

# Police Missed Clue to Dr. King's Kill

MEMPHIS, Tenn., March 17 (AP).—Within minutes after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated last April, authorities had in their hands a clue to the identity of James Earl Ray, but they failed to decipher it until after Ray was caught in London.

The clue was on a transistor pocket radio that was hand-etched with the half-inch-high numerals 00416.

00416 was the identification number of James Earl Ray in the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Mo. He was serving a 20-year sentence when

he escaped April 23, 1967.

The radio was among effects abandoned by Ray after he shot Dr. King. He dropped his rifle, a set of binoculars and a case that included the radio at a doorway near the rooming house from which he fired the shot.

James Beasley of the Shelby County attorney general's staff said the radio had been turned over to the FBI with other day. The numerals, he said, were discovered through tests at the FBI crime laboratory in Washington.

"You can see that someone had tried to file or stand them off the case," Beasley said.

"I couldn't see the numerals until they were pointed out to me, but the FBI found them within 24 hours by treating the case so the numerals showed up."

The six-transistor radio is in a plastic case.

Ray bought the radio in the Missouri penitentiary canteen on April 21, two days before he escaped. Prison practice is for inmates to etch their prison numbers onto the back of the case with an electric stylus to prevent theft or arguments over ownership.

Ray's prison number, 00416 was etched into the back of his radio. Ray paid \$9.75 for it.

There was some speculation that he bought the radio to carry with him on his escape so that he could listen to new broadcasts to find out if police were looking for him.

But at Jefferson City, Warden Harold Swenson said he thought Ray took it because he was "too cheap to leave anything behind."

In New York, Russell X

CH 18, 1969

## er Etched on Prison Radio

Thompson of Memphis, a lawyer who investigated Dr. King's assassination, met with attorneys of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. to present what he called new information about the slaying.

He declined to say what information he provided.

He said the meeting was held to evaluate his information and see if it "can be raised to the dignity of evidence."

He said the discussions were "very meaningful, but I don't want to give undue emphasis to it at this time."

"I don't want this to be another . . .," he said, not finishing his sentence. Asked by newsmen if he was alluding to New Orleans Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigation of the murder of President John F. Kennedy, he replied:

"I didn't say that, you did."

In Philadelphia, the Rev. James Bevel, a former aide to Dr. King who was with him when he was shot, said Memphis police had known about the assassination plot "a couple of days" in advance, but did nothing.

Rev. Bevel, who claimed in January that Ray was innocent, said evidence had been suppressed that Ray had been persuaded to plead guilty to save him from execution.

"As a result Ray is out of the way and the real killers are walking around freely," Bevel said.