

Mark Lane on Good Morning America, Monday, May 2, 1977 (first hour)

David Hartman: James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to killing the Reverend Martin Luther King. He is now serving a life term. But ever since his early days in jail Ray has been saying that he's not guilty, that he was an unwitting tool in a conspiracy. In this plot he says he took directions from a man called Raoul. Mark Lane is the lawyer who challenged the Warren Commission on the death of President Kennedy. Now he's written a book on the King murder. The book is called Code Name Zorro, and in his investigation he interviewed James Earl Ray in prison and we have exclusive film from those interviews. Good morning Mr. Lane, nice to have you with us this morning.

Lane: Good morning, thank you.

DH: You say you have new evidence.

ML: Yes.

DH: What is it?

ML: Well, Ray has said all along that a man named Raoul, at least that was the name that he knew him by, moved him around the country, had him involved in a series of smuggling operations between the United States and Canada, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ from the United States and Mexico. Indeed, uh, Ray did ~~XXXX~~ spend some \$10,000 more than the FBI was able to account for. His income during that period, he said he got it from Raoul. The first clue as to who Raoul might be I think is found in Ray's most recent statement where he describes a card which uh may have had the name of the contact for Raoul. And this card and this story that Ray has just told me is now being thoroughly investigated by the House committee on assassinations.

DH: All right. Let's look at this first piece of film--exclusive interview from prison concerning the card.

(Switch to film, showing Ray)

JER: Well, I think probably the most, uh, valid evidence they had was, uh, some material I found in the car when I was uh, when I was crossing the border one time. It had an address on it. One address-- it's a business card and one address had been crossed out and the, uh, some writing on the back, an individual's name, and this was looked into and it indicated some agency that was uh funding intelligence agencies and uh, I know I had a lawyer investigate the name of the individual that was wrote on the other side of it. Now, uh, the side that was marked off, we couldn't see everything on it, but the other side--in other words I couldn't see everything--but the other side had an individual's name marked and uh the lawyer, he went to New Orleans and I think he got ~~the~~ records from the Texas, uh, appeals court and that indicated that the individual might have been an informer at one time (knock on door in background) for an intelligence agency.

(Switch back to studio)

DH: Where was the card found?

ML: In the white mustang which he purchased with the money that Raoul gave him and it appears to have been a contact of Raoul, perhaps a contact of American intelligence as well. And nothing that Ray ever said about Raoul has ever been investigated by the FBI or the Department of Justice. Now the Select Committee has this information and perhaps we'll be able to find Raoul.

DH: It is possible that that card was planted, that it's faked evidence?

ML: Sure.

DH: Possibly.

ML: Even that would be a clue, though,

DH: Why do you think he confessed to the murder in the first place?

ML: Well, he ~~never~~ really never said that he pulled the trigger, and, uh, he always said that there was a conspiracy. But he was placed in a cell for many, many months. He was held under lights as bright as these, television lights, 24 hours a day. The windows were sealed so he could never see the outside. Two guards were in the cell with him at all times. Television cameras monitored his every movement. There ~~was~~ were 8 microphones planted around the cell. Even when he wanted to talk to his lawyer they had to lie down on the floor and whisper with the hope that that would not be overheard. And in a recent interview with me he told me something that I had never heard before and that is who was responsible for creating this incredible situation. Uh, and it's so incredible that when you think of--there's a very interesting book by Speer called Spandow out recently, and he described the conditions in which the Nazi war criminals, convicted war criminals were kept in a military prison run by the United States, the Soviet Union and two other nations. They were allowed to sleep at night, although they were concerned they might commit suicide there was a little peephole so that the guard could see them, but they were never subjected to the inhuman, brutal, torturous conditions to which Ray was subjected, conditions which denied him sensory perception after a period of time. I mean this torture I think played a major part in his finally being worn down where he said, OK, I won't have a trial. I'll say I did it, but there was a conspiracy.

ML: Let's look at this portion of the interview where he talks about conditions in jail. (Switch to film of Ray)

JER: They had television cameras monitor your activities and things like that. where you moved around the cell block, uh...

ML: How bright were the lights?

JER: Well they were ~~really~~ bright, they kept them on 24 hours a day. They claimed they had to watch you or something but, uh... and uh... altogether I'd say it kinda, sorta debilitating, living under those type of conditions 'cause I know once I thought ~~XXXX~~ maybe I'd been, I'd broken out in some type of rash and I thought there was a possibility I'd been poisoned or something and uh, and uh, I think later on I was examined by a doctor, blood test, but they've destroyed all these records so we really can't determine by the records of your condition if anyone--my condition at the time. I think probably most interesting about that was it was a state jail or a city jail where the uh state officials had jurisdiction over it but they had 2 federal police there, they stayed in jail with me the first week or so, and they uh, they set up the whole operation, the enclosed windows, the TV monitors, the lights on 24 hours a day.

ML: The federal authorities set this up?

JER: Yes. They took 2 of them out of the federal prison system and assigned them to the county jail.

(Switch back to studio) ML: He says it was federal officers.

ML: Yes, now they had no right, no obligation, and no jurisdiction; this was a state case. But the hand of the federal government, the FBI, came throughout this entire thing, from the time J. Edgar Hoover sent the letter to Martin Luther King suggesting that he commit suicide, until the time that the squad which was designed by Hoover to destroy Martin Luther King conducted the only federal investigation into the death of Dr. King, in ~~the~~ the hand of the FBI throughout this entire operation.

DH: Where was he, Ray, when the trigger was pulled?

ML: He says ~~that~~ he was at a filling station having his car checked out, and I think there's some evidence to support that.

DH: Let's look at this piece of film about where was Mr. Ray at the time of the murder. (Switch to film of Ray)

JER: Well at that time I was, I had intended to go to a movie. I went to a tavern, then I, at the time I'd, I, I recalled I did have this time trouble the

night before, the day before, and I doubled back to uh, uh service the car and I believe that's uh, as close as we can determine that's when the uh ~~shooting~~ shooting actually took place.

HE: And then what happened next?

JER: After I left the service station, my clear recollection that, uh, that I ran into a road block in the, in the immediate vicinity where the shooting is supposed to take place and, uh, now, there has been police statements that they waved me off, but I can't, I can't recall that. But anyway after--I did leave the area. It was my intention to go to New Orleans, but uh, uh, try to find out what more or less happened in the area. I thought maybe it was a possibility that the police raided the place and found some guns or something of that nature.

(Switch back to studio) HE: Mr. Lane, do you think he pulled the trigger?

ML: I don't know. The, uh, psychological stress evaluation has been run on his statement that he did not pull the trigger by two different experts and they both say that he was telling the truth, that there was no stress at all. Uh, I'm convinced that there was a conspiracy to kill Dr. King.

HE: You are?

ML: Yes.

HE: Mr. Lane will be back with us ~~tomorrow~~ tomorrow to continue our discussion about the Martin Luther King assassination. Thank you Mr. Lane.

ML: Thank you.