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John Larry Ray arrested

ALTON, Ill. — Bank robbery suspect John Larry Ray was arrested near here Monday evening by an off-duty Madison County sheriff's deputy who had been involved in the congressional investigation of Ray's brother, convicted assassin James Earl Ray.

Madison County deputy Sgt. Conrad "Pete" Baetz said he spotted John Ray, suspected of robbing the Farmers Bank of Liberty on May 30, walking along Illinois 140 near Alton.

Ray was arrested by Baetz and other deputies without a struggle.

Baetz had been an investigator dealing with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. assassination, to which James Earl Ray confessed.

Both Ray brothers grew up in Quincy and also had lived in Alton, authorities said.

Adams County Sheriff Robert Nall Tuesday morning planned to take a charter plane to Edwardsville, the Madison County seat, to pick up Ray and return him to Quincy by early afternoon.

Adams County State's Attorney Robert Bier said Ray is scheduled to appear in Adams County circuit court at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

Ray, 47, has been wanted by federal marshals after he escaped months ago from the U.S. Medical Center for Prisoners in Springfield, Mo., as he was being transported to a halfway house in St. Louis.

Before the escape, Ray had been in the federal prison at Marion, serving an 18-year term for driving the getaway car in the 1970 robbery of a bank in St. Peters, Mo.

Federal marshals have filed a detainer against Ray for the escape charge — which means if Ray makes his bail bond, federal authorities will be able to keep him, Nall said.

An arrest warrant, originally issued for a James LaRue and amended June 17 to show Ray's real name, has bond set at $200,000.

The FBI entered the search for Ray last week after an unlawful flight warrant was issued in connection with the Liberty robbery.

A man police believe to be Ray robbed the bank in Liberty of $15,000 — but about $11,000 was recovered June 4 when Liberty Police Chief Albert Viar chased a suspicious car and the driver dropped the money before escaping on foot.

Madison County sheriff's deputies said Ray "looked like a bum" but was dressed in a leisure suit and boots at the time of his arrest.

He was carrying a shopping bag, and deputies said a loaded .38-caliber pistol was found inside.

United Press International reported the bag also contained coin wrappers printed with the Liberty's bank name.

JOHN LARRY RAY