

lobbying for continued anonymity—or the police's Good Samaritan story was a cover for something much more provocative.

"Why would anyone kill you?" I asked. "Your only involvement in the case was as an innocent bystander trying to do a good deed. Substantively, there's no real involvement in the case."

Bolton was now anxious, even angry; but both emotions were controlled. "Ray and those people are gangsters," he asserted. "They'll kill anyone."

"Why would such gangsters want to kill a man whose only connection with the case was to find a letter about a job?" I asked.

He snorted and shook his head. "I've never told . . . It was a job, all right." He talked softly and in ominous tones. "It was a job in Portugal and it [the letter] showed that he had help." Bolton asserted that there was "big money" behind Ray.

He went on to claim that it was the Portugal-related substance of the letter that led authorities to Ray. Thus Bolton contended that he was responsible for Ray's arrest.

I asked to whom the letter was addressed and whether it mentioned mercenaries. (Ray was, in fact, attempting to make contact with mercenaries in Portugal.) Bolton responded that he did not remember. I asked what he meant when he said the letter showed that Ray had "help." He replied darkly: "That's all I'll say."

In 1968 there was never so much as a hint that the substance of the letter had anything directly to do with the case, except that it was penned by Ray. It is true that Ray was headed for Portugal when arrested in London on June 8, but it is clearly not true that what Bolton told the police led to Ray's arrest: The fat man incident did not surface until after Ray's arrest, and neither did the self-announced fat man.

That Bolton could have been confused about the sequence of events leading to Ray's arrest, that he might have genuinely believed that it was his information that got Ray arrested, is highly improbable. Bolton seemed sharp. There was nothing slow about his intellectual processes. The very newspapers in which he supposedly first read about the fat man incident not only contained headlines and articles dealing with Ray's capture (on the same pages as the fat man stories) but most of the articles about the fat man contained references to Ray's arrest. Ray was arrested June 8. For the next five days, Toronto newspapers gave extensive coverage to his arrest, his extradition, and to the police work that led to his capture. The fat man articles appeared June 10 and 11, at the peak of coverage concerning Ray's capture. It strains credibility to believe that someone could be cognizant of the fat man story and avoid knowing that Ray was already behind bars.

The story that Bolton gave to the author was more substantively detailed, and more credible, in dimensions which did not relate directly

to the letter. He accurately described the Dundas Street neighborhood and the house where Mrs. Loo lived. He recounted how the police checked out his story, taking him to the Dundas Street area and requiring that he lead them to the phone booth where the letter was allegedly found. He told how police dismantled the public telephone and checked the phone booth from top to bottom, how a frightened Mrs. Loo identified him for police.

Then I asked one of the most crucial and sensitive questions of all: What was Ray's demeanor? Bolton laughed (a forced, nervous laugh).

"He [Ray] was nervous, scared—turned his face from me and grabbed the envelope." Bolton mimed Ray's alleged actions. "Thanks," he says to me."

Not only does this conflict with Mrs. Loo's description of the exchange between the two men; but if Ray was truly scared about the encounter, he would have had no reason to come down and meet the stranger.

There were always three possible scenarios for the fat man incident:

1. The man who came forward with the Good Samaritan story was not the real fat man, but concocted his story at the behest of others who needed to resolve the matter or who wanted to dead-end a lead to the conspiracy.
2. The man who came forward was the real fat man and the Good Samaritan story was true.
3. The man who came forward before he was discovered was, in fact, the fat man but he was a courier who delivered funds to Ray, even though he may not have known what was in the envelope, who "Sneyd" really was, or on whose behalf the delivery was made.

It is yet another indication of the HSCA's lack of initiative, or its myopia, that it did not find Bolton and thoroughly investigate the incident. On the basis of the data gathered here, the matter remains as intriguing as it was in 1968. Available evidence suggests that option 1 is not likely: William Bolton fits the description of the fat man and demonstrates a credible familiarity with the scene of the incident. In the author's opinion, William Bolton is the fat man. Yet, the Good Samaritan story remains as shaky now as it was in 1968, especially when considered within the context of Ray's behavior, Mrs. Loo's description, and the striking similarity of the "slight man" incident.

As for William Bolton, the interviewer was impressed with the credibility of one facet of his story: He seemed genuinely afraid for his personal safety. His primary reaction to being rediscovered after 16 years was not bemusement, annoyance, or apprehension about publicity. It was more like the kind of fear one might expect from someone whose cover identity under the federal witness-protection program had just been blown.

Perhaps the most important question is *who* or *what* Bolton was afraid of. If he feared what he referred to as the "gangsters" or the "big money" behind Ray, then it was not because he provided police with the lead that resulted in Ray's arrest. If William Bolton feared the men behind James Earl Ray, it was for another reason, as yet undisclosed.

8 The Window of Vulnerability

Here you have a situation where you have the major civil rights leader in the country in your city, you have a riot situation looking you in the face, security guards are removed, tactical forces are removed, surveillance is removed, and there is a failure to issue an all points bulletin after a description is made available. . . .¹

Congressman Christopher Dodd, HSCA, to Memphis Public Safety Director Frank Holloman

The pattern had become legend in the King case—the melting away of protection and pursuit forces within hours of the assassination, the failure to issue an APB until it was too late to catch the suspect, the presence of a police undercover agent in the parking lot of the Lorraine at the time of the shooting. Is the pattern conspiratorial or coincidental? Which of its components are real; which, mythical? Certainly, petty criminal James Earl Ray possessed no capacity to manipulate law-enforcement. Nor did the alleged St. Louis conspiracy, whose only putative relationship to the crime was to offer a bounty on King. Any such manipulations would require a sophisticated conspiracy with access to intelligence and law-enforcement networks.

So conspicuous was the collapse of police presence at the crime scene that even Memphis police officers voiced suspicions that the fix was in.² HSCA implied that the failures were due to a combination of incompetence and latent racism rather than conspiratorial intrigue. After examining the possibility of a sinister FBI influence concerning the poor performance of the Memphis Police Department (MPD) the committee

like botched translations from German; his ability to focus on a question and provide a relevant answer often seemed nonexistent. The Ray I confronted in Nashville seemed much more poised and articulate.

The answer to whether there was a new Ray soon became apparent: there were two James Earl Rays, depending upon the topic under discussion. I was to see a good deal of both of them.

First there was Ray the jail-house lawyer, the practiced interviewee. He was cordial, relaxed, fairly articulate, and clearly focused. This Ray would maintain direct eye contact with the interviewer. He had excellent recall: the names of FBI agents, Memphis police, newspaper reporters, the contents of HSCA volumes, the substance of his previous interviews and testimonies. This Ray appeared when the turf was safe, when we talked of his status in prison, his quest for a new trial, his alleged persecution by HSCA.

When the interviewer steered the conversation to more sensitive areas—the Galt alias, the fat man, the conspirators—the second Ray emerged. This Ray was more like the one manifested in HSCA transcripts. His syntax seemed to degenerate, and his power of memory all but disappeared. His responses were rambling and sometimes only marginally related to the question. He shifted in his chair and appeared nervous; at times, anxious. His lower lip twitched occasionally. He lost eye contact.

Ray attempted to prolong our stay on safe turf. He discoursed at length about his various legal motions; he returned to safe topics whenever there was a pause in the conversation. Finally, however, all of the questions that I had come to ask were asked, although not answered.

ON THE "FAT MAN"

To the author's knowledge, Ray has never been asked about the fat man incident. Certainly HSCA did not ask him. It is a sensitive topic, once one dismisses the Good Samaritan explanation. If, in fact, Ray received an envelope full of money before departing Toronto, this is hardly exculpatory of Ray. Not without considerable explanation on his part, anyway. Also, as we shall see later, Ray refused to talk substantively about anything relating to the conspiracy or the conspirators, except "Raoul."

I began this line of questioning by testing Ray's recognition of Bolton's name. It would be highly unlikely that Ray would know the real name of any courier, or that Ray would admit knowing it even if he did, but I thought it important to test Ray's reaction.

"I tracked down this guy William Bolton," I began. "Does that name ring a bell?"

"No," he replied, showing no reaction.

"He was the guy who came forward to police about finding the letter—Dundas Street, Mrs. Loo's."

There was no verbal response. He shook his head negatively. His often excellent recall about the details of the case seemed to be failing him. The second Ray was emerging. I began to wonder if he would deny that the incident ever occurred.

"The fat man articles in the newspaper."

He nodded recognition. "Yes," he said. There was tension in his response.

I told him that the reason I was asking about this was because Bolton had given me a phony story, claiming that the letter dealt with Ray's getting to Portugal and that finding the letter led to Ray's arrest. Ray replied that at that point in time, while he was staying at Dundas Street, he did not know he was going to Portugal.

"What was in the letter?" I asked. "Who was it to?"

"It was a letter of mine, had my name on it. I don't recall much about it. . . . It probably had something to do with getting a passport." This was a most interesting response, to which we will return in a moment.

Ray affirmed that, contrary to what authorities said in 1968, the letter did not have to do with his getting a job. Then I asked the key question.

"Weren't you scared to get the letter, to meet the guy?"

The style of Ray's response differed markedly from his previous answers during this line of questioning, which were delivered almost lackadaisically. This response was swift and forceful, as if there was an urgent point to be made.

"Oh, yes. I was [scared]. I didn't [meet Bolton]. I just told the landlady, she was Chinese, to get it for me. The guy might be a cop or something, yes."

Ray seemed to recognize the implications of admitting that he came downstairs, and this recognition accounted for the zeal with which he answered. But his response lacked credibility.

First, there is Mrs. Loo's detailed account, given to police and the press, in which Ray descended the stairs, met briefly with the stranger, and received the envelope. William Bolton admitted that he had met Ray and given him the envelope.

It is significant that while having opposite stories about whether they met, both Ray and Bolton claim emphatically that Ray was scared. Ray made this point with uncharacteristic urgency. Bolton advanced this claim with a flourish of melodrama, miming Ray's frightened actions upon receiving the letter. If Ray was not scared, the best explanation is that he was expecting a delivery.

The two principals also disagree sharply concerning the contents of the putative letter. As described by police, Bolton's 1968 story was al-

legedly that the letter dealt with Ray's seeking a job. Bolton's 1984 story was that the letter had sinister conspiratorial overtones relating to Ray's escape to Portugal. Ray thinks it had to do "with getting a passport." One possible explanation for these conflicts is that there was no letter.

Ray's assertion that the letter had to do "with getting a passport" is interesting. Indeed, all indications are that the envelope had a great deal to do with Ray's obtaining his ticket and passport, but not because of any letter.

The reader will recall that all the paperwork for Ray's passport—the passport application, the application for a Sneyd birth certificate—went out on April 6. The passport arrived at the Kennedy Travel Agency in Toronto on April 26. Yet it languished there, along with Ray's airplane ticket, until May 2, just after the fat man's visit. Ray's response about what the envelope had to do with could well be correct: without the money it most likely contained, he could not have picked up his ticket to London, and to pick up the passport and not the ticket might have aroused suspicion and would have done him little good in terms of a getaway.

ON THE GALT ALIAS

To broach this subject I delivered a mini lecture that began with certain assumptions about the Galt alias, assumptions designed to put Ray more at ease. I told him that I believed his claim that he did not know there was a real Eric S. Galt until after the assassination. I also asserted that he could not have ripped off the real Galt's name by any of the methods hypothesized by the press in 1968 (such as from a motel register in the U.S.). Since he did not get the Galt alias off of Galt, I suggested that there were two possibilities: the similarities between himself and Galt were entirely coincidental; someone who knew of the real Galt provided the alias.

I further explained that I had new data extending far beyond the matching scars mentioned by the press in 1968. Ray gave me a puzzled look.

"The matching scars," I reiterated. "You both have them."

There was a pause during which he did not respond. Then he uttered a low, almost grudging "Oh, yeah," as if he was agreeing in order to humor me.¹

I continued on and told him about Galt's visits to Birmingham and Memphis, about his marksmanship. I reminded Ray about the general physical similarities between himself and Galt, and about the "Starvo" name.² Finally, disregarding a good deal of collegial advice, I told him about Galt's security file.

As I laid out the data, he was neither nervous nor passive. Instead, there was a brightness in his eyes and a trace of a smile. I hoped that the sheer weight of the data, and the fact that it was surely new to him, might produce a breakthrough, and that finally he might be willing to abjure his usual evasions and falsehoods about the origin of the Galt alias.

I finished by reminding him that he first used the alias at the same time he alleges to have first met Raoul.

"So," I concluded, "you can see how it's too much to believe in coincidence. Isn't it possible that Raoul or someone else like him gave the Galt alias to you, as a way of setting you up . . . like the rifle? [The Galt alias] is connected to a sophisticated conspiracy but not by you; they did it."

It was match point for the author, and it turned out to be a moment of supreme frustration. Ray's keen interest was displaced by the reappearance of the second Ray—the vague, evasive Ray like the one in the HSCA transcripts relating to the Galt alias.

His first response was: "I got all these aliases. There were so many, I don't remember. There were two guys in Canada. Sneyd and something . . . two names. Ah, Sneyd and some other."

This was a familiar tactic which I recognized from Ray's HSCA interviews. When asked about the Galt alias he would start talking about another alias. It is incredible that the man who could remember the names of reporters who wrote one article on the case could not recall the Bridgeman name—a name under which he rented an apartment and applied for a birth certificate, a name that received extensive press coverage in 1968, and is referred to dozens of times in HSCA volumes.

I refused to be sidetracked to Bridgeman and Sneyd and pressed on about Galt.

"I wanted simple names," Ray said of the Galt alias.

"But you see my problem," I told him. "It's all coincidence about Galt?"

Ray laughed nervously. He did not flatly assert that it was coincidence.

"I don't know where I got 'em," he continued. "Huie [author William Bradford Huie] says I got Galt off a road sign. Someone said a phone book."

Ray was now passing off his own HSCA testimony as something "someone said." Under repeated questioning by HSCA, it was Ray himself who had suggested that he may have gotten the name from a Birmingham or Chicago phone book.³ Perhaps the very subject of Galt was so unnerving as to muddle Ray's otherwise impressive recall; perhaps the answer about the phone book was so patently absurd he no longer wanted to embrace it.

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Introduction

Writing in *Civil Liberties Review* in 1978, Frank Donner unleashed a scathing review of Mark Lane and Dick Gregory's *Code Name Zorro*, which contended that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated by a conspiracy involving the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).¹ Donner's review was entitled "Why Isn't the Truth Bad Enough?," a reference to what he viewed as the inability or unwillingness of many Americans to accept the conclusion that deranged individuals acting alone can so profoundly alter our history and our political process. But the truth is only "bad enough" when we know what it is. Otherwise, as Santayana warned, we may be compelled to repeat those historical events that we do not understand.

There have been several versions which, at a given point in time, have passed for "the truth" about the King assassination. In 1968 the official truth was that a small-time criminal named James Earl Ray had acted alone in killing Dr. King, motivated by racism and by a desire for fame, spawned by his stunted self-image.

In the mid-1970s, culminating with the disclosures of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (generally known as the Church Committee), America learned the awful truth about Hoover's FBI. The Bureau had engaged in a protracted persecution of Dr. King; it had worked to discredit him, and even to destroy him, both personally and politically. The FBI's illegal vendetta smacked of police-state tactics.² Did this revelation change the official version of the truth concerning King's assassination? Was the FBI involved in a conspiracy?

In 1977, prompted by the disclosure of Hoover's war on King, the Carter Justice Department released and endorsed a review of the FBI's

investigation of the assassination and of its possible complicity in the murder. The probe found no evidence of a conspiracy: James Earl Ray had acted alone.³

In 1978 the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) offered a radically different version of the truth: namely, that "on the basis of circumstantial evidence available to the committee, James Earl Ray assassinated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a result of a conspiracy."⁴ Did the FBI conspire to assassinate King? No, said the committee. The conspirators who allegedly put a bounty on King were based in St. Louis and included a drug-dealing real estate developer and a wealthy, racist industrialist who was fond of dressing up in a Civil War uniform.⁵

In a way, there was something quite cathartic, even comforting, about the House Assassinations Committee's version of the truth. Hoover and his police-state apparat had not murdered America's greatest civil rights leader. It was instead a sleazy cabal of racist right-wingers who seemed to be behind Ray. King's martyrdom was enhanced by this latest version of the truth: a conspiracy of petty racists had slain the Nobel-prize winning black leader. King had been eliminated by the very same forces that he had fought to overcome on the long road of nonviolent struggle from Birmingham to Memphis.

The House Committee's truth provided a kind of cleansing of the body politic. It was a bad truth, but one that did not involve the federal government or sinister networks of American intelligence. And it did not raise questions about the basic structure of American democracy. Instead, it further exposed the same virulent racism that King himself had worked so hard to illuminate and eradicate.

Yet, the House Assassinations Committee's version of truth was highly speculative. It was supported by only the vaguest circumstantial evidence.

If we eschew both of the rigid mind-sets whose polemics and tunnel vision tend to dominate the analysis of American political assassinations—the first believes that every three coincidences prove a conspiracy; the second believes that every pervasive pattern of conspiratorial evidence can be explained away as coincidence—then we can proceed to another level of truth about the King case. This truth is more valid than those previously offered by official investigations. It is also a worse truth.

The freshest and best evidence precludes not only the possibility that James Earl Ray was a lone assassin but also that a crude and flamboyant conspiracy, allegedly hatched in St. Louis, propelled the assassination by putting up \$50,000 to recruit a hit man. The truth of the King assassination is that it was a much more sophisticated conspiracy executed by persons possessing the kind of expertise generally found within intelligence circles.

the story about the lost letter. The man's identity was kept secret by police, at his request.

Had the authorities found the real fat man, or was the man who came forward so conveniently some sort of disinformation agent? Was the Good Samaritan story credible or was it more likely that Ray's escape money was in the envelope? We shall examine this key event by detailing the landlady's account, then analyzing the explanation of the incident given by Toronto police in 1968. These will then be related to Ray's behavior and, finally, to what the fat man had to say 16 years later.

The report of the incident came from Mrs. Yee Sun Loo, the 32-year-old mother of three who rented a room in her Dundas Street home to Ray. Ray stayed 16 days in the second-floor room of the three-story, Victorian-style, red brick dwelling. It was located in what was then an ethnically mixed, older neighborhood on the fringes of Toronto's red-light district. During his stay, Ray had but one visitor. Mrs. Loo described Ray as very quiet. He would come into her kitchen, pay his rent, then "disappear", he "never said anything."²

It was Thursday, May 2. James Earl Ray was the only boarder still in his room, the others had gone to work. According to Mrs. Loo, the events occurred as follows. She had just finished putting a diaper on her baby and had placed the child in his high chair. She glanced at the clock. It was noon.

She heard three raps at her front door and went to answer. Through her screen door she saw a man standing on the wooden porch.

"Yes?" she inquired.

"Is Mr. Sneyd in?" asked the visitor. He held a white, letter-sized envelope with a typewritten name on it.

"I will get him," said Mrs. Loo.

She went upstairs to Ray's room and informed him: "Mr. Sneyd, there is a man with a letter for you." Ray emerged wearing a dark suit and sunglasses. He nodded and descended the stairs.

Mrs. Loo observed as Ray went to the front door. She could not hear what was said but saw the visitor nod to Ray and hand him the envelope. They exchanged a few words. Ray put the envelope in the inside pocket of his suit jacket, turned and went upstairs. The visitor left.

Mrs. Loo described Ray's visitor as "tall" and "fat." He was Caucasian and appeared to be about 40 years old, with dark hair brushed back. He wore a white, short-sleeved t-shirt tucked inside his black trousers.

The hunt was on. Earl McKrae, who now writes for a Toronto magazine, covered the story for the *Toronto Star* and obtained an exclusive interview with Mrs. Loo. He recalled for the author the excitement generated by the search for the fat man:

We worked round-the-clock to find him. Everyone thought: "This is it—the payoff was in the envelope. This is the conspiracy." The police felt particularly

7

In Search of the Fat Man

Who's the Fat Man?

Toronto Star, June 10, 1968

Mounties Hunt "Fat Man" in Ray Case

New York Times, June 10, 1968

The "fat man" incident was by far the most provocative episode in the fugitive phase of the King case. Its conspiratorial implications generated considerable interest within the American media and a frenzied level of activity in Canada, where reporters and Mounties alike thought that finding the fat man might break open the conspiracy.

Ray had already been arrested in London when the fat man story broke. Ray's landlady on Dundas Street reported to police that on May 2 a corpulent stranger had come to the door asking for Sneyd (Ray's alias at the time) and had handed Ray an envelope. That very day, Ray paid up his rent and purchased an airplane ticket to London, where he flew four days later. The ticket cost \$345; Ray paid in Canadian cash. Speculation quickly arose that the fat man was a coconspirator or, at minimum, a courier delivering get-away money.

The hunt for the fat man was on. But in less than a week it was over. On June 12 Toronto police made a dramatic announcement. The fat man had been found, and he was completely innocent of any involvement in the King case. It was simply that the so-called fat man was a Good Samaritan who was returning a misplaced letter to Sneyd/Ray. A man claiming to be the fat man had come forward to police and volunteered

dumb because here was the key to the King case right in their backyard and they couldn't find the fat man.'

Each of Toronto's three newspapers—the *Star*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Telegram*—tried to find the fat man before its competitors did. The constant drumfire of publicity was an embarrassment to Toronto police, whose efforts to identify and locate the suspect were unsuccessful.

One lead came from a cab driver who had been dispatched to pick up two men across the street from Ray's rooming house at 12:18 p.m., shortly after the fat man's nighttime visit. The driver described his two fares as being white males "forty to fifty years old," and one was "big and fat."⁴ The two men were waiting on the sidewalk when the driver arrived. He took them to the Toronto Dominion Bank a few blocks west.

Records of the Diamond Taxi Company revealed that on three occasions on May 2, including the one just described, someone called for a cab to be sent to 955 Dundas Street West, a house directly across the street from Mrs. Loo's. No one at 955 Dundas called a cab that day,⁵ according to Anthony Szezepina, whose family occupied the dwelling.⁶

Police showed the cab driver pictures of Ray and two other men, none of whom the cabbie recognized. The driver did not recognize Ray as the man with the alleged fat man, but did recognize Ray as the fare he had picked up on May 1, four doors down from Mrs. Loo's. The cabbie's May 2 pickup seemed to be the police's best lead, but it was at a dead end at the Toronto Dominion Bank.

Then, on June 12, only four days after the incident had been reported, Toronto police held a press conference and made a dramatic announcement: They had found the so-called fat man and the matter had been resolved. He was described by police as middle-aged and not fat at all, simply "big." His story was as follows:⁶

He was working in the neighborhood where Ray's rooming house was located. He went to make a phone call in a telephone booth—there was, in fact, a phone booth located only a few yards from Mrs. Loo's door—and found an unsealed letter, apparently left by someone. He opened the envelope and read the letter, which had something to do with a job application. He could not remember much about the letter's contents beyond its general nature, nor could he recall to whom it was addressed. The man decided to return the letter to its owner and walked to the address of the sender and asked for Mr. Sneyd.

Police stated that the man did not know Ray and had no criminal connection with the King case. They checked out his story and they were satisfied. So far as the police and RCMP were concerned, the search for the fat man was over. Needless to say, there was a good deal of suspicion among the local press that the police were so anxious to settle the matter, and thus prevent further questioning of their competence,

that they would grasp at any "solution" regardless of how tenuous, or even contrived, it might be. Earl McRae, for one, continued to pursue the fat man for two weeks, until his editors diverted him to other assignments. His main goal was to discover the identity of the self-anointed fat man, and then check the validity of his story, but he was unable to do so. If we compare the version of the story accepted by police with Mrs. Loo's account and also with Ray's behavior, a string of problems arises concerning the validity of the Good Samaritan version.

The *Toronto Telegram* brought up two points which, when taken out of context or left unexplained as they were in the *Telegram*, implicitly cast doubt on Mrs. Loo's credibility.⁷ First, the *Telegram* described Mrs. Loo as "near hysterics" when its reporters interviewed her. Second, the newspaper claimed that she had meant to tell police that the visitor was tall and big but because of a language barrier, police thought she meant to describe him as fat.

If Mrs. Loo was "near hysterics" by the time the *Telegram* talked to her on the evening of the day the story broke, it was probably because of the traumatic experience she had undergone during the day. Mrs. Loo was a Chinese immigrant living in one of the seedier sections of the city. It is likely that she regarded the white authority structure with considerable trepidation if not outright suspicion. Being grilled by Toronto police and then besieged by reporters must have been emotionally unsettling.

Earl McRae, who obtained an exclusive interview with Mrs. Loo before she was hounded by hordes of his colleagues in the Toronto press, told the author that he had no problems whatsoever in communicating with her. He found her to be a credible witness whose recall of the incident seemed both clear and detailed.⁸

Regarding the second point, police were wont to point out that the man who came forward with the Good Samaritan story was not fat, only tall and big. The police gleefully reiterated this point as a way of implying that the whole incident was blown out of proportion; that, implicitly, Mrs. Loo was either prone to exaggerate or could not accurately communicate the details of the event.

In fairness to Mrs. Loo's powers of perception and communication, it should be noted that to a slender Oriental woman, a tall, robust Caucasian man (whose girth may well have been accentuated by his tucked-in t-shirt) might appear to be fat, even though police officers would not choose to describe him as such.

There is no doubt, however, that the attention suddenly focused on Mrs. Loo was a difficult experience for her. When I contacted her she refused to talk about the incident. "Oh, no, no," she protested. Her son told me that she consistently refused to talk about the matter.⁹

There are formidable problems with the police's explanation of the fat man incident. First of all, there is the claim that the letter found in the phone booth was related to Ray's seeking employment. Within hours of the incident, Ray purchased a \$345 airplane ticket and paid cash. Either he already had the necessary get-away money in his possession or it was delivered to him in the envelope. In either case, job hunting would have made little sense: The money to escape to London was in hand or on the way. Job hunting abroad would make no sense either. Presumably Ray knew nothing about London and had no idea where he would be staying. There was no suggestion by Toronto police that the letter was headed abroad.

Moreover, when we consider the circumstances and the time frame surrounding Ray's purchase of the ticket, it appears all the more likely that the fat man delivered money. It was on April 16 that Ray went to the Kennedy Travel Agency in Toronto and ordered a ticket to London and a passport under the name of Sneyd (the travel agency handled the passport application for its customer).¹⁰ Ray was informed that it would take between one and two weeks for his application to be processed by the bureaucracy in Ottawa and mailed to the travel agency. He left his Dundas Street address and Mrs. Loo's phone number with the agency.¹¹

Ten days later, on April 26, the "Sneyd" passport arrived. Ray had booked an excursion flight that departed Toronto on May 6. One would think that the world's number one fugitive would be anxious to pick up his passport and ticket as soon as possible, to have them in his possession in case he had to leave that section of the city or had to change addresses again—in case the law began to close in on him. There would be an advantage to having his get-away credentials in hand, even if it were not possible for him to arrange to leave sooner than May 6.

Yet, whatever the potential benefits, Ray was in no position to retrieve his ticket unless he could come up with the money. It might have seemed odd, and thereby called attention to himself, if he had picked up his passport but left his ticket there until later, clearly signaling that he did not yet have the necessary funds. The appearance of normalcy in this transaction was important to Ray. He told Mrs. Lillian Spencer, the travel agent, that he was a used-car salesman from a small town in Canada who had recently moved to Toronto. This was Ray's way of explaining why he had no one in Toronto who could vouch for his Canadian citizenship. And, as Ray described to HSCA, he purposely ordered a round-trip ticket because: "I figured that would be less suspicious than getting one way."¹²

Despite the obvious utility of getting his ticket and passport as soon as possible, they languished at the travel agency until May 2—the day of the fat man's visit. It will also be recalled that the visit took place at noon. Ray had all morning to go to the travel agency and retrieve his

traveling papers if he had the money to do so. But he waited until afternoon.

Mrs. Loo glimpsed the envelope. It was white and had only a typewritten name on the front.¹³ She could not make out the name but believed that it was a name. Ray did not own a typewriter nor did he have access to one, so far as we know. Moreover, the envelope could hardly have contained a job query which was intended for mailing, not with only a name and no address. It—as seems likely, given the incident of the "slight man" which will be described shortly—the typed name on the envelope was Ramon Sneyd, then the envelope was to Ray.

Mrs. Loo recalled that when the fat man came to her door he asked: "Is Mr. Sneyd in?"¹⁴ Mrs. Loo's house was not so large as to look like a hotel. One might have expected that, upon seeing a Chinese woman come to the door, the fat man might first want to confirm that Sneyd lived there—"Does Mr. Sneyd live here?" If he was confident of the address or willing to assume that Sneyd lived there, he might have simply slipped the envelope through the mail slot or under the door. After all, the fat man had supposedly opened and read the letter, and knew that the envelope did not contain anything financially valuable or of an emergency nature. Yet, he was evidently such a thorough Good Samaritan that he was willing to spend part of his lunch hour waiting for Sneyd to come to the door and receive the envelope rather than just dropping it off and hurrying away. Although it was supposedly a routine letter whose substance was quite forgettable, returning it to the right address was not enough to satisfy the fat man: He felt compelled to hand it to the man who had penned it.

The key to the fat man incident is James Earl Ray's behavior. Ray was not known to hang around his room during the day. His Ossington Street landlady, Mrs. Fella Szpakowski, told police that he left every morning at 8:30 and returned just after supper.¹⁵ During the week preceding the fat man's visit, Mrs. Loo saw almost nothing of Ray. His bed was always loosely made when she would check the room during the day, and Ray was always gone. She wasn't even sure that he was occupying his room, except that he did pay his rent for that week (April 26 to May 3).¹⁶ It was during this same week that Ray was seen on at least two occasions in the Silver Dollar Tavern drinking with another man. It will also be recalled that on April 27, five days before the fat man incident, Mrs. Loo took a call for Ray in which the caller said "Get Sneyd." Ray was out at the time. But on Thursday, May 2, Ray had reappeared and was in his room when the fat man came.

Ray was a fugitive and, by all accounts, an extremely nervous one. Mrs. Szpakowski remembered his as appearing "so worried all the time."¹⁷ One of his London landladies, Mrs. Thomas, described him as "very, very nervous." She recalled that Ray was so reclusive he refused