CG 44-1114
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Re: Burglary of United States Post Office
Kellerville, Illinois
March 7, 1955

The following investigation was conducted by SA JOHN L. HOGAN at Chicago, Illinois, on April 30, 1968:

Mr. E. F. WANDEL, Section Chief, Postal Inspector's Office, made available their file number 35437-MD which reflects the following information:

The Kellerville, Illinois, Post Office, Fourth Class, was forcibly entered between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m. on March 7, 1955. The loss consisted of 66 blank postal money orders numbers 742239535 through 600, a postmarking stamp and a money order stamp.

On March 8, 1955, a money order in the amount of $45 was passed at Alton, Illinois. The payee was listed as JAMES WALTON and the purchaser was W. C. HERRIN. On March 21, 1955, two money orders in the amount of $75 were passed at Kansas City, Missouri. The payee was WILLARD J. MC BRIDE and the purchaser was VERNON MC BRIDE. Investigation developed that the person passing these postal money orders drove a 1949 Lincoln two-door sedan, bearing 1955 Florida license 1W25183. The Motor Vehicle Bureau determined that this plate and car were sold on March 12, 1955, at Miami, Florida, to WALTER P. or T. BERRY, Shamrock Tavern, c/o EARL MILLER, Quincy, Illinois.

As a result of the alert on this automobile, WALTER T. RIFE and JAMES EARL RAY were arrested by the Missouri State Police at Hannibal, Missouri, on March 23, 1955. Thirty-four money orders were recovered in the 1949 Lincoln sedan. Both RIFE and RAY readily admitted cashing 32 postal money orders but denied involvment in the burglary of the United States Post Office. In a signed statement, RIFE stated that the name WILLARD J. MC BRIDE and VERNON MC BRIDE were the only names used with the exception of one money order which contained the name JAMES WALTON and W. C. HERRIN. He further stated that after passing a money order at Alton, Illinois, he and RAY drove to Miami, Florida, in his Nash automobile and under the alias WALTER T. BERRY, traded this automobile for a 1949 Lincol

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-RAY talked freely to the postal inspectors concerning his association with RIFE, their travels together and the passing of instant money orders. He refused to furnish a written statement. At this time, he had known RIFE for a period of approximately one week.

On April 1, 1955, both subjects entered guilty pleas in the United States District Court, Kansas City, Missouri, concerning the forging and cashing of stolen postal money orders and possession of stolen money orders. On July 1, 1955, RIFE was sentenced to three yearsin prison and RAY was sentenced to 3 3/4 years.

A review of this file reflects that the 32 money orders cashed by RIFE and RAY were cashed at St. Louis, Missouri; Alton, Illinois; Hot Springs, Arkansas; Memphis, Tennessee; Hot Springs, Louisiana; Kansas City, Missouri; St. Petersburg, Miami, Miami Beach, Daytona Beach, Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Tampa, Florida.

Instant burglary was never solved and the Post Office Department closed their case in this matter. Their file does not contain any background information or descriptive data concerning either RIFE or RAY.