

PLEASE RETURN

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Man who dug into slaying of Dr. King visits here

By CHARLES E. BURGESS
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A four-year search for the truth about the slaying of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. led Gerold Frank through a dozen of states, to Mexico, Canada and Africa. He had turned to the dusty files of the FBI to find out who had been convicted as Ray. Ray was remembered as a ragged, sullen boy who stole a cigar box holding the eighth grade's lunch money.

The search took Frank to Alton, Ill., to a deteriorating house on West 9th street where Ray was born in 1928, and to the police station in East Alton, where Ray was booked in 1944 after running five miles barefoot to avoid police pursuers.

Frank visited a quiet home in the St. Louis suburb of Maplewood, where Ray's sister and father talked of how they felt "Jimmy" had been made "the goat" for an FBI conspiracy.

And the quest took Frank to the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, where Ray, serving a 99-year term for a 1960 grocery store holdup in St. Louis, escaped in 1967 to surface a year later as one of history's most infamous accused killers.

MAN AMERICAN *Frank's*
The True Story of the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Greatest Manhunt of Our Time," is Frank's account of the assassination, its roots and its aftermath.

The 467-page book was brought out by Doubleday in early April. Frank is visiting St. Louis Monday, on the 20th day of a 34-day promotional tour to publicize it.

He will appear on several radio and television programs and visit downtown and St. Louis County book stores throughout the day.

"It may be the ham in me,



Author Gerold Frank.

but I enjoy these tours," Frank, a grayting, mustached man of 60-plus, said.

"Maybe its the ham in me, but I find it a strange and interesting experience to be able to talk about something that I think I know more about than any man alive."

FRANK SAID he was

of the slaying of the Rev. King happened when a Doubleday representative called to ask him to do a book about it.

"We even agreed on a tentative title at the time — 'Conspiracy,'" Frank recalled.

But the title was abandoned as a result of Frank's hundreds of interviews in the painstaking process of following Ray's trail legalistic and the maneuvers of Ray after he was captured.

Frank said he believes Ray operated alone. No evidence was found of a conspiracy, and "Ray never trusted anyone, not even his lawyers. He is a very suspicious man. He would not have trusted a prop-

television report

Marching a

Why did Ray kill Dr. King?
"There are men who are walking targets," Frank said. "In their commitments, the way they are looked up to, make them a living accusation against the low man on the totem pole. All of his life, Ray, roiled with walls that do not exist for you and me."

"RAY, LEE Harvey Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan — all of these assassins could have come from the same home."

"They were loners, agitators, frustrated in everything they tried to do."

"Ray was political. He hated Negroes. He wanted his moment in the sun, the respect no one had ever given him. He thought he could make money from people who wanted King out of the way. A fund set up by his brothers brought in just \$200."

"He thought Oswald Wallace would be elected president and would pardon him."

Frank, a former Cleveland and New York newspaperman and foreign correspondent, has been writing nonfiction books for 25 years, and he said the King assassination was his greatest challenge.

"It was an open-end thing. I almost gave it up twice. But I'm proud of this book. I

book will be a biography of Judy Garland.

"All subjects are worthy," he maintains. "The Zsa Zsa story was the first in a series of the modern woman of the 1950's. The Barrymore story was about someone like Tennessee Williams. It was about a girl born to a great heritage, who couldn't live up to it."

"I did all the work for those books that a person would do in writing a biography. I do all my own interviews. I do have the advantage of hearing the story from the central people, since I write in immediacy."

The scope of "An American Death" invites comparisons with William Manchester's account of the assassination of John F. Kennedy and with the Capote-Miller school of extended "nonfiction novels."

"Well, the New York Times said I did what I set out to do, and Manchester didn't. But read his book, read mine, and judge for yourself. As for the 'nonfiction novelists,' I preceded them by a good many years."

pen that will change the face of the book as the study of an event."

FRANK FITZGERALD, author and prize winner, for his 1961 "The Boston Strangler" — he calls it a "study of a city in terror" — and his 1964 "The Dead," an account of the assassination of a British official in Cairo. He has written or cowritten several books on the Middle East and Latin America.

However, Frank is perhaps best known as the acknowledged "ghost writer" of autobiographies of entertainment personalities — Zsa Zsa Gabor, Diana Barrymore, Lillian Roth, Sheila Graham-F. Scott Fitzgerald. He hopes his next

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