

June 11, 1977

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I thought perhaps you might be interested in a somewhat unusual experience which I had last evening, the night of James Earl Ray's unscheduled departure from Brushy Mountain penitentiary. In way of background information, let me say that one of my best friends "back home" in California has a brother employed in Washington DC as a dispatcher for the Capitol Police. I am also friends with the brother--more like acquaintances really, and certainly not on intimate terms, since I have not heard from him in seven or eight months, and before that only once a year or so. Anyway, my friend in California is aware of my progress on the James Earl Ray book I mentioned in my last correspondence to you, and also of that fact that Ray and I exchanged letters on one occasion.

So, to "get to the meat": last night about 8:30 pm EST I received a long distance call at my home from this friend in Washington DC. He asked if I was watching the news, to which I replied in the negative, there being no news on our channels at that hour. He informed me that James Earl Ray had just escaped, and that he had felt I "would like to know." I thanked him for the information and expressed surprise at the unprecedented call. He began asking me repeatedly what the escape would do to my "contract" with Ray. I informed him that there was no such contract, and finally succeeding in convincing him, we went on to some general small talk. He finally broke off by saying that "things are starting to light up here," which inclines me to believe that he was on duty in Washington at the time of the call.

I gather from the conversation that my friend in California had misunderstood my brief correspondence with JE Ray, interpreting it as the foundation for some sort of publishing contract. Indeed, his brother in Washington seemed to think that my book was being written at Ray's request and direction. The fact that he would

call me long distance at all, let alone in the middle of a working shift, plus the fact that his call came 15 or 20 minutes before news flashes here announced the escape, lead me to suspect that the "friendly" call was actually official in its origins. Without seeming paranoid, I feel it entirely possible that this man in Washington mentioned my "relationship" with Ray to some of his superiors, who in turn may have sought to use our friendship in determining whether or not I was in contact with the fugitive. Confidentially, I fear that James may have been "helped" out of Brushy Mountain in order to be permanently silenced, though of course that end could be achieved with equal ease in prison. Perhaps a convenient "disappearance" disguised as a "successful escape?"

I am aware of your busy schedule, and do not expect a reply if it is inconvenient for you. Consider this letter my formal permission to use and/or publish the above story in any way you see fit if it might mesh with future story ideas you are working on.

Sincerely,

M.D. Newton

Mike Newton
General Delivery
Nashville, IN 47448

PS: It was amusing, in a tragi-comic way, to see Percy Foreman on the television news last night proclaiming that "Ray never fired me as his attorney." Will the lies from Mr. Foreman never cease?