

Lane / Ragsdale

Dear Phil,

11/6/78

Very often I would like to write to people like you, who are helpful, at greater length than I do. Usually I am much too busy with FOIA and similar matters for a long day to permit me to do this. However, the exceptionally balmy fall has led to a change in my schedule and style of living ~~now~~ because there is a medical need for me to exercise and keep the circulation circulating and stretching the inhibited vessels. With the chigger season past - how they irritate when they get under my venous supports and I can't scratch or medicate - I have a replacement for mowing the grass and weeds - clearing land that was re-overgrown when I was not allowed to do that kind of work and beginning to accumulate the winter's firewood. These tire me and I take rest periods that are not long enough for continuous work so I use the time as I do now.

My purpose is to inform you so you will not be misled and so that our mutual friend also will not be misled. I'd prefer that you keep what follows to yourself except for him and that he do likewise for a very simple reason. I think that the only hope now is for the end of the Lane influence on the case. There is nothing I can do as long as he is Ray's lawyer and I never write to Jimmy any more. I want to stay completely out of it. Above all I do not want Lane to have an basis for his usual m.o., taking something out of context and then fabricating on the basis of invention. I'm letting him do his thing without any interference and I do not want either to permit any interpretation of interference or help him in any way. The sooner even he can't avoid facing the fact that he is flat on his face the better for Jimmy, who can't get anywhere with the Lane m.o. or propaganda substitute for evidence and law. And the better the possibilities of truth coming out and being recognized as truth.

The stories you sent, both dealing with the Lane/Ragsdale inspection of the tank in which Memphis had Jimmy and what Lane said, illustrate his contempt for fact and decency and his abysmal ignorance of the most elemental facts of the case itself. This is something that I believe Jimmy Ray should understand.

There was only a brief period of time, in the very earliest stages, when the defense of which I was part did not make maximum possible effort on the conditions of Jimmy's confinement. I prepared a long memo on this but Bud felt that the court would regard it as a ruse and might hold it against Jimmy so he didn't use it. However, for whatever reason, Judge Williams felt otherwise. So beginning in 2/71 we made a big deal out of it. I then prepared Bob Livingston and you will find that he made a long and eloquent oration almost on this, citing even cases involving Judge Battle from when he was prosecutor.

While it may be possible that given financing we did not have we might have done more I doubt that anything other than we did could have made a difference to the judges on the case. For example, if the moneybags of big mouth and fat accounts, like Lane and Regory, had helped with the defense (Jim Mesar and I had no income) there are, undoubtedly, other things Jim would have tried. There is also Jimmy's own strong refusal to consider other steps I personally proposed along this line. And I did, beginning the first of March, 1971, with Jimmy personally.

Nonetheless, we made a very strong case on this on every occasion and in every appeal. We got an examined the jail logs, every record of every bit of medication Jimmy had, how he slept, what and how much of what he ate, etc. Jim made an exhaustive study of all these and other records and made maximum possible use of them. As a result what Lane is now bleating about has been before the courts and has been decided - all the way to the Supreme Court. Over Jimmy Ray's strong objection the sixth circuit ordered Jim Mesar to carry the case from it to the Supreme Court. The Court ruled, supporting sixth circuit, which supported McRae. So what Lane is now making noises about has been decided with what I fear is permanent finality and to the degree the judicial system permits. While I do not think Jimmy will be deceived by this I do think many concerned people can and will be. Excuse the typos. Thanks and best wishes,

Ragsdale Charges Cover-Up By Ford

Duncan Ragsdale, challenging Rep. Harold Ford of Memphis for the Eighth Congressional District seat, yesterday charged Ford and the House Assassinations Committee with being part of a "cover-up" which has prevented James Earl Ray from getting a new trial.

Ragsdale and Ray's attorney, Mark Lane, yesterday visited the specially secured Shelby County Jail cell where Ray was confined following his capture after the April 4, 1968, assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Lane maintains Ray pleaded guilty to the killing because he was "under duress" in the special cell and suffered from "deprivation of sensory experience."

Ragsdale said he and Lane will meet at 1:30 p.m. today at the Lorraine Motel, scene of the killing, with a witness who claims to have seen an unidentified man creeping through bushes away from the boardinghouse where Ray was staying across from the motel.

Ragsdale, a Republican, and Ford, a Democrat, are on Tuesday's ballot with Dick Whitmore, an independent.

Ray's Attorney Criticizes Jail

Mark Lane, the attorney representing James Earl Ray, today visited Ray's former cell at the Shelby County Jail and charged that conditions in the jail were part of the methods used to "coerce and torture" Ray into pleading guilty to the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Mark Lane, the attorney, said he will describe the jail conditions in his application for a new trial for Ray. That application, Lane said, will be filed in the Criminal Court Clerk's office within two weeks.

Lane and Attorney Duncan Ragsdale, both of whom are co-guardians for a woman who claims to have seen the assassin of Dr. King, spent about 45 minutes in the jail today asking questions about the jail cell's condition at the time Ray was being held there awaiting trial for the murder of Dr. King in 1968.

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