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Author's Motives Suspect, Ray Says

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — James Earl Ray testified yesterday for the first time in an effort to win a new trial in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and said he suspected author William Bradford Huie was a source of information to his prosecutors.

Ray told a federal court hearing he became worried when Huie "wrote something linking me to the KKK (Ku Klux Klan)," and that he complained to the late Criminal Court Judge Preston Battle.

Ray said that he learned from reading Huie's articles and books that "his whole technique was to get someone to incriminate themselves and then he'd give them money. I thought maybe he was trying to do the same thing on me."

Ray said he also was suspicious of Huie because the original list of 300 witnesses was increased by about 30 after he talked with the writer.

"I ASSUMED Huie might have said something to the newspapers and the prosecution got some more witnesses, or something," he said.

Ray took the stand on the fourth day of his hearing to determine whether he is entitled to withdraw his guilty plea and stand trial for murdering King on April 4, 1968. He is serving a 99-year sentence for the murder.

Ray claims he was coerced into the plea by a former attorney, Percy Foreman, of Houston, Tex., and that Foreman and another former attorney, Arthur Hanes Sr., of Birmingham, Ala., were guilty of a conflict of

JAMES EARL RAY

interest because of contracts they had with Huie for royalties on a book about the case.

A crowded courtroom of about 100 spectators, plus more than 20 newsmen, listened as Ray began his account of the events leading up to his guilty plea March 10, 1969, in the rifle sniping of King as the civil rights leader stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis.

Ray was a party to the contracts which at first involved Huie and Hanes and later Foreman, when Foreman replaced Hanes as Ray's lawyer.

Ray's new attorneys have challenged the claim that Hanes and Foreman were seeking through the contracts to recover their legal fees.

"I never got any money," Ray said.

RAY SAID after his June 1968 capture in London he had inquired about the availability of Hanes and F. Lee Bailey to represent him because they were the only two nationally known attorneys whose hometowns he knew. He said later Hanes wrote him saying "he accepted the case, although actually I didn't think I had asked him."

He said Hanes later met with him in the London prison. The first meeting was a "pep talk more or less" but at a subsequent meeting Hanes showed up with contracts giving the lawyer Ray's power of attorney and assigning Hanes 40 percent of all money that might develop "from the communications industry."

Ray testified that Hanes recommended he drop an appeal of his extradition to the United States.

"I don't know if he gave me any reason, just to come back to the United States and face the charges," Ray said.

After his return to the United States, Ray said, "I suggested maybe we should find some other way to finance the trial. I didn't think it would take all that much money to finance the trial. He felt strongly that was the only way to derive the necessary funds."

The defense later introduced copies of a number of contracts Ray said he had not seen until recently.

One was signed between Huie and Hanes before Ray's extradition and provided that Huie would pay $35,000 to Ray and Hanes, but only after Ray was returned to the United States.

"Were you aware of this contract when Hanes advised you to waive your extradition appeal?" asked James H. Lesar, Ray's current attorney. "No," said Ray.