

GEORGE McMILLAN

October 2, 1971

Dear James Earl Ray:

I want to talk with you about your life but I'm not gonna shoot you a lot of crap.

You need my book. It is going to help you. It will help you if you get a new trial. It is the only book that is going to present a sympathetic and understanding portrait of you. You can't hate a man if you understand him, and I am going to make people understand you.

But I'm like a man trying to fly a kite in a hurricane. There's too much hot air flying around, too many people have been trying to exploit you. You know this yourself. You understand all these people.

But the one thing you don't know much about is publicity and writers. If you did, you wouldn't have signed that contract with Hule. If you did, you wouldn't have cooperated with Weisberg. His book is so bad it hurts you. It makes your case sound fishy.

Here's what you've got to remember: I am going to write a book about you whether you talk with me or not. It will be a serious, good, permanent book. People will be reading it 50 years from now.

Stoner agreed with me the other day that you're not going to hurt yourself by talking with me. It can only help you.

I know the worst. I know a lot. Foreman (no matter what you think of him) once told me that I knew more about you than anybody in the world, including your brothers and sisters and father. I know all about Stumm, how you two used to sit in

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the back of Boob Roberts' hamburger joint in Alton and talk politics. I know about your medical record in the Army. I know about Mom. I know (and feel great sympathy for) Lucille. I've had lots of talks with Bruiser and even think I understand why he's the way he is. I know about Habel Fuller. I know a book full of stuff about Earl, about Audrey, about how Earl used to come over to Ewing. I've spent a lot of time with Jerry. I've sat in Carol's kitchen talking with her and Bruiser, or Pitty-wit. I know that Willy Maher did time at Algoa. All this and much else --

But I am trying to put all this into the framework of a human being, you, of your struggle, beginning way back in those earliest days in Ewing, to give your life some meaning, from the time you were a Republican when you were just a boy. I know how you read and studied and thought. I know about your ambitions.

I don't so much need facts from you. I just need to understand you better. I need to see things as you saw them. That will help me and my readers understand you. That's what I need. That's why I need to talk with you.

And I can't wait until all your appeals run out. That may be years. It probably will be years. I've got about six months more work on my book, and it will take another six months for it to be published.

Whatever you tell me won't be published for a year. I expect my book to come out in the Fall of 1972, and it can't possibly come out before then. I will sign a contract with you that what you tell me won't be published before September, 1972. The odds are that if you are going to get a new trial you will have had it by then.

I can meet my deadline and still wait three or four months to talk with you. But I can't wait after that.

What would really make sense is for us to talk face to face about this idea. I don't want to sign a contract with you until I talk with you about it in person; and I don't

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think you <sup>h</sup>sould sign one with me. I'll come to Petros any  
time you say.

Sincerely,

*George McMILLAN*

Mr. James Earl Ray  
c/o Warden R. H. Moore  
Brushy Mountain Prison  
Petros, Tennessee