's being before the committee without counsel. He told Jerry that they'd have to throw him in jail before he would stop fighting for Jerry's constitutional right to be represented by counsel of his own choosing, namely Mark. Instead of getting Jerry other counsel when the committee notified both (at three-page length) that its rules precluded one lawyer representing two witnesses, Lane looked to the promotional benefits to his paperback then in need of some attention to sell it. So Lane went through the motions, made a fine speech to the press and fled. In this case he fled to Atlanta and a previously-scheduled promo.

I don't know if Jerry has obtained replacement counsel or how he'll pay a decent lawyer, one who knows something about Congressional practice. I think he is now scheduled to testify - in secret of course - on the 11th. (When Jerry realized he was in the soup he asked the committee to appoint Jim Lesar to rep him and if they would not do that to appoint me. He even called me "The Honorable." The response was that Jim already repped Brother John and that I'm not a lawyer.)

Maybe John is due on the 11th. They are having both plus Carol Pepper at about that time.

On Reddit² Lane began with two ripoffs and then added his own unique genius, which always means slander or libel and error. As you know the name is actually pronounced "Reddick," which is the way I used it in my book, otherwise with complete accuracy. I knew more but feared the consequences of publication of it. I made several efforts to talk to Redditt when he was working for Kuykendal. He refused. I figured this was because I am white so when I asked Les Payne to carry some of my work forward in return for the stories he would get I turned this over to him. Redditt added not what Lane made up out of nothing and Redditt then appears to have gone for. What Redditt told Les that may be the truth is that he had also recommended a simple perimeter protection. Not to stop any assassin but to prevent any escape. There were threats against Redditt. I know of some before the killing and some coinciding with it. The blacks were angry over what he was known to be doing, which is simply spying.

Now about those brave black preachers not from Memphis (and one or two from there) and their public breast-beating, there is much I could say about most of them. Not all and not Lawson.

Before I went to Memphis for the first time I wrote Kyle three times without getting even an acknowledgement from him. Here I was, a honky wanting to talk to blacks who had no reason to trust outsiders, not knowing the town and with no way of getting around it. He would have nothing to do with any effort to learn anything about the assassination other than the official account.

Then there is Jesse Jackson. I bought copies of my own book for the black caucus and personally delivered them. Jackson saw them, took two copies without paying for them, and two members of the black caucus did not get a copy.

I made a number of efforts to get in touch with Jackson and never got a callback. I also made a number of efforts through a black friend, then a TV producer/director. He also got no response.

Now that Hoover is safely dead and there was the certainty of some good personal publicity out of it Jackson found voice. Irresponsibly.

Same with Abernathy. I tried him through his agent, a friend of mine, besides writing him and trying through a number of SCLC people, including in Atlanta.

Coretta, through Harry Wachtel as well as directly. Silence there, too.

I could go on and on.

So one of my interests is a file for history: "Their Brother's Keepers."

Then there is always the problem of chickens and roosting when they home.

Thanks and best to you all,