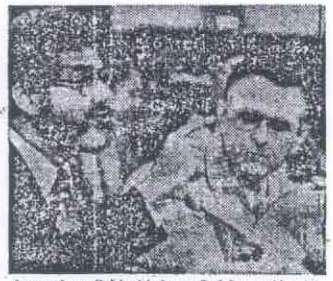
'THEY'RE OUT TO GET ME'

says the woman who

SLOWLY Anna Ray steered her big, bronze Ford Galaxie station wagon through the fast-moving traffic as she spoke about how the police harass her.

We were returning from a dramatic visit to her husband, James Earl Ray, in Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary here in Tennessee.

The police hated her, she claimed, because she was campaigning for a new trial for Ray. He has so far served twelve years of a 99-year sentence for the killing of Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights leader.



Lawyer Lane (left) with James Earl Ray at his trial.

EXCLUSIVE BY
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from Tennessee, USA

I listened to her long complaints list: sand put in her petrol tank while her car was parked under the noses of the police and guards outside the prison; her steering wheel sabotaged; and frequently the tyres let down. Officials just looked on and offered no help.

So many incidents had occurred that she had bought Sacha, a police dog, to protect the car and herself.

And, furthermore, she added that she was frequently picked up for speeding when she wasn't; and once had been held at the police station for four hours with no reasonable explanation.

I sank lower in my seat. Oh, dear. Was she paranoid about the police? I wondered silently. Then I heard the wail of a police car siren.

The timing was astonishing. "There's the proof," exclaimed Anna. "They're going to pick me up for exceeding a 15 mph limit by a school. Am I going fast?"

I didn't think so, and a stream of other cars was overtaking her at speed.

As the patrolman got out of the police car, Anna said to me: "I know the man. He's always picking me up. The prison must have phoned ahead to say I was coming."

Shaking hands

My photographer and I got out of the car with Anna, and this seemed to confuse the policeman. "Put the camera on the bonnet of the car," he commanded.

The photographer, an American, took no notice and continued to record the scene. Now the policeman's hands were shaking, and he said to Anna: "You were doing 28 mph and I'm booking you."

I would be surprised if that was her speed, but I cannot be sure. What I *can* be sure of is that Anna was singled out in a traffic stream—all of which was going faster than she was.

An odd business. Only an hour before, Ray had been telling me he did not kill King, and had been framed by the FBI who had murdered him.

If this is the case, I can understand why Anna Ray is the unpopular figure she claims she is with the authorities in this curious Red Neck state.

She is her husband's link with the outside world, and without her he might become the forgotten ghost which Anna says "they" want him to be.

The harassment, she says, started from the moment they were married—eighteen months

● John Knight (left) when the cops stopped Anna for "speeding"—yet again.

wed Luther King's killer

ago in a prison ceremony.

They had first met when Anna, a well-known local artist, was sent by a TV station to sketch his trial.

"No pictures were allowed of our wedding ceremony," said Anna. "But another couple who got married in the same jail on the same day were allowed four rolls of film.

"Before the wedding James had spent five years in solitary. They were hoping he would kill himself or go insane."

Why did she marry him?

"He's had such a mean life and I want him to have a little happiness and dignity. I felt I could help him get justice and at the same time ease his burden with my love."

Anna was a great admirer of Martin Luther King and his Civil Rights campaign, so she evidently thoroughly believes her husband did not kill him.

The wedding ceremony was performed by the Rev. James Lawson, one of King's closest friends.

He told them: "I count this moment of your marriage as a sign of a new hope and new possibility, and the primary reason I'm here is because I see it as a sign of grace."

The best man was Mark Lane, the celebrated American lawyer who is pressing for a full re-trial for Ray.

Lane, who was the late President Kennedy's New York campaign manager, told me: "I held the ring and James's cellmate baked a cake.

"No one in the prison thinks James killed King. If they did, he would be in trouble from the blacks. They are friendly towards Ray. And if the whites thought he'd done it, they would have made him into a hero and given him a medal."

Anna with the Rev. James Lawson, after her prison marriage.

Eye-witness

Lane talks about Grace Walden, a star witness in the case who has been prevented from testifying.

She was staying in the flophouse in Memphis from where a sniper shot King dead—aiming his gun from the bathroom. Mrs. Walden saw the man leaving the bathroom, and is the only eye-witness.

The man she saw, she says, was short, small-boned and in his fifties, with salt-and-pepper hair. Ray is tall, was in his late-thirties with black hair.

But Mrs. Walden was never called to testify. She was placed in a mental institution by the Memphis authorities.

"This was quite illegal," claims Lane, "because Tennessee law requires that a commitment proceeding be initiated by a relative, guardian, doctor or director of a health and welfare institution. She was rail-roaded out of the way."

On the tenth anniversary of King's death, a group of Southern church ministers demanded Mrs. Walden's release. They claimed she was being held in hospital because she refused to identify Ray as the man she saw fleeing from the bathroom.

Finally, Lane brought an action and got Mrs. Walden released. He acted as her guardian. She stayed with him in his home in Memphis for two years. Now in her late sixties, she is in a nursing home, an enfeebled woman, who has a long-past record of alcoholism.

Lane says that when she was shown a picture of Ray immediately after the assassination she said: "That's not your man." Two months later she was incarcerated in a mental asylum.

A ruthless and murderous scenario has been enacted here. Six years ago Dr. King's 70-year-old mother was gunned down—as she played the organ in a Baptist church in Atlanta, Georgia.

The killer was a 23-year-old black man, Marcus Chenault, who told his trial judge: "I was sent here on a mission, and it has been partially accomplished."

Police revealed that there was a death list of ten Civil Rights leaders. But demands for an inquiry into a conspiracy plot to wipe out the leadership were never answered.

Mark Lane shares unpopularity with Anna Ray. In his office in Memphis he showed me a drawer in a filing cabinet. It was marked "D" for death threats, because he gets so many.

Whatever the truth about who shot Martin Luther King, one thing emerged during my inquiries. Few people here think it is the slim, greying man of Brushy Mountain.

A prison guard remarked to me as he escorted me out of the place: "The trouble with Ray is that he ain't got no politician behind him."

Recently, James Earl Ray, for the third time, tried to escape.

While a diversionary fight was staged for him, he managed to get over the wall, and stay on the run for three days.

The prison warden was reported to have said: "Don't let the FBI find him first. They'll kill him."

The end came suddenly when Ray awoke to find himself surrounded by tracker dogs.

They are weird, like a lot of things at Brushy Mountain.

For they are bloodhounds trained not to bark.