John Ray Denies Shooting

John Larry Ray
"I never shot anybody"

By Charles Bosworth Jr.
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

QUINCY, Ill. — Although John Larry Ray says he sometimes suffers blackouts for weeks at a time, he says he's sure he didn't shoot Vernon E. Jordan Jr., national director of the Urban League, in Fort Wayne, Ind., on May 29.

"I can say definitely I didn't do it," Ray said Wednesday after he was questioned about the shooting by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents.

"It would be against my nature. I never shot anybody," Ray told reporters at Adams County Jail in Quincy, where he is being held in connection with a Liberty, Ill., bank robbery the day after Jordan was shot and wounded.

"I can't tell you where I've been because of the blackouts," he said, "but I didn't shoot him."

Shortly after Ray's hour-long interview with FBI agents, Adams County Sheriff Robert Nall allowed Ray to talk to reporters in the hallway in front of his cell block. Although the FBI had no comment on the interview with Ray, Nall said Ray told agents the same thing he told reporters.

Nall also said the FBI agents planned to examine campsites found near the Farmer's Bank of Liberty in Adams County for similarities with campsites found near the Indiana motel where Jordan was shot. Ray is charged with robbing Farmer's Bank of $15,000 on May 30.

Nall said he believes the campsites near Liberty were used by the bank robber. He said the FBI suspects the

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campsites near Fort Wayne may have been used by whoever shot Jordan.

Nall said that Quincy is a nine-hour drive from Fort Wayne. Jordan was shot at 2 a.m. and the Liberty Bank was robbed about 9 a.m. the next morning. Nall also said his department has a positive identification of Ray on May 22, when he was reportedly seen camping near the small town of Adams in Adams County.

Ray, brother of James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said the Ray family had been targeted for persecution by the FBI and the Department of Justice.

He said the "FBI propaganda" in connection with his questioning in the Jordan shooting was an effort to ensure his conviction in the bank robbery case.

"After this has been all over the news, there is no way I can get a fair trial in Adams County or in this country," Ray said.

At his arraignment Wednesday in Quincy, Ray asked that his trial be held before the United Nations.

Ray was granted permission to act as his own attorney until a second appearance in court is held Tuesday. Ray said he had only 45 cents and could not afford to pay a lawyer. But he said he plans to talk to nationally known lawyer Mark Lane of Memphis, Tenn., who has represented his brother, James Ray.

Ray entered no plea on the armed robbery charge. He is being held in lieu of $200,000 bond. Associate Judge Harold L. Madsen in Quincy denied Ray's request for access to a legal library and typewriter, and said it was premature to discuss a change of venue for the trial.

Ray said he couldn't remember whether he was carrying the .38-caliber revolver police say they found in his shopping bag when he was arrested Monday near Alton. And he said he doesn't remember where he was before he went to Alton. He said he had planned to check himself into the Alton State Mental Hospital because of the blackouts.

FBI said Ray is not a suspect in the Jordan shooting, but he was questioned because of similarities between it and the King assassination. Both civil rights leaders were shot by .30-06-caliber rifles at motels.

Ray said he has never owned or fired a .30-06-caliber rifle.