

"Political Prisoner" Wins Release; Exposes King Murder Cover Up

by Arnie Passman

A hard rain was falling in Memphis the evening of May 3rd as American Airlines flight 361 sat on the runway preparing for its journey to Dallas, with connections to Los Angeles. The passengers were buzzing as a television crew turned off its lights and cameras and left the plane.

They had been filming a 62-year-old woman named Grace Walden, subsequently described as "someone who looked like she had lived with Howard Hughes for ten years." To this day Grace claims she was locked up in the Western Mental Institute of the Tennessee State Hospital in Bolivar because she saw the man who killed Martin Luther King, Jr.

Grace was traveling to Los Angeles with lawyer, author and conspiracy buff Mark Lane, who told onlookers:

"Her name is Grace Daniels -- she's the heir to the Jack Daniels fortune."

"And once we're airborne," said Grace, an ex-drunk, "all the drinks are on me."

Of his reasons for spirited her out of Tennessee so she might tell her story, Lane said, "Grace has been terribly consistent over the years, in spite of being a brutalized political prisoner... since Dr. King was murdered."

Upon landing with Lane in Los Angeles (where he is making a movie on the King killing with actor Donald Sutherland) Grace told a crowd of more than a hundred people she remains convinced she saw the man who killed Martin Luther King. "It wasn't James Earl Ray and it's a shame that man's been in jail for all these years, because he was not the person who did it."

According to Memphis police reports of the King assassination, Grace saw a man come out of the rooming house bathroom King was shot from. She described him as about 5'4" tall, around 60 years old and "holding something long in his right hand," presumably a gun.

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On May 22nd Lane appeared voluntarily in the probate court of Shelby County Judge Joseph Evans with psychiatric affidavits as to Grace's competence and a videotaped statement from her. "There was a petition to hold me in contempt of court for leaving the jurisdiction with Grace without the permission of

court. But I decided to confront it directly and immediately, and that upset them a great deal."

Lane had been told by Judge Evans, on May 3rd in the presence of newspeople, that it was all right for Grace to travel with him. The judge also told Lane that guardian Nance had to tell him where Grace was.

In a heated, seven-hour hearing Lane told the court he found

Saying he would not consider returning Grace to Memphis, Lane was asked by Judge Evans if he would like to be Grace's guardian. "It came as a great surprise to me, I must say," Lane recalls.

"I said she didn't need a guardian, but I would be willing to serve at this point instead of Mr. Nance. And as my first act as guardian, I would move to have her declared competent and have me dismissed as guardian."

Lane said he plans to file a multi-million dollar suit for Grace against the state of Tennessee and Western Mental Institute Superintendent Morris Cohen, and is also seeking a new trial for Ray as well.

Lane is confident of victory if they do secure a new trial for Ray. "They will not have enough evidence to get past the establishment of a prima facie case, I think. James was not in that building, and his fingerprints on the rifle are circumstantial evidence."

Lane said a legal conference is being planned for Memphis, within the next few weeks. It will probe the best ways to gain a new trial for Ray in the state and federal courts.

He also said the Council of the Roman Catholic Church for Western Tennessee held a meeting in which it voted 17-1 in favor of a new trial for Ray. "Moreover, the priests of Memphis supported a suggestion of mine that there be a boycott of the state of Tennessee," he said.

"They sat down with me to prepare a list of industries to boycott in Memphis -- like Holiday Inn, Coppertone, Maybelline and they assured me they would cancel their 1981 national convention at the Holiday Inn Rivermont in Memphis as part of our campaign."

Holiday Inn's Rivermont hotel is where Dr. King was supposed to have stayed on April 3-4, 1968.

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Two months ago on the 10th anniversary of the King killing black and white religious leaders of all denominations in western Tennessee issued a statement calling for the release of Grace and a new trial for Ray. While pleading guilty (under extreme duress and torture, claimed Lane), Ray told the court there was a conspiracy in the murder of Dr. King.

Following the statement by the clergy the president and the general counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union in Memphis sought a writ of habeas corpus to secure Grace Walden's release from the Tennessee mental hospital.

"And they knew we'd win that," said Lane who represents both Grace Walden and James Earl Ray. "And they knew this would all come out."

Faced with the writ by the ACLU, Grace was secretly moved by the court to a Memphis boarding house three weeks later. "The state wanted to get off the hook," said Lane. "They quickly brought Grace before a judge and had a guardian appointed without saying she had counsel and friends and that money had been raised for her. "But they never expected I'd find her, and never expected



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Lane's New Leads In JFK Case

In his effort at uncovering the truth behind the Kennedy and King killings, Mark Lane has most recently been working under the auspices of Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt, who himself fell victim to an assassin's bullet last March. "I got a call early this year from the Bahamas from Dick Gregory, my co-author on Code Name 'Zorro,'" Lane explained, "which is about Dr. King's murder."

Gregory was with Larry Flynt, who was on a no food, drink or talk fast that week. "Through Greg," said Lane, "Flynt asked me to be a judge in his million dollar offer for information in the JFK killing."

Following a hurried flight to the Bahamas to look at a special report on the Kennedy assassination Flynt was about to publish, Lane was asked to rewrite the entire issue. "It wasn't very new or true," Lane explained. "We flew right back to L.A. and rewrote it in four or five days."

In response to Flynt's \$85,000 ad campaign, to gain information on the assassinations, responses began pouring in. The new leads needed to be investigated, and Flynt asked Lane to start a Special Reports Investigative Group to do a JFK follow-up and a report on the King killing.

The investigators were hired and before long they faced a staggering backlog of over 1000 contacts to follow up on.

A week before Flynt was gunned down in Lawrenceville, Ga., he flew with Lane to the Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in Tennessee to interview James Earl Ray. "Larry was the first media person James gave new information to, including the identification of Raoul (since divulged by the Associated Press)," Lane said. "It was a long, in-depth interview that was going to be featured in a special report for publication on the 10th anniversary of the King slaying."

After Flynt was shot, however, Lane's staff was reduced to himself and a secretary. Publication was suspended, but the two people were retained to deal with the continuing influx of new leads. Currently, Lane does it alone without pay.

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Oswald in California in the late 1950s. "One was recruited with Oswald to work for American intelligence," explained Lane. "He said Oswald told him he had worked with American intelligence while in the Marine Corps in Japan.

"And that Oswald got gonorrhea in the line of duty from a Japanese woman double agent.

"The man said Oswald told him he was going to get a discharge to spy on Russia. So when Oswald was said to be the first Marine in peace time history to defect from the Corps, the other Marines who knew winked at this."

Lane and investigator-author Don Freed said other Marines who were stationed with Oswald have begun to surface and are calling themselves "Operation Survivor."

"None of them are asking for the million dollars, that's not what they responded to," claimed Lane. "What they responded to was an obvious effort by someone in a position of power in the area of communications to secure information.

"One man told me he picked up the phone to call me twelve years ago after hearing me on a San Francisco radio talk show. Instead, he said he changed his name and disappeared."

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This week's cover features a photo of Neil Young by Chester Simpson and a photo, by Mike Mufelski, from the UC Berkeley sit-in protesting investment in South Africa.