

# British Ex-Detective Defends

By Raymond Snoddy

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LONDON—The former London Detective who said that James Earl Ray had admitted to him that he killed Martin Luther King Jr., yesterday stood by his testimony given to a congressional committee.

Former Chief Inspector Alexander Elst also angrily labeled "absolutely untrue" allegations about his credibility made by Ray's attorney, Mark Lane, at Friday's hearing of the House Assassinations Committee.

Speaking by telephone from his pub, the Green Man in the small village of Six Mile Bottom, near Newmarket, Suffolk, Elst said he was astonished that he had been vilified before the committee without being given the chance to clear his name.

Elst (pronounced East), who served with Scotland Yard's gang-busting

Flying Squad, tape recorded his testimony for the Assassinations Committee in his pub on Aug. 4. In that statement Elst recalled conversations he had with Ray, whom he guarded after Ray's arrest at London's Heathrow airport 10 years ago.

Elst said yesterday "At one stage he was telling me about how he had panicked and thrown away the gun in a front doorway after seeing a policeman. I felt he was telling me the truth. He felt no doubt that he was the killer and was proud of it."

During the reading of Elst's evidence at Friday's hearing, Mark Lane slipped out and announced later that he had made a telephone call to a London lawyer, Lane said he had been told that Elst "had been placed on trial for taking bribes and for involvement in jewel robberies" and that in court he fabricated testimony.

Elst, who is 49, said yesterday he had been involved in only one case and had been acquitted of all charges.

He added: "So far as I am concerned I cannot understand how anyone called 'qualified' lawyer could come out with such a statement without at least checking the facts. Even in American law there must be some course of action which would be absolutely untrue and would be the cause of it."

Elst did not mention that he had been convicted of a crime in 1957 and fined there were "allegations" about his ability about 1957.

In June, 1957, Elst was fined for supplying charges with a stolen postal stamp of 194 that cost £100 to \$60,000.

The prosecution had charged that officers serving in the Flying Squad

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had conspired with a lawyer and a police informer to secure an acquittal.

The judge directed the jury to bring in not guilty verdicts against Elst.

The judge said: "I have come to the conclusion that there is no evidence to link him with any of the counts in which his name appears."

Elst said yesterday that was the only trouble he had ever been involved in.

Elst has a commendation for each of his 28 years police service which he says is "way above average." He was also awarded the British Empire Medal for bravery.

Elst said he was bewildered and annoyed by the storm that has burst over him. He said he believed it was the right thing to do to give testimony on what he knew of the Ray case yet now he was "infamous."

"I live in a very small village and this is crucifying me," he said. He said he was too confused to decide whether he should go to the United States to demand a hearing. He said he had no plans to do so at present.

Elst says he believes what happened to him is part of an attempt to shift the blame for the Martin Luther King killing onto the FBI.

"I would say to such an allegation—absolutely no way. I had dealings with the FBI and they could not have acted more honorably to get that man brought to justice."

In his statement to the committee, Elst said Ray seemed "proud" of killing King.

"(Ray) was telling me that for him to have shot a black man of note in certain parts of America would make him into a national hero," Elst said. "He seemed absolutely mad about publicity. He really wanted it. He kept

asking me, 'Has anything else appeared in the papers today?'"

Elst said Ray expected to make "a lot of money" from publicity about the killing.

"First of all he mentioned half-million dollars. Later on, it became a quarter million dollars," Elst said. "He told me that his plan at this time now was to get a good lawyer, one he could trust, a mercenary lawyer... who hated black people anyway like himself."