

King Murder Coverup Proceeds

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If you're a news junkie, you might have the impression that the FBI has figured out how James Earl Ray financed himself while on the run, both before and after the assassination of Martin Luther King.

It has always been a mystery how Ray acquired the \$10,000 he spent traveling through North America and Europe. But has the mystery been solved?

Last week the *Los Angeles Times* headlined a short article, "Files Reveal FBI's Belief That Ray Had No Funding In King's Slaying." The story referred to newly released LFBI files concluding there is no evidence that Ray was bankrolled by anyone else, that Ray financed his flight to Europe through a series of petty robberies, and that Ray lived very cheaply.

KNX-TV anchorperson Connie Chung also reported that the money mystery had been cleared up by new FBI documents which indicated Ray's involvement in a series of robberies, including one in London.



The Mysterious James Earl Ray, before and after mysterious foreign journey.

The so-called "new" information had been speeded over the wire by UPI, which had an exclusive look at 48,000 pages of FBI documents.

— The "new" documents. If the *Times* staff had bothered to do any research they would have realized that the evidence is nine years old in some cases. The conclusion also is the same one the FBI has tenaciously clung to since Ray's capture.

The documents are only new, or newish to the public. Two years ago public pressure forced the Justice Department to review the FBI's investigation of the King assassination. After 10 months the Justice

Department concluded Ray's finances "still remain a mystery today." After looking over that report, Attorney General Griffin Bell also disputed the FBI's version of Ray's finances, saying — in a February, 1977 *L.A. Times* article — "I'd like to find out where he got his money."

Nobody seemed impressed by the FBI "robberies." The Justice Department's report detailed how every FBI office in the country was ordered to search through the evidence on every unsolved robbery and

[Continued on page 30]

[King Assassination]

[Continued from page 9]

burglary committed during the relevant time period to see if any could be linked to Ray. Since he lived in Canada and Mexico for brief periods, the authorities in those countries did the same. Still, not one crime could be tied to Ray, except for the London robbery.

— **Ray lived cheaply.** Not completely true. During Ray's North American travels, he spent time at resorts in both Canada and Mexico. He bought a \$2,000 car, \$600 worth of photographic equipment, and tailor-made clothes. Just while living in Los Angeles for four months, Ray spent \$466 on dancing lessons, \$220 on a bartending course and \$200 for a nose job. Then, of course, there were his travel expenses between the United States and Europe. Cheaply?

— **The London bank robbery.** Ms. LChung reported this event as if it were a new discovery. It was — nine years ago. Four days before his capture in London, Ray left behind a fingerprint when he robbed the Trustee Savings Bank of \$240. When this amount is added to Ray's only other *known* source of income, \$600 earned during a two month stint as a dishwasher, it falls far short of explaining the \$10,000 Ray spent in little over a year.

The important question of how James Earl Ray financed himself still remains unanswered. By calling its old conclusions new, the FBI was able to fool some of the media.

Carl Bernstein, of Woodward and fame, once said that a reporter should not just be a stenographer, uncritically recording the events before him. In this instance, the *Times* apparently disagreed. ●