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Apr 14/82 HAL: THANKS FOR INFO ON SERVICE STATIONS.
RE YOU ON JAMES AS HIS OWN "WORST JAILHOUSE LAWYER": I MAY HAVE MISTAKEN HIS
ASSIDUITY FOR COMPETENCY (SEE MY PAGE 16, PAR. 4).

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE FLAKEY ANNA RAY? World ©1982 Phil Moss

BEST,

JAMES EARL RAY SPEAKS - EXCLUSIVE

By Phil Moss

James Earl Ray gave me no sign of being in fear for his life. The man convicted as the assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has himself been the target of two recent assassination attempts.

Before I went in to visit Ray, his wife Anna had told me she thought he was in immediate danger at the hands of black militants.

But Ray only told me calmly, "There's always a possibility (of being harmed) in prison. It's a violent atmosphere anyway; there's always a possibility of someone being assaulted. You might be assaulted for no reason at all; they call it 'going off.' Some people belong in mental institutions but they don't have room for them, so they keep them in prison."

In his first interview ever for readers world-wide, Ray discussed many topics, including his views on the American justice system. He maintains he is innocent in the death of Dr. King on April 4, 1968. During several hours of conversation with Ray, on two occasions, I concluded he was an intelligent and sensitive man, not the mere smirking petty criminal he's been portrayed to be.

My two visits with him at the Tennessee State Penitentiary in Nashville took place in the same week (in February) when two black inmates had been shot to death by white inmates at Brushy Mountain State Prison. The victims were members of the Alke-Bulan Society, a tiny "black power" sect. So were the three convicts who face trial this spring for stabbing Ray repeatedly on June 4, 1981, at Brushy

Mountain. In the same way as Ray was transferred after that attack, Tennessee Correction Department officials have now shifted other black inmates--who say they fear for their lives--from Brushy Mountain in eastern Tennessee to the main prison at Nashville, in central Tennessee. It is the black newcomers to the main prison that Mrs. Ray fears will attack Ray. But Ray assured her in my hearing that they would be housed in quarters away from his own maximum-security area.

On January 23 of this year, Mr. and Mrs. Ray were assaulted in a prison visitors' room. A black prisoner with a history of violent behavior burst through an unlocked door and attacked them with a heavy stand-up metal ashtray. Aiming right at Ray's head, the attacker intended to kill Ray, Mrs. Ray told me. Ray escaped unhurt, but Anna Sandhu, an attractive thirtyish blonde artist, suffered a bruised wrist.

"That was just negligence on the part of the administration," Ray told me. "All the doors should be locked. Especially where visitors, women and children, come in here and they're supposed to keep them safe." Convicts, he added, are on their own and have to see to their own safety.

Last June, Ray was sitting in a deserted library at Brushy Mountain when he was stabbed 22 times. "I think there was two (attackers)," he recalled. "One was behind me, holding me, and the other one of them was stabbing me, and I understand one more was on lookout."

I could see a diagonal three-inch-long scar shimmering from the left side of his temple--a souvenir of the attack. Our conversation went on:

MOSS: Where did they cut you?

RAY: In the head and the face and the back and the arm.

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MOSS: And you escaped any really severe blow!

RAY: I was in pretty good physical condition. In addition to that, I didn't get hit in any vital places. I was lucky.

MOSS: But your arm was pretty bad.

RAY: The doctor said the worst wound was in the arm.

MOSS: The right arm?

RAY: The left arm.

MOSS: How is it now?

RAY: Other than itching, and things of that nature, most of it's healed.

MOSS: But you were bleeding pretty bad when you got hit, weren't you?

RAY: I would suppose so. (NOTE: Ray understates a lot; Mrs. Ray told me he was bleeding profusely.)

MOSS: Did you go unconscious?

RAY: No.

MOSS: But I understand from Anna you had to wait about 10 minutes for the guards to come and get you.

RAY did not comment on that, only saying that he tried to attract attention after the attack.

RAY: One thing about Brushy Mountain Prison is that it takes so long to get to the hospital. They've got to call an ambulance. They've got to put you in the ambulance, and they've got to take you to Oak Ridge (the nearest city), which is about 15 minutes. So it usually takes about half an hour to get to the hospital. I suppose if you were bleeding or anything of that nature, you might lose quite a bit of blood before you ever got to the hospital.

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MOSS: Did they do anything to staunch the blood in the ambulance?

RAY: They got the medical technicians in the prison, they're pretty good. They put this thing through the veins that day. I was in sort of good condition when I got to the hospital.

MOSS: You had surgery.

RAY: Yes, sir, it was Dr. Ernest Hendrix. He sewed me up.

MOSS: How long were you in surgery?

RAY: I think it was about an hour--60 or 70 stitches.

MOSS: They said 77.

RAY: That's close enough.

With that statement, Ray smiled a tight-lipped smile. To say - as has been alleged - that he is always unsmiling and humorless would not be accurate.

He told me the State of Tennessee has tried three times to transfer him to the Federal prison system. One time would have been after his abortive escape from Brushy Mountain, June 10-13, 1977.

MOSS: But you don't want to go in a Federal penitentiary?

RAY: That would be kind of foolhardy, I think.

MOSS: Not safe.

RAY: Well, in the Federal system, informers can kill people with impunity. I know that in the Atlanta (Federal) prison, there was 90 killings down there in a 5- or 6-month period. Informers, they do this stuff and they never get no time (added) out of it or anything else. Later, they're either paroled or--

MOSS: One time they were going to try to send you to Springfield, Missouri (a Federal facility)?

RAY: That was just (to be) the first stop. That was just a cover, they was going to send me to Springfield and from there they'd probably send me to Atlanta or--

MOSS: --another Federal prison. So you'd be at the mercy, you might say, of these informers.

RAY: Oh, yeh.

James Earl Ray and Martin Luther King were almost of an age when the civil rights leader was slain in Memphis, in the western part of Tennessee, in 1968. Dr. King was 39, Ray was 40. On January 15 of this year, Dr. King would have been 53. On March 10, Ray turns/turned 54.

Their lives were starkly different. Although his family was not wealthy, King was one of the minority of black youths of his generation able to attend college. For Ray, it was an existence of little education, poverty, and a family some of whose members were disposed toward crime. James was almost foredoomed to be a criminal.

I was in Memphis on the night Dr. King was shot, and I've followed the case since. I've carried on a correspondence of sorts with Ray, and only recently I inquired about a face-to-face chat with him. Ray wrote back that he would be willing to see me.

The Tennessee State Penitentiary rises up out of a barren Southern landscape like some misplaced medieval castle. Its grim hulk is only about five miles from the tinsel of Nashville's Music Row, which churns out country music for the world.

After I was searched, beefy guards escorted me through one impregnable door after another till I got to Unit 6. Call it what you will--segregation, solitary confinement, maximum security--it's a forbidding place where problem criminals are caged. Guards took me to the end of

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a block of dimly-lit cells, to Number 13, which is home for James Earl Ray. At first a guard thought I should interview him in his cell, but it was decided we'd talk in a small visitors' room instead.

Ray was unshaven that morning. Grayish stubble speckled his face. His black, uncombed hair was gray at the temples. Two deep creases indented the space between his intense blue eyes. His hawk-like nose, which once underwent plastic surgery, appeared to have been broken in the past. Under his light-blue prison-issue shirt and frayed dark-blue jacket, Ray showed the makings of a pot belly. He also wore dark blue prison pants, blue stockings and blue-and-white jogging shoes.

From the third finger of his left hand shone a simple gold wedding band; he wore no other jewelry. His complexion is fair, but not prison-pale; he runs daily in an open space within the segregation building--his only regular exercise. Ray is a non-smoker. He is about 5 feet 10 inches tall, and weighs about 175 pounds. He is Prisoner Number 65477.

Although somewhat ungrammatical, Ray is articulate and has an excellent vocabulary. His voice is young-sounding, but firm.

In the course of our conversation, I asked Ray, "If you could go back in your life, would you do things a little differently?"

With a slight smile, he responded, "I could have stayed out of that bread box, for one."

He meant he could have refrained from escaping in a bakery truck from the Missouri State Penitentiary on April 23, 1967--almost a year before Dr. King was assassinated.

MOSS: If you had (stayed out of the bread box), you'd still be incarcerated there (in Missouri).

RAY: No, I'd have been out by now. I'd have been released 10 years ago. (Ray's Missouri sentence, for robbery, took effect in 1960. It was for 20 years, but Ray could have been released on parole earlier--well before 1980.)

MOSS: But might you have gone back into a life of crime after your release?

RAY: I doubt it very much. When I escaped from the Missouri Penitentiary, I didn't escape with the idea of going into a life of crime. If I had of, I wouldn't have gone to work for the restaurant. (After his escape, he worked for 8 weeks as a dishwasher in suburban Chicago.) I'd just have got me a pistol. But I intended to go to a foreign country and then just blend into the population.

MOSS: Get regular work--was that your thought regardless--whether you escaped or were released?

RAY: Yes, I most likely would have (gotten regular work). In fact, I was--before I got arrested in Missouri, I'd been in Canada, trying to get work up there. It's less handicap if you can work in a place where you don't have a criminal record--don't have all these investigations (by employers) and everything.

I asked him to describe how he escaped from the Missouri prison.

RAY: That's the only real false information I gave Huie (William Bradford Huie, author of He Slew the Dreamer, written in collaboration with Ray). I thought it was necessary to protect the people that helped me escape. I told him I went over the wall, which is possible because I think I was thinking about escaping in that manner. (Ten years later, in 1977, he was to escape briefly from Brushy Mountain over a wall.) But actually I went out in a bread truck. There was a

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couple of convicts out there, no guards out there (around the prison bakery).

MOSS: Would you say somebody secreted you into a big bread box, or would you rather not go into it?

RAY: Oh, it was a box, maybe 6 by 6 (feet), I guess. Or 6 by 4.

MOSS: You curled up in it?

RAY: Put some (air) holes in the bottom of the box, put a board in (to cover Ray), and put the bread on top of the board. Just a false bottom (where Ray could hide).

MOSS: Did they do it as a favor, or did you pay them?

RAY: No, I didn't have no money to pay them. I had about \$250, but it's not necessary to pay them because I knew them. I'd rather have somebody I knew--

MOSS: --do you a favor. So you had \$250 on you to get out in the world.

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: Where did you get out of the bread truck?

RAY: The truck stopped at a highway to go to a prison farm. What it was, was taking the bread they'd baked inside the prison, to the farm. It took me a while to get out of the bread truck, out of the box. By the time I got out the truck had done gone through town, across the river, was turning to a road going into the farm, this prison farm. It had to cross the highway to stop, to let traffic by. When it stopped, I just jumped out the back and got away, like I was waving it off. I went down a gravel road opposite where he was turning in at.

I wanted to know Ray's opinion of the man he was supposed to have murdered.

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MOSS: Personally, what did you think about Martin Luther King?

RAY: I didn't think about him. I probably knew he existed but, well, I was in the penitentiary. (Author George) McMillan, in one of his articles he said I used to see Martin Luther King on TV and I'd chew on bars and say, "Somebody's got to get him," and all that. So they started investigating that and they found out there was no TV in Missouri prison while I was there. A lot of prisons have TV. But Missouri, there was no TV, the only thing we had was a (radio) headphone. And the last year I was there, we got little transistor radios.

MOSS: Headphones that you'd plug into a radio?

RAY: They had little stations (receptacles into which to plug headphones). The guy I heard on the news, I think it was Fulton Lewis (prominent right-wing broadcaster) for seven years; that was the only news you could get.

MOSS: But you could read papers?

RAY: Well, if you could buy them. But at the time usually a prisoner wasn't financially where they could buy a newspaper. I didn't buy a newspaper the whole time I was in there, I don't believe.

Ray has been branded a racist. I asked him pointblank, "Do you like black people?"

He responded, "They're just here and I'm here. I don't like them and I don't dislike them. I never gave much thought (to race) till I got this charge against me. People's got different personalities, blacks and whites. Just based on my observation, you know people have cultural differences--music, things like that."

MOSS: As far as politics are concerned, you wouldn't care to comment on "black power" versus "white power"?

RAY: I haven't been outside (prison) for a long time. But there's so many different groups in the United States. You have a lot of Indonesians coming in, and blacks. [He is probably referring to Vietnamese and Laotians, and to Cubans and Haitians.] These people seem to be organized. If you're not organized, it seems like you're going to wind up on the short end.

MOSS: Do you consider yourself part of a minority of white, imprisoned individuals?

RAY: No, not necessarily. But I think you have to be somewhat organized, where you can defend yourself, instead of just running around getting yourself knocked in the head and stabbed. That gets tiresome after a while.

MOSS: What you're indicating is, that in prison you might have to be part of a group in order to survive.

RAY: Yes, I think that's going to be ultimately necessary, because it seems like violence is escalating in prison. A lot of people go to prisons for robbery and burglary and rape and they get the idea they're involved in politics, which is nonsense. I can see being involved in politics on the outside, and coming to the penitentiary. But if someone's robbing banks on the street, and they come in the penitentiary and say, "I'm not really a bank robber, I'm a revolutionary," it doesn't make much sense.

Regarding politics, a CBS-TV documentary in 1976 concluded that Ray had no political orientation. This conclusion puts Ray at an opposite pole from two other men jailed as assassins, both of them with avowed extremist convictions: the late Lee Harvey Oswald, implicated in the death of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, and Sirhan

Sirhan, convicted of murdering the President's brother, Robert F. Kennedy, in 1968. However, George McMillan, author of The Making of an Assassin: The Life of James Earl Ray, alleges Ray was an anti-black racist, as well as being a Nazi sympathizer who was glad to serve in the U.S. Army in postwar Germany, where he could perhaps help bring Hitler's dogmas back to life. Ray dismissed McMillan to me as "mouthpiece for the CIA."

For a CBS poll taken for the 1976 television program, 20 per cent of respondents said they believed Ray was "solely responsible" for killing Dr. King, but 80 per cent thought he acted in conspiracy with others.

My exchange with Ray on the subject went as follows:

MOSS: You're asserting you didn't kill King?

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: Do you know who pulled the trigger on King?

RAY: Well, I don't know. Just me denying it doesn't mean anything. I've told them several times (that he didn't do it). There's so much information on this case that's classified (kept secret). I found out through Freedom of Information suits (for access to official documents) that the Atlanta police--they investigated people that made threats against King over the years. (Atlanta, Georgia, was King's home city.) The Justice Department's classified all that. And the entire Memphis file's been classified.

MOSS: Which Memphis file?

RAY: The Memphis Police investigation. And the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation of the U.S. Justice Department)--they surveilled people for years. The FBI would pick up threats on his life through intercepting his telephone calls. (Several books have told of a vendetta against

King by the late J. Edgar Hoover, longtime iron-fisted director of the FBI.)

In 1977, Playboy magazine, without the knowledge of the warden, went into the Brushy Mountain State Prison and had Ray strapped to a polygraph (lie detector) machine.

"Did you kill Martin Luther King Jr.?" a questioner asked.

"No," replied Ray.

"Do you know for sure who killed Martin Luther King Jr.?"

"No."

The polygraph examiner said Ray was not telling the truth. On the other hand, Charles McQuiston, inventor of a rival device, the Psychological Stress Evaluator, made a voice test and was quoted as saying that Ray was telling the truth when he denied killing King.

All along, Ray has maintained he was entangled with a shadowy smuggler he knew only as "Raoul." It was from assisting Raoul, he says, that he got most of the money to finance 14 months of travel, from his escape from the Missouri prison to his recapture at Heathrow Airport in London. By some estimates, he would have spent up to \$10,000 during that period in 20,000 miles of travel.

MOSS: Now Raoul is not your brother Jerry (an ex-convict)?

RAY: Oh, no.

MOSS: He's a Latin individual, a Latin-appearing individual?

RAY: Yes. I met him in Canada. I think he was a Latin. I've had quite a bit of association with Mexicans. I've been to Mexico twice. I know something about the language.

MOSS: You think he spelled his name R-a-o-u-l, or R-a-u-l?

RAY: I don't know, I can't recall. I know it's five letters. Some people spell it R-a-u-l. I think it was R-o-u-a-l (sic).

MOSS: The five letters is more the French style and the Latin R-a-u-l--like Castro's brother Raul--is four.

Ray believes the contraband he was smuggling across the Canadian and Mexican borders for Raoul was drugs.

RAY: I acquired the money (his travel money) from the narcotics operation--although at the time I didn't know it was a narcotics operation.

MOSS: Through Raoul.

RAY: And some of the money I acquired--I escaped from Missouri in April, 1967. I went to Chicago and went to work for a restaurant. I made \$800 or \$900 there. The (travel) money didn't all come from one source.

MOSS: Did your brothers have some money for you that you might have sent out of the prison?

RAY: Oh, no. They didn't have a cent (for me). I think they got my records of the money I sent out of the prison over the years. My salary in the prison was \$1.50 a month. You're not going to send much money out (from that). I think I sent out \$100 one time for a lawyer. And that's all on the record.

MOSS: McMillan's book (The Making of an Assassin)--I know you consider it a vicious book--said you were a prison "merchant": you may have dealt in drugs.

RAY: No. He accused me of dealing in drugs, being a drug addict. But I think the Correction officials issued a denial. Usually if you're dealing in drugs, there's a lot of convict-informers, they start writing

letters on you. They say, "Ray's doing this and that." But they haven't got no letters on me.

MOSS: So you think some of the convicts who have McMillan or somebody talk to them might make up stories for these writers?

RAY: Undoubtably. I think he (McMillan) got some of his information from two convict-informers. I sued him for libel in 1976. (Ray lost the case, the trial judge ruling he was libel-proof because of his past criminal record. However, Ray quotes Justice William Rehnquist of the U.S. Supreme Court as saying that being free to libel people simply because they are imprisoned is wrong.)

Ray links everything he did in Memphis and just before with the mysterious Raoul--who has never been traced. It was Raoul, he maintains, who caused him to buy the 30.08 rifle that is presumed to be the murder weapon. It was Raoul, he says, who caused him to buy for cash a \$2,000 Ford Mustang, the car that became Ray's escape vehicle after the assassination. And it was presumably on Raoul's behalf that he rented a room at 422½ South Main in Memphis. That room--or rather, a bathroom nearby--became the point from which a sniper fired the single shot that felled Dr. King at 6:01 p.m., April 4, 1968, on his balcony at the Lorraine Motel across the street.

MOSS: You rented a room in the rooming house?

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: But you were not in there at the time the shot was fired?

RAY: No.

MOSS: Where were you?

RAY: I think I was at a service station, I'm not certain. I told the Select Committee (the House of Representatives Select Committee on

Assassinations, in 1978) I was there. They went to the service station about three blocks from where I told them I was at. They got a statement from the guy and his son there saying I wasn't in there. These (same) guys gave the FBI a statement in 1968 but they (FBI) didn't say anything about statements from other service stations in the area. I don't know if they just pick out one service station. The FBI, I'm sure if they went to this one service station, they went to the others. But this is the only station they come up with.

Immediately after the assassination, someone dropped an incriminating bundle near the front of the rooming house. It contained Ray's Remington rifle and other possessions.

MOSS: How about the rifle you purchased?

RAY: Yes--in respect to the rifle: I don't believe it was ever given a ballistic test. CBS-TV filed a suit and tried to get a test but the state courts wouldn't permit it. They said it would violate my rights! Well, I don't know how it would violate my rights, because it should be in the public interest to have it resolved. I did purchase the rifle but I don't know that that's the one (that killed Dr. King).. I assume it's the one.

MOSS: Your fingerprints on it: could they have been placed afterward on the rifle?

RAY: I think there is a process to put them on there afterward. When I was in Washington for the Select Committee hearing, someone sent us a telegram saying there is a procedure where they can transfer prints from your hand to a guy or something. But actually my prints should have been on the rifle, because I bought it.

(But was Ray the skilled marksman who brought down the Nobel Peace Prize winner with a solitary bullet? Anna Ray says his Army records show Ray was only an average shot.)

MOSS: The beer cans and the transistor radio (in the discarded bundle) had your prints as well.

RAY: Most of that stuff was mine--that material they found. Except I very seldom if ever drink beer. I can't account for the beer.

James Earl Ray possesses one of the sharpest legal brains of any American prisoner. On his own and in concert with attorneys, he has filed many lawsuits. At the moment, he is in legal quest of some sealed material in the slaying site of Memphis.

RAY: I tried to get it (this material) under a Freedom of Information suit. You know the day when Dr. King was shot, every policeman in Memphis and sheriff's deputy and possibly FBI men too - if they were within four miles of the area where the assault took place, they had to make a sworn statement of everything they saw. Now when I was in Memphis jail, the policemen, I'd hear them talking--they might have been talking to me (so Ray could hear), but they was talking to themselves (to each other). So I could hear them, see? They was talking about these "four-mile statements." Said, "You had to make yours?" Said, "Yes." Sworn statements. The reason they said they had to make these was because somebody had made the allegation that Memphis Police and Sheriff's Department were involved in the murder. Now (with "four-mile statements") they have a record of just what the police were doing--to protect themselves, which seems only natural. Now in this firehouse--which was pretty close to the rooming house where he was shot from, where he was supposed

to have been shot from--there was four policemen there, in a TACT (tactical unit) car. Apparently they were pulled out into the street where they could see everything.

MOSS: On Mulberry Street (site of the Lorraine Motel and the nearby fire station).

RAY: Yes, in this firehouse. One of the policemen there was named Berry. Well, he later was one of my guards in the jail. Now there's been an allegation that I assaulted King; run down the stairs with bundles and rifle and all that and threw this stuff in the street. The reason (supposedly) I threw it there: I looked up and saw a police car and that I got scared and threw it down and jumped in the car (his Mustang) and run. Well, there was a police car there and they apparently were four people in it, because I later learned a TACT car consisted of four policemen. Now, apparently after the shooting took place, a policeman--he's trained to observe things--so naturally they look around. Well, if they would seen me or anyone else like me run out of this building, throw this stuff down and jump in the car--they would have at least seen the car leaving the area, a white Mustang. So what I'm trying to do is get these statements, see, to see just what they saw and didn't see. In this regard, in 1970 I wrote to (Memphis Police) Chief (Henry) Lux and asked him if I could get the statements. Then he wrote back and sent a duplicate copy of the letter to the Attorney General's office, saying that he, the Attorney General, had jurisdiction over this. He (Lux) more or less confirmed that there was such statements, but if I wanted them I had to go to the Attorney General. So I think those statements--just those statements from the police--would help clear up a lot of things.

MOSS: You think they still exist?

RAY: Yes, The Justice Department's got a copy now, I'm quite certain. And there's very close cooperation between the FBI and the Memphis police.

MOSS: Of course (former Memphis police director Frank) Holloman was with the FBI.

RAY: They would have exchanged that information. I know the FBI's got a copy of those statements, as far as that goes, because that would also protect the FBI.

MOSS: So you overheard these guards talking about these statements they were making. So they were all around King, but not protecting him, it would seem.

RAY: I can see it's difficult to protect someone from some type of assault, especially what I call these crazy things where a guy runs up and sticks a gun on you and pulls the trigger and shoots rapidly.

Ray said he wrote to the House of Representatives asking them to de-classify investigative material compiled by the Select Committee on Assassinations. "They told me it would stay classified for 50 years," Ray said.

Summing up his search for information, he said, "It just makes it difficult to get anything out except the state's version of the case."

From Memphis, Ray drove his getaway car to Atlanta, abandoning it there. He made his way to Canada.

MOSS: You got into Toronto and you picked out these names for passports. How did you pick out these names ^{like} of Ramon George Sneyd ^{and} ~~Eric Starvo Galt?~~

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RAY: I got these names from a newspaper--back copies of a (Toronto newspaper. They've got a system up there where if you want to look at these back copies they put them (on microfilm) up on a screen. I picked out someone similar to my age--I think there was 19 people born in 1932 or '33. (Ray was born in 1928.)

MOSS: Then you got these passports through means available to you, right?

RAY: I had just one passport.

MOSS: So when you were captured in London, did you have just one passport on you?

RAY: Yeh, but one was cancelled. But it was the same passport, same name. (Apparently he means he had two passports in the name of Sneyd, one void and the other "valid.") One of them had the name spelled wrong. So when I was in Portugal, I stopped in the Canadian Embassy and got the name changed to conform with my birth certificate.

MOSS: Which was Sneyd?

RAY: Yes.

a day, all of that time at Heathrow Airport.
RAY: His first stay in London was for only ~~about two days~~. He then flew on to Lisbon.

MOSS: How long did you stay in Portugal?

RAY: About two weeks.

MOSS: You were trying to get passage to another country, like Rhodesia?

RAY: My problem was, I didn't have enough money. If I'd had several thousand dollars, I would went to Australia or New Zealand, some other English-speaking country. When I got to Portugal, I had 300 or

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400 dollars. I found a ship. It was going to Angola, I believe it was. So, I had enough money to get passage on it. So they said, "OK, we'll give you a ticket." They said, "You got to get a visa." So the ship was leaving in three days, they said it takes seven days to get a visa. So I missed that. The only other country I tried to go to was-- I was trying to get somewhere where I could get lost in all this. This country called Biafra was having some type of war with Nigeria. That's an English-speaking country though it's undoubtedly black. I spoke to some individual there in Portugal who represented this Biafra (about being a mercenary). He thought that I might have been a reporter from the United States.

MOSS: Newspaper reporter?

RAY: Yes, So that didn't work out. So I went back to England.

The fugitive remained undiscovered in London from May 17 to June 8, 1968.

MOSS: When you went back to England, what was your plan? You were short of funds.

RAY: I was thinking about trying to get to some English-speaking country. It's difficult going to a country with a foreign language and no money and start working there. If I'd have been in Portugal, where would I have went to work if I couldn't speak the language? Probably I should have stayed in England, or tried to have got to Ireland or somewhere. I didn't look for any type of job in England. I suppose I should have. I tried to get to--I was going to Belgium and possibly get in some type of military operation.

MOSS: To be a mercenary?

RAY: You get down there (to a country hiring mercenaries). You can sign up for anything (in Belgium). Once you get there (to the country), you can take off (desert). They can trace you in a thing like that. What I had to do was get somewhere, some foreign country, by any method I could. And once I got there, see, just take off on my own because it's too easy to trace you if you stay where you're supposed to go.

MOSS: How did Belgium come into the picture?

RAY: I read something in the paper about it, that go to Belgium and you could go to some (warring) country from Belgium--Belgium or Holland or somewhere.

MOSS: Let me ask you something about London. I had a landlady in London who said that she lodged you in the Victoria Station area. Her name is Mrs. Hilda Thomas. Do you remember her--a Swedish lady?

RAY: I do recall that name somewhere. I probably remember it from one of the documents I've got from London.

MOSS: Do you remember staying at her place?

RAY: I don't recall her specifically. I do recall that name somewhere--there's a Victoria Station, so it might have been there.

MOSS: The way it happened was, I was in her guest house ^{[not the one where Ray had lodged].} you had been stabbed (in America, in June of 1981). So I asked whether I could watch her television to see whether there was any news on your condition. She said, "I gave a room to that man." She said you came with another man. So far does this strike you as being right?

RAY: I wasn't with no other person. Someone might have come at the same time.

MOSS: She said that when you came in there, you reserved a room for a couple of days and she said your rent money came from a bank robbery, she thought. At least, she was told this later. She said further that when she and the maid served you breakfast in your room, you ate it in moments and shoved the tray outside your door and that aroused her suspicions. Does any of this sound as though it might have happened?

RAY: I don't recall eating any meals at the guest house.

MOSS: She said that when you went out of the room, onto the street, she went into your room and she found several passports on your bed. Would that be possible?

RAY: No.

MOSS: And she further said that when you came back, she said, "I've got to have your room." And you protested, according to her, that you'd paid your rent and you were standing your ground. So she gave you a room upstairs. She said further that you said you'd be leaving on Saturday afternoon; instead you left Saturday morning--you'd paid your rent all right. Mrs. Thomas said that the first word she heard, a guy knocked on her door and said he was from a newspaper (the Sunday Telegraph) and wanted to talk to her, and that you had on your person--according to the reporter--a rent receipt from her which was the only London link the officials had. Does any of that sound valid?

RAY: I don't recall anything of what she said (as being true). I mean, I may have stayed at that place. But as far as all of those things that she describes, I don't recall any of that.

MOSS: They thought you robbed a bank at Fulham in London.

RAY: The only questions I've never answered is--they've associated me with several crimes in England. I don't like to answer them, because I was extradited from England. If I got a (successful) new trial in the United States, there's always a possibility they'd take me back to England.

That fateful Saturday, June 8, 1968, when Ray's attempt to reach Brussels was aborted at Heathrow Airport, the officials had advance knowledge he was in the country, Ray said. "Yes, the Canadian police had seen my picture on a passport and determined it might be me. So they notified Scotland Yard."

Back in Memphis, Ray's day in court--not really a trial--was a strange one. Just as strange, according to Ray, was the preparation for his guilty plea, a plea he was to rescind from jail within days.

MOSS: You weren't--coerced is not the word, but it was suggested by your lawyer, Percy Foreman, that you plead guilty, otherwise they might sentence you to death. Is that what he said to you?

RAY: That was his opening gambit, more or less.

MOSS: With you?

RAY: Yes. He gave me a paper to sign. The paper more or less cleared him with a magazine (Look magazine), and he was selling the information to Huie (William Bradford Huie, author of the magazine articles and the book, He Slew the Dreamer). It (the paper) cleared them of damage in my case. Foreman went on and advised that I had a 99 per cent chance of being electrocuted. I disputed that because I don't think that, based on circumstantial evidence, the jurors were going to come back and sentence somebody to death. I thought Foreman was in error. I didn't know if it was just through ignorance or-- (It has been alleged that the Huie book would be more salable after a guilty plea from Ray.)

MOSS: Then when you pleaded guilty, it wasn't through Foreman saying, "You'd better plead guilty or die"? What made you plead guilty?

RAY: This process took about a month or so. First thing he said was that I might be executed. I disputed that. Fact is, going along with a guilty plea, I think the trial judge (W. Preston) Battle said no one was being executed.

MOSS: So then you pleaded guilty.

RAY: Well, anyway, Foreman started a different tack then after the death-sentence tack. He said it was to my financial interest; I can't see why it would be to my financial interest.

MOSS: Sharing the proceeds of the Huie book?

RAY: Well, I'd done signed everything over to Foreman. But I'm not interested in money anyway. I'm trying to get a fair trial.

MOSS: Did you realize anything financially from the Huie book?

RAY: No, I didn't get a nickel. Of course, I didn't want anything out of it, because it would have looked bad if I'd haken taken money. The money was really for a jury trial. But getting back to the way Foreman worked the guilty plea: After the financial (-interest) thing, he gradually worked up-- See, my father had been a fugitive from the state of Iowa for about 40 years. So Foreman indicated then the FBI might arrest him and take him to Iowa. Then they might charge my brother Jerry Ray with conspiracy (in the King death). And then toward the end Foreman started indicating he might "throw" (deliberately lose) the case by forcing a trial. So finally I decided I didn't have much choice except to enter some type of technical plea of guilty.

In an unorthodox procedure, Foreman, a celebrated attorney from Texas, said to Ray's jury, "I want to ask each of you individually just

one simple question. It's in effect polling the jury in advance. Mr. Black, who is Mr. Black? Mr. Black, are you willing to effect the punishment that his Honor and (Attorney) General (Phil) Canale and the attorneys for the defense have agreed upon in this case, 99 years?" Black, and the other 11 jurors in turn, agreed to go along with Foreman's strategy. The judge remained silent as Foreman took over the courtroom.

RAY: Under the law, jurors are supposed to say they find you guilty of first degree murder, or whatever it is, and they're supposed to set the sentence. Well, the jurors in my case never found me guilty of anything. No, they didn't find me guilty of anything. They just went along with what Percy Foreman said. Now in Tennessee they've reversed about 12 cases like that (where proper jury procedure was not followed). But I went in front of the Tennessee courts and they said I'd waited too long to protest. So it really don't make no difference. I think no matter what I come up with, they'll find a reason to deny it."

After the guilty plea, the judge told an interviewer he was still puzzled by aspects of the King case. Then, in another of the twists of destiny that has afflicted Ray all his life, the jurist suddenly died. Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle had been able to see the case to its supposed conclusion only because Ray pleaded guilty on March 10, 1969, instead of waiting for the trial date of April 7, when Battle was already in his grave.

If Battle had lived, the course of Ray's imprisonment--or freedom--may have gone differently.

MOSS: Regarding your term--as you could be eligible under your 99-year sentence for parole in 30 years--you've served about 13 now--

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: If you got out, if you had positive action on that, it would be about the year 2000, you'd be about 72 years old.

But Ray is not sitting in his cell waiting for the dawn of a new century. He is acting on several fronts, trying for clemency or a pardon and always for new information.

RAY: I think I spent too much time the first six or seven years (of imprisonment) looking for legal technicalities to get a new trial. Consequently, in 1976 or '77, we done got a lot of information who we thought financed the assassination. I always thought it was something involved with drugs, because drugs is a big industry. I was almost certain I'd been involved (with Raoul) in the industry.

MOSS: Without knowing it?

RAY: Yes. So over the years I've looked at various pictures. I must have looked at several hundred pictures, maybe 300, 400, somewhere like that. And I also looked at a lot for the Select Committee, they had a bunch of pictures. They knew there was some more to the case than what'd been published. But they didn't apparently want to bring it out unless they could get all the details. During the time I was "on the street" (out of jail), I seen three people, or four people, I thought was maybe involved in the case. Two of them were in Memphis on the day of the (King) homicide. I mentioned to William Bradford Huie that I'd seen these two people and I thought they were following me. In addition to them, there was this person I seen with Raoul in Mexico, which was October, 1967, when I'd taken some stuff across the border. I determined, based on viewing pictures of one individual, his name is David Graiver, that he was the person I seen in Mexico.

MOSS: With Raoul?

RAY: Yes. So I started investigating. I was al-
certain that this was the person I seen. Except the
little bit. He had had a beard that time (in Mexico) and
wasn't quite as long, but that's a modern thing; styles
years. We started investigating him and we found out he
in Argentina financing some type terrorism in the 60s.

And Ray names one Carlos Miguel Hernandez as one of the
ing him in Memphis. He identifies Hernandez as a former
America's Drug Enforcement Administration who was to become
narcotics offender.

Ray has carried on his legal research while shuttling
between Nashville and Brushy Mountain. I asked him about his
from Brushy Mountain in 1977.

MOSS: Is it true that you made a pipe ladder for yourself
over a back wall?

RAY: Yeh, me and another prisoner made the pipe ladder.

MOSS: Was it your cellmate?

RAY: No.

MOSS: Some other guy?

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: He's one of those six who went over the wall with you?

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: And the others just followed you opportunistically
they part of the—?

RAY: No, they seen us going over ~~we~~ ~~they~~--

MOSS: --jumped at the chance?

RAY: Yes, that's correct.

MOSS: And what did you do out in the mountains?

RAY: Other than just walk (I did nothing). Walk in the nighttime and lay low by day.

MOSS: You didn't know where you'd be headed?

RAY: Oh, I was just in a northerly direction.

MOSS: Could you tell which way was north?

RAY: Not necessarily. I'd usually pick out a spot, you know, and walk to that area; then pick out another spot and keep walking till I got there. In the mountains it's a little difficult; sometimes you walk into a sinkhole, you got to make a detour. It's very easy to lose your bearings.

In trying to escape, Ray risked being shot. Why did he take such a chance? Ray confirmed to me that he thought the attempt might bring him attention and force a full-fledged trial. Griffin Bell, Attorney General for the Carter administration then in power, had expressed himself as dissatisfied with conduct of the King case. While on the loose, Ray thought, he might reach Bell through some media representative and get a hearing.

And what if, instead of that, he remained successfully at large? "Well," Ray smiled, "either one, it wouldn't make too much difference." As a practised fugitive, Ray might finally have realized his previous hope of reaching a distant country that could provide him with sanctuary. Then it's a question whether any country in the world--no matter how unfriendly to America--could withstand U.S. pressure to extradite him.

But none of this was to be. After more than 54 hours, in what has been called the biggest manhunt in Tennessee history, a weary James Earl Ray was recaptured. His fellow escapees were also apprehended.

About six months later, Ray was released from solitary confinement and returned to the general prison population because of his "good behavior."

"I wish we had a lot of prisoners like him," said an official. "His only problem was that he was an escape risk."

Ray and I talked about prison life:

MOSS: Generally speaking, how do they treat you?

RAY: In some respects it's OK. I'm not really concerned about treatment and all that. I'm concerned about broader issues: rights to a jury trial plus physical rights (by which apparently he means being allowed out of solitary confinement and into the general prison population).

MOSS: On the subject of prisons, do you think it'd be a good idea for inmates to serve on Correction Boards, so that some of the prison population could have a voice, along with these officials?

RAY: On that question, it depends on the type of inmate. Usually these type are "professionals."

MOSS: You mean a guy they'd put on the board might be a lackey for the system?

RAY: Yeah, I think that's so.

MOSS: So it wouldn't necessarily be a guy who'd do you some good?

RAY: I don't think any inmate on a board would really do you any good anyway. Because the prison officials are going to run it regardless.

MOSS: I've heard the prisoners run the prison; is this wrong?

RAY: Well, they run it to a certain extent. As far as these things connected with violence, they might run it. But as far as being in segregation (solitary confinement), the administration runs it. I know there's no prisoner can get me out of segregation. The warden's got that. Even with the Classification Board: I've been recommended for population (joining the general prison population) by the Prisoner Classification Board--that constitutes outside personnel, guards and things. The warden turns it down. So the warden, he--he's something like a (Soviet) commissar; he has the last say what goes on in the prison.

MOSS: What do you think can be done to improve the prison system? I notice that Governor Alexander (Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander) is talking about building more prisons. Do you think it's going to help to build more prisons, build bigger prisons?

RAY: I read an article here about two or three months ago where it said whenever they build new prisons, they automatically fill them up.

So I think you could probably build a thousand more prisons and in a very short time they'd be all filled up. Because you've got to keep filling them up. What's the point in having a prison if you don't have nobody in it? You've got people in here (Tennessee State Penitentiary) for years. If they turn them loose, they'd probably never be back in. They've been in here 15 or 20 years.

MOSS: Why wouldn't they be back in?

RAY: Well, they're getting too old and things like that.

MOSS: Too old to practice their trade?

RAY: Well, they're not interested. They get to a certain age-- Being as they've got them in here, they've got a bed open, they'll keep them. Mexico has a good system: I see they've got an island out there, off the west coast of Mexico. It's (the water) shark-infested. They put them there on the island, they take care of themselves. They grow their own food and everything. It's no cost to the state. They just live out there, even move their families out there.

MOSS: Could anything like that be done in the States at any point?

RAY: Oh, they'd never think of that. That's too original. Their idea is just to build a new jail.

MOSS: What's in your cell? Do you have pictures on the wall? Books? Do you have a cellmate?

RAY: No, some of us don't have cellmates. I had one at Brushy Mountain (who escaped with him), but I don't have one here. Sometimes in segregation you don't have one. No, I don't have pictures or anything on the wall. Some people have pictures on the wall (as the writer noticed walking down the cellblock to Ray's cell). I just have legal papers and a typewriter and that's about it.

MOSS: Do you have a radio?

RAY: I have a radio-cassette (player).

MOSS: Do you play music?

RAY: No, I use the cassette for--I have to record something (orally).

You can hear enough music up and down the row without turning your radio on.

MOSS: What do the guys play: rock or country or blues or what?

RAY: Oh, you'll be hearing one play hard rock; the next guy will be playing Loretta Lynn (country singer), and all going at the same time.

MOSS: Is it quiet at night for sleeping, or is it noisy, or what?

RAY: You get so you can sleep with noise.

Ray's job in the segregation unit has been that of a custodian, or clean-up man. His working hours have been from 2 till 9 p.m. Mornings, when he is not working on his legal case, he may be painting. His artist wife has sent in art materials. She says Ray's painting style is primitive, describing it as a cross between Grandma Moses, the American primitive painter, and Vincent Van Gogh.

MOSS: This hobby of painting--do you paint anything in particular?

RAY: Oh, I imagine about 10 or 15 paintings.

MOSS: I mean, what do you paint?

RAY: I usually pick up something out of a book. All the way from a church to fresh falling leaves. I'm not too good at it. This place in here is not really conducive to painting, because the light's not too good and it's hard (to paint).

MOSS: How did you meet Anna? She was an artist visiting you.

RAY: I knew her for some time before we got married. I met her the first time--she was a courtroom artist for a TV station in Knoxville (in Tennessee) and she drew pictures of the trial (a hearing

after his escape from Brushy Mountain).

MOSS: And so?

RAY: Well, I just got to meet her. She came out there (to the prison) and saw me several times. One thing led to another, and we fell in love.

MOSS: You were married (October 13, 1978) by the Rev. James Lawson, who was a good friend of Dr. King?

RAY: Yes.

MOSS: You asked him to come and officiate for you?

RAY: Yes, we asked him. He knew my attorney, Mark Lane (who has written a book about the murder of Dr. King); they worked together.

MOSS: It is frustrating, to say the least, being separated, as you are, man and wife.

RAY: Yes, I thought we'd get something done before this time, legally (regarding conjugal visits, sometimes allowed to American prisoners and their wives or fiancées).

MOSS: Your wife's a religious person. Are you? Have you ever been?

RAY: I really don't like to talk about religion and things of that nature. A lot of people like to play on religion and all that stuff. Yeh, I used to go to church at Brushy Mountain. I know that she's (Mrs. Ray) very religious. That's (religion) not part of my legal problem.

MOSS: You were I think nominally a Catholic back when you were a boy, isn't that right? Chapel is open here on Sunday, isn't it? Would people in segregation be able to go to chapel?

RAY: No one here is permitted out of the building, except to go to the hospital. I never liked for my religion to be non-denominational (prison services are ^{usually} non-denominational). My mother, she was a Catholic, and my father, he was a Protestant. (Ray's mother is dead; his father is a spry 84-year-old.)

MOSS: What do you think of the way people live their lives on the outside? Do you think there's too much stress on mercenary things?

RAY: I really don't know too much how people live their lives on the outside. One of my problems I think is the prevailing ethic--this need to attain self-justification. That's not really the average person, the middle-class worker. That's more or less the upper middle class. Their ethics prevail. They've got this need to pretend that everything's OK. Like the King case, they've got to pretend it's just exactly like the government's version of it. And any deviation from that, well, it's just harassment (of the establishment).

MOSS: So it's the establishment view they want to purvey for the whole population to believe?

RAY: It has to be just like they say it is because there's some need to be respectable. I can't put myself in these people's shoes. It's this need to pretend.

MOSS: What do you think of the kids today? Do you think they're getting any kind of guidance to be ethical people? Or do you think the drug thing is infiltrating the entire population?

RAY: I'm a prisoner, I don't know what's going on on the outside. I just know what I see in the papers.

I had seen Ray alone on a Wednesday morning. On Friday evening of the same week, Anna Sandhu Ray and my wife and I went in to see Ray on a social visit. (The "Sandhu" in Mrs. Ray's name comes from her former husband, an Indian.)

We met in a larger visitors' room than Ray and I had used. In fact, the four of us were in the very room where James and Anna had been attacked just weeks before. This time the door was locked securely.

I had spoken to an unshaven Ray. Now he had a fresh shave. He wore clean, faded-blue trousers and shirt. It was a short-sleeve shirt, and healed slash wounds from the stabbing incident at Brushy Mountain were visible on his husky forearm.

Mrs. Ray and Ray did not greet each other with an embrace, they only looked at each other fondly. They did not sit side by side, their chairs being separated by several feet. Anna had told us that moralistic guards in the past had kept convict-husband and wife from showing too much affection.

James and Anna indulged in husband-and-wife talk, but not the average household chatter, of course. Their brand of conversation usually would have to do with prison matters and legal moves, as well as including expressions of concern and endearment. Tonight it was talk of James' safety.

After the shooting of blacks that week at Brushy Mountain, rumor had said the violence might somehow be retaliation by white inmates for James' earlier stabbing. Concerned that blacks in turn might avenge themselves on James, Anna had phoned Warden Jim Rose at the main prison, saying she thought James might be killed. The warden said he thought James was safe. However, he took James off his janitorial duties and confined him to his cell (except for visiting rights), at least for several days.

This is counter to what James wants. America's best-known prisoner still wants to return to the general prison population--among those inmates I'd seen Wednesday morning, freely roving the prison yard. However,

James was not cross with Anna. He reassured her of his safety. As to the trouble at Brushy Mountain, that was not racist at all, but it had to do, James told us, with "money." Sure enough, several days later, Arzo Carson, director of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, indicated the slayings were linked with territorial claims to drug traffic within Brushy Mountain prison--a big-money operation.

After almost an hour with the four of us in the visitors' room, Mrs. Moss and I stepped outside so Anna and James could be alone. They could talk of private matters--perhaps of how his neck was feeling, (although to me he'd mentioned only itching) still in pain from the stab wounds, or of her latest sale of a painting to some Nashville country-music star.

Out in the corridor, Mrs. Moss and I chatted with several guards. It was wintry outside, and we and the guards spoke of their bulky jackets. "They're not as warm as they look," one said. The guards suddenly seemed as human as we were, or as their prisoners were.

Soon, time was up and Anna and James were let out of the visitors' room. They had probably stolen a kiss inside. A guard opened a heavy gate leading to the cell block and James wandered back toward Cell 13.

Mrs. Ray, Mrs. Moss and I went out through the same numerous doors through which we'd been ushered on our way in. Finally, we were out of the prison, out on the parking lot, out in the free world.

James Earl Ray was back in his cell, thinking of Anna and weighing his next move.

END