DAVIDSON

Ray's belongings in brother's hands

Items fail to shed light on killing

Associated Press

Jerry Ray peered into one of three cardboard boxes marked "J.E.R." that held the few belongings of his brother, James Earl Ray.

"You got the confession tape in there or what?" he joked to John G. Organ Jr., deputy warden of Lois DeBerry Special Needs Facility, near Riverbend Maximum Security Institution.

Jerry Ray was at the prison hospital on an overcast day yesterday to pick up the possessions of his brother, who died Thursday of liver failure caused by chronic hepatitis.

James Earl Ray, 70, died while serving a 99-year sentence for killing the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis in 1968. He confessed to the crime but recanted and spent nearly three decades trying to gain a trial.

Ray long claimed he was set up by a shadowy gunrunner he knew only as "Raoul." Some hoped that as his health deteriorated, Ray would provide more details or perhaps even give a deathbed confession.

He never did. And nothing in the boxes shed any more light on the case.

Ray's belongings consisted of two bags of laundry, a lunch box, fan, typewriter and a television. The most intriguing object was a tape recorder and some unmarked tapes.

A writer had given Ray the recorder two days before he slipped into a coma, hoping he might record a statement about the case, but Ray never used it, his brother said.

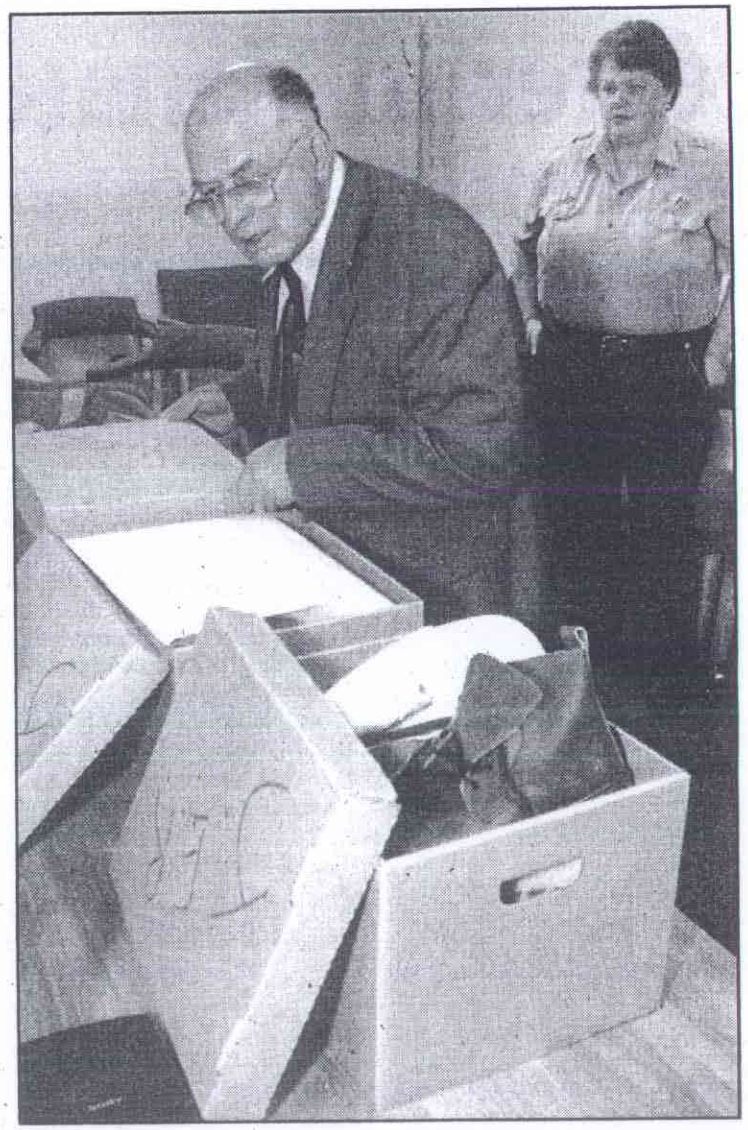
Also in the boxes were legal papers, photographs, shoes and a hair dryer. Jerry Ray said it would all be stored as keepsakes.

"It'll mean a lot to us, because that's what he had. It's a part of him," he said.

Jerry Ray said he plans to continue fighting to clear his brother's name. He is waiting for a decision by Attorney General Janet Reno on a request, supported by King's family, to open a new investigation into King's murder.

"I doubt if it's over," Jerry Ray said. Martin Luther King's son "Dexter told me he's in for the long haul. I'm going to continue to the day I die."

The King family, which publicly supported Ray's request for a trial and asked that he be freed, may attend a memorial service in Nashville next month, Jerry Ray said. ■



AP

Jerry Ray, brother of the late James Earl Ray, looks over the possessions of his brother at the DeBerry Special Needs Prison.