

Memphis, Tennessee Field Office on June 23, 1976

Mr. Hester was interviewed jointly by the team. We began by informing Mr. Hester that we had no particular biases favorable or unfavorable toward the Bureau but that many questions were raised by the review of the files completed thus far.

Concerning the Lorraine Motel, Hester categorically stated that no electronic surveillance had taken place with respect to King and his associates. Memphis was not in the mainstream of King's SCLC activity. In 1968, the Memphis Field Office did have a sound man by the name of _____, but he was relatively unsophisticated and was used primarily to do internal checks on the FBI communication system.

Hester stated that there had been no Bureau investigation of the Memphis Police Department (MPD) in connection with the assassination because there was "no need" to do so. It was inconceivable to Hester that the MPD could have been involved. He emphasized the irrationality and risks involved in the police having King killed in their own city. In this connection, he discounted the significance of the sudden removal of certain black City fire and police officers from the area prior to the shooting. Hester was not aware of any contingency roadblock plan devised by Officer Redditt to seal off the area around the Lorraine in case of a disturbance. Redditt was not interviewed because Holloman's (Director of Fire and Police) explanation of the MPD response in handling the assassination was considered satisfactory. Hester seemed to place a good deal of faith on the fact that Holloman had been a Bureau agent.

The idea of using a roadblock in Memphis to seal off possible routes of the assassin was considered impractical by Hester. There were too many possible escape routes to block particularly to the east and south of town. In addition, the authorities were not sure that they should be looking for a white Mustang in the first minutes and hours after the assassination.

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All persons associated with King should have been interviewed.

Hester eventually determined the LL&L Produce Co. story to be a bogus lead. All relevant persons were interviewed in Memphis and New Orleans. There was no indication of any past racial or Klan activity. Nothing of interest was discovered. This in combination with Mr. McFerren's low credibility in the eyes of the Bureau led to a termination of this lead. The story was related to the Bureau after the fact and Hester viewed McFerren as a publicity seeker in light of his past involvement in demonstration activity. Nothing was uncovered to reinforce McFerren's allegations.

The Bureau had no liason directly with the police officers assigned to the firehouse, but there was daily Bureau contact with the MPD. The Bureau was not involved in trying to protect King when he returned to Memphis for the second march.

The Bureau acquired considerable background information on Ray in an attempt to analyze his personality traits. The Army 201 file for Ray was probably obtained by the SLMO office and pertinent information forwarded to Memphis. Hester labeled Ray as a loser and a loner who was comfortable with prison life. He could not handle the responsibilities of life on his own. He shot King to make a name for himself and subconsciously may have wanted to be apprehended. He may have even fantasied about the possibility of being pardoned by a newly elected President Wallace.

Hester was of the opinion that if Ray had ever had a great deal of money at his disposal it would have been revealed in a more lavish lifestyle. Hester thinks Ray got his money through a series of small time robberies for which he was never identified. Unsolved crimes of this nature are not uncommon. Also, if Ray had been part of a conspiracy for which he was paid, he probably would have been eliminated by his co-conspirators out of fear of being discovered. It would have been very difficult for any conspirators to have insulated themselves from Ray.

Hester thought Ray was a hopeless amateur and was incredibly lucky in accomplishing the assassination and managing to get away. He returned the first rifle because he did not know how to clean

the cosmoline out of the chamber which had made it impossible to load. He put only one bullet in the rifle which he finally used. Ray shot for the head of his victim whereas an experienced assassin would have aimed for a better target such as the heart.

Hester had no explanation for Ray's first trip to Birmingham in 1967. There was no apparent logic to it.

Hester was pretty well convinced that the CB radio broadcast was a hoax perpetrated by the seventeen year old son of a prominent Memphis attorney.

Bureau agents were on the scene at the Lorraine as early as 6:30 or 7:00pm.

The fact that the latent prints from the scene were matched with those of James Earl Ray through examination of the federal fugitive warrant files was a stroke of luck. There was plenty of information on Eric Galt, but it didn't go anywhere. The chances that Galt was a federal fugitive were very small. Therefore, it was not a normal investigative procedure to search the fugitive warrant file. It was a desperation move by someone in the Bureau because all the leads on Galt had proved to be unproductive until that point. Hester thought the Bureau was lucky to connect with Ray even as late as April 19th.

Addendum to the Joe Hester Interview of June 23, 1976

On July 8, 1976, I recontacted S.A. Joe Hester to determine if the Memphis Field Office file had a lab report reflecting the finding of the cosmoline in the breech of the first rifle purchased by Ray at the Aeromarine Supply Co. in Birmingham. Mr. Hester said this had not been included in the report; it had been mentioned to SAC Jensen in a telephone call between Jensen and the F.B.I. lab. It had not been included in the lab report because the lab expert had not known there was any question about why the rifle had been returned.

Mr. Hester did not know the identity of the Memphis police officer who is in the photograph of the rifle, box and suitcase taken in the doorway of Canipe Amusement Co. - which photograph Review Staff attorneys Folsom and Walker view with all the other evidence on April 7, 1976, at the Shelby County Criminal Court.