

April 1, 1969

GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION

This is the case involving the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The attached advises that Judge W. Preston Battle, Criminal Court, Shelby County, Memphis, Tennessee, was found dead in his office on evening of 3-31-69.

According to the Memphis Police Department, there is no indication of foul play. Indications are that Judge Battle died from natural causes.

Judge Battle presided over court proceedings of James Earl Ray in which Ray received a 99-year sentence on state charge of murder.

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
COMMUNICATION SECTION

MAR 31 1969

TELETYPE

FBI WASH DC

FBI MEMPHIS

754 PM URGENT 3/31/69 RJT
TO DIRECTOR, FBI (44-38861)
FROM MEMPHIS (44-1987)

Mr. Tolson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. DeLoach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Mohr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Bishop	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Casper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Callahan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Conrad	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Felt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Gale	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Rosen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Sullivan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Tavel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mr. Trotter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tele. Room	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Miss Holmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Miss Gandy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

MURKIN

JIM BEASLEY, ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE, ONE OF THE ATTORNEYS WHO HANDLED THE JAMES EARL RAY CASE, ENTERED JUDGE W. PRESTON BATTLE'S CHAMBERS AT APPROXIMATELY FIVE THIRTYFIVE P. M. THIS DATE AND FOUND JUDGE BATTLE SLUMPED OVER HIS DESK. BEASLEY IMMEDIATELY CALLED AN AMBULANCE WHICH TOOK JUDGE BATTLE TO METHODIST HOSPITAL WHERE HE WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD ON ARRIVAL.

ACCORDING TO THE MEMPHIS POLICE DEPARTMENT THERE IS NO INDICATION OF FOUL PLAY. INDICATIONS ARE THAT JUDGE BATTLE DIED FROM NATURAL CAUSES.

BUREAU WILL BE ADVISED OF ANY ADDITIONAL PERTINENT DETAILS.

END

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MR. DELCACH FOR THE DIRECTOR

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