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"This thing with me will be resolved by death and violence."

Malcolm X

"I'm not fearing any man. . . . Mine eyes have seen the glory
of the coming of the Lord."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

John Kennedy's unfathomable death created in many Americans a terrifying expectancy. If that could happen, what would not? We sensed that the potential for political murder had been only partially discharged with Kennedy. Somehow it was still suspended above the nation, a nearly palpable menace awaiting its moment. Who would be next, we wondered?

The answer surprised us. Our next two assassination victims were not, as always before, powerful white politicians. Instead, the assassins struck black reformers. Black men, in fact, who in different ways--the one as incendiary, the other as dreamer--were protesting the injustices they believed white politicians had caused or tolerated.

The first to die, Malcolm X, put his bitterness succinctly. Of Kennedy's assassination he said, "Chickens coming home to roost never did

make me sad; they've always made me glad." The chickens Malcolm had in mind were not just in ghettos; he felt they had also winged in from Southeast Asia and the Third World. It didn't matter that Kennedy at the time of his death was preparing wide-ranging civil-rights legislation, or that his inheritor, Lyndon Johnson, was sponsoring bills that in time would inspire some black leaders to hail him as the greatest civil-rights President since Lincoln.

That was not enough for Malcolm, or for Martin Luther King. They wanted justice now, freedom now. Like the preachers sons they were, they exhorted their disciples to demand just that. But before they could see those demands met, each was dead, and soon, each's cause faltered. Assassination had again removed a leader and deflected, perhaps thwarted, his movement. For those who kept faith with Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, it was small comfort that the ultimate effects of their deaths were unknowable. Better to turn in grief and wrath, to assassination's only other constant, the questions of just who killed them, and why.

With Malcolm X it seemed simple. On Sunday afternoon, February 21, 1965, three men attacked Malcolm while he was addressing a congregation of his Organization of Afro-American Unity in the Audubon Ballroom, at 166th street and Broadway, New York. The assassins were well-drilled. Two stood up about eight rows from the rostrum. "Don't be messin' with my pockets," one hollared and while Malcolm asked them to cool it, his bodyguards moved that way. Then smoke billowed from a man's sock, soaked in lighter fluid and set afire in the aisle. As Malcolm and his 400

followers stared at the confusion, a man rushed the stage with a sawed-off double-barrelled, twelve-gauge shotgun wrapped in a gray jacket. The blasts caught Malcolm in the chest, blowing him backwards over a chair. The other two men moved up and pumped shot after shot from a .38 and .45 into his body before all three ran to escape. Two made it, but a body-guard's pistol felled one just outside. The crowd broke his leg and would have killed him if the police hadn't come to the rescue. They soon identified him as Talmadge Hayer, a.k.a. Thomas Hagan.

In the ballroom, Malcolm X was dead. His pregnant wife Betty Shabazz wailed over his body, and another woman keened, "Oh, black folks, black /folks, why you got to kill each other?" That was it, obviously. Malcolm's lieutenants were sure Elijah Muhammad had ordered this killing, and that Black Muslims had carried it out. Sixteen months ago Elijah had suspended Malcolm from the Muslims, ostensibly for his remark about Kennedy, but really, they thought, because Muhammad feared the startling charisma of Malcolm, feared that Malcolm's new organization would attract more blacks than the Muslims, and above all, feared that Malcolm would tell what he knew about sub-rosa Muslim activities.

Malcolm himself had thought the Muslims might kill him. They were responsible, he'd said, for the fire-bombing of his house just six days before he went to the Audubon. That was their gratitude for all he'd done. He'd built the Muslim organization in New York. He'd enrolled their most famous recruit, the young heavyweight Cassius Clay. He'd articulated for them the black man's rage as no-one had. "If ballots won't work, bullets will," Malcolm had once proclaimed, and now he feared

he was to be the proof of that sentiment. That seemed ironic. He, born Malcolm Little, the man who in his youth *was* convinced that white racists had burned his home and killed his father, who as "Big Red" (for his reddish hair and light skin, the legacy of a "white rapist" grandfather) had gotten through zoot-suits and process-hair, through dealing cocaine and grass, *through* burglary and six years in the slammer where he'd learned about Islam and become converted, and then made it up close to Elijah's side, this man was now to be killed not by the "white devils" he excoriated but by his one-time brothers. *Still*, even Malcolm *admitted* they had reason. After he'd left the Muslims, Malcolm accused the 67-year-old Elijah of sexual promiscuity (anathema to Muslims) with teen-age "secretaries," and declared he would, if threatened, tell what he knew; for example, about deals the Muslims had made with the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party. Such things could badly damage the sect. "The die is set, and Malcolm shall not escape," Elijah opined. No wonder that Malcolm wrote, "Some of the followers of Elijah Muhammad would still consider it a first-rank honor to kill me."

It had apparently happened. Soon after the shooting police arrested two Black Muslims as Hayer's accomplices. Thomas (15X) Johnson *was* eventually tried as the shotgunner Norman (3X) Butler was charged with being the other gunman. Both had reputations as enforcers for the Muslims (Butler was out on \$100,000 bond for shooting another Muslim defector when Malcolm was assassinated). In 1966, the three were convicted of the murder and sentenced to life. A rougher sort of justice moved faster than that. Within thirty-six hours of Malcolm's death the Muslim's Mosque Number 7 in

Harlem burned beyond repair, and for months after Malcolm's allies publicly, if futilely, threatened to kill Elijah. But at least everyone agreed. The Muslims--atleast some Muslims--had assassinated Malcolm X.

That verdict still seems fair, even considering that no firm evidence ever led beyond the three accused assassins (Elijah repeatedly denied any personal or organizational responsibility). Of course, there were rumors of other people who wanted Malcolm dead. His half-sister thought the "power structure of the West," maybe the CIA, might have done it because ^{if} Malcolm had lived ^{he} would have changed American society so much. James Farmer, former CORE director, said Malcolm could have been killed by Harlem narcotics interest because of his crusade against drugs (Malcolm remained a Moslem, adhering to their strictures about intoxicants). Others have said, yes, but it was the Red Chinese who did it, or maybe Turks or Arabs, all of them exporters of drugs which were heavily used by blacks, a habit Malcolm hoped to end. There were also speculations that Malcolm was betrayed by his bodyguards, most of whom were once Black Muslims. But no proof of these conspiracies emerged, and they entered the limbo of incredible assassination theories.

We were left with the only irreducible fact: Malcolm X was dead. Many called that good riddance, remembering his hysterical rantings against whites, his calls for a separate black nation, his exhortations to blacks to buy guns and "get the white monkey off your back." Yet near the end Malcolm seemed to have changed. He professed a new idealism, a brotherhood of all ^{the} oppressed instead of a war between the darker and the

paler races. He thought the Muslim separatist philosophy produced "zombies." He said he was glad to be free of his hysteria, of "the sickness and madness of those days . . . it's a time for martyrs now. And if I'm to be one, it will be in the cause of brotherhood." Unfortunately, he did not die in brotherhood's name, but in a climate of violence which his early hate-mongering may partially have made. Only his magnificent autobiography suggests what Malcolm might have become in other climes. Sadly, the violent weather was to hold, a fact deplored at the time of Malcolm's death by Martin Luther King, who ruefully said such violence "is not good for the image of our nation and not good for the Negro cause." That was three years before Memphis, where King became a genuine martyr to brotherhood.

MORE TO COME

It was there, of course, that Martin Luther King and James Earl Ray came to be paired as saint and criminal in the pantheon of American assassinations. Yet as with Lincoln and Booth, Kennedy and Oswald, there are vital questions surrounding that pairing, so many that we truly know only two things.

First, we know that at 6:00 p.m. on April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King leaned on the railing of the balcony of Memphis's Lorraine Motel into the sights of a 30.06 rifle. One minute later a slug ripped through his right jaw and into his throat and body, killing him with a single shot which ended his dream of social equality, which burned Detroit and Washington, which launched a world-wide search for his killer, and which eventually brought in a skinny petty criminal escaped convict and lifelong-loser variously called Eric Starvo Galt, Harvey Lowmyer, John Willard, John L. Rayns, Paul Bridgman, Ramon George Sneyd, but known to us soon and ever since as James Earl Ray.

Second, we know that even if James Earl Ray did kill King--and there is reasonable doubt that it could be proved--he has been victimized, almost framed, by judicial irregularities, the cover-up of important facts in the slaying, and a failure by the FBI and Memphis police to investigate thoroughly the possibility of a conspiracy.

To understand those two things, we must begin with Martin Luther King. King was in Memphis to lead a protest march in support of Local 1733, the all-black union of garbage and sewer workers. The 1300 men had gone on strike in February, asking for a fifty-cent an hour raise, workmen's compensation, an insurance program. Memphis officials refused. Inevitably, trouble built. The town seethed with race hate. Memphis's black leaders called for Dr. King, the Nobel apostle of non-violence.

On March 18th King arrived from Anaheim, California, where he'd given a speech the day before. (James Earl Ray, then underground in Los Angeles

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had noticed it.) In Memphis, King exhorted fifteen thousand people to join in a work stoppage. It happened, but the agent was a freak show storm, not aggrieved citizens. One plan frustrated, King consented to lead a march on March 28.

It was a disaster. Militant youths, the "Invaders," broke King's non-violent rules and some windows. They looted stores, touched off a riot in which police killed a 17-year old boy. Cops moved in, plucked King and Ralph Abernathy and Jesse Jackson and others out of the melee and took them to the fashionable Rivermont Motel. (During the recent revelations of FBI harassment of King, we found that the Bureau tried to leak the news that King was staying in a white establishment, so as to embarrass him. In turn, one of Ray's current attorneys has speculated that the FBI really wanted to drive King out of the Rivermont to the Lorraine where he could be more easily killed.) Anyway, things were more volatile than ever. Could King come back for a second march if they'd cool off the kids? King again agreed. They'd march on Friday, April 5. Thus it was that King returned to Memphis from Atlanta on April 3, and checked into the black-owned Lorraine Motel. Lots of people knew it, what with the TV and radio coverage. In room 306 he waited for his bullet.

Did James Earl Ray fire it? The physical evidence proves no more than that James Earl Ray was involved in Martin Luther King's assassination-- something Ray has admitted, saying "I personally did not shoot Dr. King, but I believe I may be partly responsible for his death." Furthermore, other evidence-- which Ray's 1969 guilty plea (forced out of him by his lawyer, he says) prevented from being tried in a court-- suggests a conspiracy as much as it does a lone killer. *But in either case King* ⁽¹⁵⁾ *at* the Lorraine on April 4. Where is Ray?

For a time no more than three hundred feet away, in a rooming house at

418½-422½ Main Street, . . . The room, 5B
 in the north section of the divided building, ^{is} a flophouse special featuring
 a chipped iron bedstead arched at each end like a leer. On the bed was the
 April 4 edition of the Memphis Commercial-Appeal. In it was a report of Martin
 Luther King's speech the previous night, of his vow to march, and more, of an
 incandescent prophecy. ". . . Some began to talk about the threats that were
 out, of what would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers. . . .
 Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead.
 But it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been . . . to the
 mountain-top!" Then his people heard him say, ". . . Longevity has its place.
 But I'm not concerned about that now," and then on, his voice building, until
 he shouted, his broad face varnished in sweat; "So, I'm happy tonight. I'm
 not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. . . . Mine eyes have
 seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!" The adulation washed over him. It
 must temporarily have cleansed him of the fear he'd recently admitted to close
 associates and friends, the fear which festered with every threat on his life
 since the first attempt in 1958, with every confrontation, with the fact of
 his surveillance by the FBI (and the Memphis police, even now, as he spoke and
 at the motel from a fire station across the street). He may, too, have been
 shed for the moment of his correct suspicions that J. Edgar Hoover's animosity
 had led to illegal wire-taps, to a letter suggesting he commit suicide, to the
 gossip spread about alleged sexual misbehavior.

All that is sure, though, is that the next day anyone in room 5B could
 push aside the yellow and green-flowered plastic curtain and see the balcony
 at the Lorraine, could see room 306. James Earl Ray may have looked there,

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for certainly he was in the room at times, between about 3:30 and 5:30 on April 4. However, no-one, would have taken a shot at King from that window. You'd have to lean half out for any sort of accuracy. But there was a bathroom a door away from 5B. From it a man could get a clear diagonal shot across the weedy, bushy back yards and Mulberry Street, if he could get the rifle out the window and stand in, and with one foot up on the edge of the cratered bathtub. And if he weren't interrupted. In this rooming-house the toilet got a lot of use, as it does in places inhabited by heavy drinkers. One such lived directly next door, in 6B, named Charles Quitman Stephens. Charley had seen James Earl Ray around 3:30 that afternoon, he later said, and he'd come out inot the hall when Mrs. Bessie Brewer, the manager was showing this fellow 5B. He told police and newsmen that he could also identify James Earl Ray as the neat, "sharpfaced" man whom he'd seen in the failing twilight run down the hall after the shot, carrying a bundle, running, he thought, from the bathroom which had been locked at odd times between 3:30 and the shooting. Oddly, his common-law mate Grace said Charley had to be wrong, that the running man she'd seen through her door looked nothing like Ray, and that Charley didn't see the man until he was clear down the hall rounding the corner for the downward stairs.

Could it have been Ray? No-one denies he was in the rooming house. Or that he had with him a 30.06 Model 760 Remington Gamemaster slide-action rifle fitted with a Redfield 2x7 telescopic sight. At about four o'clock, he'd also bought a pair of Bushnell 7x35 binoculars at the York Arms Company a half-mile away, perhaps for observing King. And the binoculars, along with the rifle (one spent casing in the chamber and none in the four-shot clip), eleven other 30.06 cartridges including five military rounds, a green and brown bed-spread, a Browning Mauser Rifle black-cardboard box, and a 15x20 inch blue/^{plastic}overnight case

filled with toiletries, a white T-shirt (size 42-44), a pair of darned gray and white paisley undershorts (size 34), a transistor radio, two cans of Schlitz, a pair of pliers and a tack hammer make up the famous "bundle of evidence" which Ray is said to have dropped in the door of the Canipe Amusement Company at 424 Main Street after the fatal 6:01 p.m. shot.

Ray also was in the bathroom or, more properly, Ray as John Willard, the name he'd given Mrs. Brewer. His palm print, the police said, was on the wall above the bath-tub where he'd leaned against the wall to get in the tub to take the shot. The scuff marks of shoes were clearly visible in the tub, too, and there was an identifiable James Earl Ray fingerprint on the rifle. In room 5B the FBI picked up fibers from the bed-spread as well as hair samples, the straps from the binocular case, and other bits of physical evidence proving that Ray was in 5B.

Altogether, the weight of physical evidence against Ray seemed *convincing*. A week after the killing the police and FBI even found his car in Atlanta, loaded with stuff, clothes and camera gear and even a white sheet, there in the 1966 white Mustang said to be parked by Canipe's on south Main Street when King was killed and in which Ray made his escape, driving from Memphis to Atlanta, and then abandoning in favor of a bus to Cincinnati, a train to Toronto, and then planes to London, Lisbon, and back to London where he was caught in June, 1968. Authorities would prove it was Ray's car, after they proved it was Eric Starvo Galt's and that Galt was Ray. Establishing that could not convict Ray, however, since he says it was his car. Moreover, that indefatigable assassination researcher Harold Weisberg--a main force behind current efforts to secure Ray a new trial--believes he has evidence showing puzzling things about the car,

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like that it was almost bare of fingerprints although there were several of Ray's left in Memphis, and that there were cigarette butts in it when Ray didn't smoke, and there was mud on the passenger side when Ray was supposedly alone, and there was a white sheet on the back seat, and some of the clothes didn't fit Ray. As we'll see in tracing alternate explanations for the crime, these items could be important.

But to return to the car, it had been odd that no all-points bulletin was issued to stop a white Mustang. Mr. Canipe had watched one roar past his door after he'd seen someone drop the bundle. The Tennessee State Police said they never got a request for an APB, and the Memphis police said that was because they had no proof the "young white male, well dressed" in the white Mustang had killed King, even though, yes, they had at 6:08 broadcast a local call to stop such a car. Trouble was, there were lots of white Mustangs in Memphis, at least four hundred, and besides after the killing there was a phony radio broadcast about a wild chase up in north-east Memphis with a white Mustang running away from a blue Pontiac, with three white men shooting at the Pontiac,

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Police explained that/a schoolboy prank which had come too late (at 6:35 p.m.) to be part of a conspiracy. It was interesting, though, that the broadcast diverted attention from the southern routes out of Memphis which Ray admitted he took.

Besides the fingerprints and car there were mountains of other evidence pointing to Ray as the man who murdered King. Eyewitnesses were to identify him as the man who, on March 29 in Birmingham, Alabama (fresh from Los Angeles via New Orleans, Selma and Atlanta), had purchased a .243 Remington Gamemaster, ordered it fitted with a 2x7 variable power scope, bought some

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cartridges, and given his name as Harvey Lowmyer, 1807 South Eleventh Street, Birmingham, Alabama. The next day, *though*, Mr. Lowmyer brought the rifle back to the Aeromarine Supply Company and asked for a heavier rifle, a 30.06 because his "brother" had said the .243 wasn't big enough for the hunting they planned in Wisconsin. The obliging clerk, Don Wood, gave Lowmyer the same Remington model in a 30.06, fitted it with the scope, added cartridges, and put everything into a black Browning box because the scope made the rifle too big for the Remington box. Mr. Lowmyer seemed grateful, Wood said. So were the FBI since through the rifle and Wood they could identify Lowmyer as Galt as Willard as Ray, hence as the murderer because hadn't that 30.06 killed King?

That would be contested in later proceedings since the FBI's ballistics expert Robert Frazier (who had worked on the John Kennedy killing, too) could say only that the deformed slug was "consistent with" the rifle--a meaningless statement since the same would be true of any of about nine million 30.06's in America. (Some firearms identification texts and experts say the slug was not too mutilated to link with a specific weapon, since a full 3/8 inch of its base remained, or a "perfect evidence slug" as Ray's first lawyers called it.)

Actually, all that was certain was the shot itself. The police saw that from their observation post in the fire station across from the Lorraine. Someone put King in his sights at 5:59 as he stepped out on the balcony, leaned on the railing for a chat with his colleagues and disciples arranged below in the Lorraine's courtyard by the white Cadillac that was to take him to a soul-food supper. There was the driver, Solomon Jones, and his aides, the Reverends Andrew Young, James Bevel and Hosea Williams, and Jesse Jackson just come down the metal staircase from the balcony to the courtyard. There they all were,

gazing upward at King, as the shot's crescendoing echo sucked the air from their ears and hearts, and they saw their spiritual leader jerk to his right, then fall, it seemed slowly, backwards into a little offset on the balcony, like a descending balloon or perhaps a dream, fall to lie in the blood pumping from a fist-size hole in his right jaw, from the slug which tore downwards and to his left, which severed his spine and all his major nerves, killing him as a functioning human being in that one instant. The police swarmed from their watching posts into the Lorraine, but it was too late. King's disciples pointed across Mulberry Street, but no-one was caught.

In the first shock of King's death, while ~~disturbances~~ ^{pocred} 125 American cities, speculations about his killers reverberated. Maybe it was militant black groups like the Panthers or Revolutionary Action Movement, who were tired of Ghandian methods. Maybe white racists like the Klan. Or pro-Vietnam hawks like the Birchers or Minutemen, fed-up with King's dovish talk. Maybe the CIA or FBI, sick of King's alleged Communist leanings. Perhaps to stonewall such talk, Attorney General Ramsey Clark, after consulting with President Johnson, flew to Memphis where the morning after the killing he announced that the killer had left behind a remarkable amount of physical evidence, that there was no evidence of a conspiracy, and that "all of our evidence at this time indicates that it was a single person who committed this criminal act."

This was untrue, but expedient in the inflammable racial and political situation. Nothing in the physical evidence of Canipe's and 5B excluded two or more assassins. But Clark did not want to repeat the morass of doubts Oswald and Ruby and Shaw and the rest had created. Better to announce at once that one man did it, then let a massive investigation take place behind the secrecy,

It was massive, since at the end, when they brought in the lone killer Ray, it was the result of 3000 FBI agents, the police of several countries, and about two million dollars . Who was this man, and had he done it alone?

James Earl Ray was the kind of man for whom Martin Luther King spoke. Poor. Pissed-off. Imprisoned in a world he never made. From the beginning on March 10, 1928 until now, in the Tennessee State Prison, Jimmy Ray's life taught him to get before you're gotten. His father was a shiftless sort, a menial laborer, good mostly for siring nine children on Ray's hapless mother before leaving her so she could complete an ugly ruin with alcohol. The Ray children grew up in an agony of embarrassment and poverty. Eventually, Jimmy and his brothers Jerry and John became convicts. One sister went mad. Even so, as a teenager Jimmy Ray seemed to have a nail-hanging hold on America's vertical mobility. He learned the dying trade in Alton, Illinois, and was neat, shy with girls, polite, reliable and frugal as hell. Then, when World War II ended, he lost that job, and six weeks later joined the Army (on the enlistment form, he said his father was dead). After basic he became an MP in Germany (and, some say, admired the defeated Hitler's racial policies), an occupation which didn't inhibit considerable boozing, a little dope, lots of fighting and trouble. In December, 1948, Ray was discharged for "lack of adaptability to military service."

From then until he was arrested for the King murder James Earl Ray was a Sammy Glick of the netherworld, scrambling for all he was worth. If he ever heard anything like the messages of peace and brotherhood coming from a black Baptist minister, and his son Martin, in Atlanta, his record doesn't show it:

January 1, 1949: arrested Alton, Illinois, for traffic violation.
 July-December, 1949: \$1.10 an hour laborer, Chicago rubber factory.
 1949: 90 days, Los Angeles County Jail, burglary of typewriter.
 April, 1950: arrested for vagrancy, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
 April, 1950-May, 1952: \$1.00 an hour laborer at various Chicago firms.
 1952: Convicted of robbing Chicago taxi driver; served two years in Illinois State Prison.
 September, 1954: charged with burglary, Edwardsville, Illinois.
 March, 1955: arrested with an accomplice and convicted for stealing and cashing U.S. money orders in Hannibal, Missouri; sentenced to three years in federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas; released, April, 1968.
 April, 1958-October, 1959: odd jobs, St. Louis, Alton and thereabouts; used some aliases; suspected of robbery of Alton store but never charged.
 October 10, 1959: with an accomplice robbed a Kroger supermarket in St. Louis; caught in 20 minutes with \$120.00 loot and sentenced to twenty years in Missouri penitentiary at Jefferson City, Mo., under habitual-criminal statutes; acted as own attorney at end of trial; accomplice got seven years.
 November, 1960: unsuccessful escape attempt, Missouri penitentiary.
 March, 1966: unsuccessful escape attempt, Missouri penitentiary.
 April 23, 1967: escaped from Missouri penitentiary.
 June 8, 1968: arrested in London as Ramon George Sneyd, a Canadian, for the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Obviously, only the last event varies the pattern of small-time thievery.

King's murder also differed in that a rifle was used. In his stick-ups, Ray sometimes brandished a pistol, but he never fired it. After his escape from the Missouri Penitentiary, Ray carried a pistol, was captured with one on him. But other than his Army experience twenty-two years before, there's no evidence he used a rifle. Why would he choose one to kill King? It's been suggested that in prison Ray was entranced by Lee Harvey Oswald's feat, that maybe he went to school on it and decided on a long-range murder for a trouble-maker he hated. George McMillan, a writer whose forthcoming book assumes Ray's guilt, quotes men in stir with Ray as saying he was rabid about "Martin Luther Coon," and vowed to get him. McMillan also claims Ray's brother Jerry said that Jimmy,

who often contacted Jerry after his escape, was wild for Wallace, and that on the morning of King's assassination, Jerry got a call during which Jimmy said, "Big Nigger has had it." (Jerry Ray has denied these statements.) McMillan further says that Ray financed his post-escape peregrinations with money made in prison and sent outside to Jerry, about \$7,000.00 in all.

How much of this is incontrovertible? The escape itself--Ralph Abernathy thinks "James Earl Ray may have been let loose" to kill King--was peculiarly successful for Ray. He hid in a box carrying bread loaves, was trucked outside the walls and then departed the truck (the authorities put out a routine \$50.00 reward leaflet, but it had someone else's fingerprints on it--another detail that suggested to some that Ray had been let out, maybe that he wasn't supposed to be caught). But other attempts hadn't gone so well.

Convicts at Missouri *this writer has interviewed* said Ray was laughable in those adventures, once playing the "mole" and hiding in ventilators only to crawl out hours later into a guard's arms. Another time he tried to scale a wall with a pole, but fell back into the yard and hurt himself. (After the King affair, when Ray was finally transferred out of solitary in Nashville into the medium-security Brush Mountain prison, Ray again tried to escape. This time he hid in a team tunnel and got scalded out, and he picked the wrong tunnel--the other one in the yard led outside.) As for his wheeling and dealing at Missouri, one fellow-inmate said, "He was the kind of guy who'd bring in \$10.00 worth of dope and sell it for \$20.00. This is while some guys are making ten grand a year in pills." Still other convicts have said Ray made plenty,

Was Ray the kind of con who could plan and execute the King murder, then

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escape to two foreign countries? It's true you can learn a lot inside the walls about new identities and passports. In the months before King's death, Ray did travel in Canada and Mexico, as well as extensively in the United States. Yet before, Ray always had been a bungler. Dropping evidence at Canipe's would be his style, but eluding all the FBI agents would not. Perhaps, then, he was so deeply motivated by racism or something that he became inspired. Certainly both in prison and out, Ray exhibited deep inferiority feelings, which he tried to allay through weight-lifting, dance-lessons, bartending-lessons, hypnosis-lessons, even plastic surgery which changed the distinctive shape of his nose, and maybe they finally all worked to make him more confident and efficient. (Or, some suspect, such activities were simply aids to the new identity he needed after killing King.)

But was Ray a racist? His brothers admit they are. Jerry openly displayed his feelings, once working for J.W. Stoner, a dwarfish, gimp misanthrope who helped form the black-hating National States Rights Party, and whom Jerry tried to retain as a lawyer for Jimmy after Ray's guilty plea netted him 99 years. John Ray also admits he dislikes blacks. As for Jimmy, he refused to live in the integrated "honor" dormitory at Leavenworth. While loose in Los Angeles he volunteered in March 1968, to work for Wallace (Jerry, again, supposedly said Jimmy thought if King were out of the way Wallace could be elected easier) He had a bar-room fight over "niggers" there, and also wrote for information on emigrating to Rhodesia. A John Birch leaflet was found in a room in Atlanta allegedly rented by Ray just before the killing (along with a map, complete with Ray's fingerprint, on which were marked the locations of King's church and home). And in England, after the assassination, Ray reportedly made inquiries about signing on as a mercenary

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in Rhodesia or the Congo. Yet these facts, however suggestive, don't prove Ray killed for race reasons. A man who spent seven years in the Missouri Penitentiary with Ray has a different feeling about that.

"I'd say he was about as close to me as he was anybody, which wasn't too close. He was an extreme introvert. He didn't mix . . . he was only interested in gettin' out. Any fucking way he could . . . he couldn't stand the lock-up, he hated it. Time drove his shit, just to speak frankly. You know about King, let's assume that Ray was down South . . . well, he goes on down there and he talks to two or three politicians, who are pretty influential people, and they could probably convince me that they could get me out of it, or get me out of the country. A guy gets pretty fucking desperate out there on escape, you know. . . . In my opinion (if Ray did kill King) it wasn't out of any racist motive. If he was a racist, I can honestly say I never heard this guy, not one time did I ever hear him say one word about or against a black man or a nigger. Not one time . . . He wasn't hostile, but now, man, you knew it was there . . . His smile came easily. But he had a temper. That great little ingratiating smile was pretty superficial."

We know that a man can smile and smile and be a villain. We can believe that Ray, like lots of poor-whites in border states didn't much like his black brethren. We know he was a thief--"penny ante" his warden said--with severe inferiority and anti-social feelings that might generate a fantasy of greatness achieved through murder. We know that both as a small boy and grown-up criminal he could create alibis. Does all that add to the murder of Martin Luther King? And if Ray did it alone, why?

19 20

There are, as with our other assassinations, several answers. The first is Ray's own, most of which he sold after his arrest to an Alabama writer named William Bradford Huie for money to fund his defense (Huie's publication of much of Ray's tale in Look before the trial date would these days be considered prejudicial, a point stressed in Ray's petitions for a new trial). The second comes from the prosecution's adherents. The rest emanate from students of the crime who are sure Ray could not have done it as the State said, and so--as with John Kennedy's assassination--pursue every rumor, trace every lead, and speculate endlessly about them. All these versions are complicated by questions about the case's judicial and investigative procedures.

Ray's account to Huie--documented in I-followed-Ray's-footprints style--portrays a bold and ingenious criminal, who comes to the bad end of being framed by a mysterious man called Raoul. (Huie himself first believed that story of conspiracy but then concluded Ray had done it by himself.) The story admits 99% of what the State of Tennessee would try to prove, differing only in the crucial detail of where James Earl Ray was when King was murdered. On that point, in fact Ray has switched several times, as we'll see. But the rest was clear in his mind.

We track Ray as he escapes on April 23, 1967, and probably with his brother's help makes his way to Chicago (McMillan believes the next day he told John and Jerry he was going to kill King). He works for two months as a dishwasher. To his employers, this slim, quiet man is John Rayns, a model employee who didn't seem at all to mind the Negroes he worked around. When he quit in late June, the owners were sorry to see him go, but they wished him well at his new job in Canada.

But Ray didn't go directly to Canada. With \$450.00 and a \$200.00 Chrysler, whose title, with his temporary driver's license, gave him a bit of tenuous I.D.--he went to the St. Louis area where brother John had a saloon. When the Chrysler broke down he sold it for \$145.00 and bought a \$200.00 red Plymouth.

In Canada Ray/Rayns becomes Eric Starvo Galt. Huie believes Ray chose the name after passing the city of Galt between Detroit and Toronto. However, there is an Eric St. Vincent Galt in Toronto, a writer, whose middle-initials, St. V., when scrawled in signature look like Starvo. Did Ray get that odd name there, and if so, why and where was he looking at Galt's signature? (It's possible he sought out Galt's signature as he later, after King's death, supposedly sought out Canadians who resembled him and whose names he could use in getting a passport.)

Anyway, he first headed for Montreal where he hoped to find a Canadian citizen to act as guarantor of a passport which he could use to get someplace "from which I could never be extradited." (He didn't know then that his prison information was out-of-date: Canadian law no longer required such a guarantor.) He also needed money. To get it, Ray told Huie, he robbed a whorehouse on July 18 of \$1,700.00, though he later admitted it was a supermarket.

After the robbery Ray bought all sorts of glad-rags, sent for some sex manuals, enrolled in a locksmithing correspondence course, and went to the exclusive Gray Rocks Inn in the Laurentian Mountains where he met and seduced a beautiful Canadian divorcee whom he hoped would swear he was a Canadian citizen.

Ray admits all this, but he adds "Raoul." And Raoul is all. If he exists, Ray's defense can hold. According to Ray, he hung around "the boats" ^{in Montreal} looking for a way out of the

country. He frequented a waterfront tavern called the Neptune. He says there he put out word that he might be available for nefarious goings-on, if fairly riskless, since he needed capital and I.D. One day a sandy-haired, mid-thirtyish French-Canadian named Raoul showed up, saying he might have some things for Galt to do, just little things at first, mind you, but then more and bigger, ending with lots of cash and all the papers Galt might need to get away to places with no extradition treaty with the U.S., say, Rhodesia or wherever.

And so, Ray says, began the association with Raoul which continued sporadically over the next eight months until Raoul told Ray to meet him in Memphis on April 4 at 422½ South Main Street, and where Ray says, Raoul or somebody must have killed King.

Does Raoul exist? The prosecution said no, that Ray was a loner always. No Raoul, just Ray suddenly turned clever, and if their sole eye-witness, Mr. Stephens couldn't exactly say it was Ray he'd seen running from 5B--and his mate Grace Walden had said no, the man was blond, stocky, older than Ray, in an Army jacket and plaid shirt--look at all the circumstances.

Circumstances that unreeel like a cops-and-robbers movie scripted by Ray but subtitled by his accusers, their alternate versions winding down to the shot which blew away King. The star, James Earl Ray, speaks first:

I'm Eric Starvo Galt in August, 1967, smuggling packages, heroin?, for Raoul into the U.S., modest fee, \$750.00, then being told to sell the old Plymouth and go to Birmingham, Alabama where Raoul would meet me, get the better I.D., give me money, a suitable car, and if I needed Raoul, here was a New Orleans telephone number. He said there was \$12,000 in it eventually, and it was risky in the U.S. but things hadn't worked out with the passport.

No, the opponents say, not that way. He went alone to Chicago and signed the Plymouth over to Jerry and then went by train to Birmingham where he took dance lessons, lived in rooming houses, bought the white Mustang for \$2,000 cash, got a Galt driver's license, bought surveillance-style photo equipment, movie stuff, just living there until October 7.

Raoul met me in Birmingham. We bought the car after I found it and he OKed it. He gave me \$500.00 to live on and \$500.00 for camera equipment he discribed to me, told me to lie low and stay out of trouble. I got Galt I.D. for driver's license and car registration.

Uh-uh, Ray was living on his prison and robbery earnings, and probably wanted those cameras--he bought a Polaroid, too--for pornography, to make money. He was just indulging himself, building up his self importance, and he probably really liked being in Wallace country.

I left Birmingham October 6th and went to Nuevo Larado where Raoul met me and we smuggled a tire full of something across the border, and he gave me \$2,000 in twenties and said he'd need me for other jobs, to keep in touch via that New Orleans number, why not stay in Mexico awhile and I said fine, there or Los Angeles.

Bull, Ray just lazed about in Mexico, mostly Puerto Vallarta, making it with three different whores, posing as a writer, setting up to smuggle a bunch of grass into California.

I'd like to go back there when I get out, it was good, I even proposed marriage to an Alicia but it didn't work, so I left with some marijuana but got rid of it before crossing the border.

He took it into L.A. by himself, and those halycon days were spent as much as anything else with that Polaroid photographing himself because he was obsessed with wanting to be in the Ten Most Wanted criminals with his picture in all the post offices, he was so insecure, see, like Oswald, and he was studying his photos so he could get his prominent features--the end of his nose and his right ear lobe--altered by plastic surgery so when the great crime occurred, he couldn't be recognized.

Sure, I stayed in L.A. from November 18, 1967 until March 17, 1968. Had two apartments at different times, and took bartending and dancing lessons because if I lived in South America they'd come in handy. Stuck with the locksmithing. Applied for two jobs but didn't have a Social Security card. Tried to learn about self-hypnosis, that's where those self-improvement books I had in England came from. Told the telephone company I was a Wallace worker so I'd get a phone quick to use looking for a job. Had trouble with some people in a bar called the Rabbit's Foot over race.

Hell, he told them since they loved niggers so much he'd take 'em on down to Watts and see how they liked it. And he inquired about going to Africa. The hypnosis was strange, he actually gave those doctors his real name, since he believed he'd tell the truth when hypnotized anyway.

23 24

I went to New Orleans December 15 after Raoul wrote me at General Delivery saying come for a conference, they had a job for me. Charley Stein rode with me, he's the cousin of a girl I met, to bring his sister's kids back to L.A. The ride was a favor, but I made them register for Wallace before we left. Anyway I saw Raoul and he told me to be ready for a job in two or three months, hinted that there was some big businessman involved. He gave me another \$500.00 in twenties.

Typical lie. He went because he was into some solo dope deal and Charley Stein saying he made several long-distance calls to New Orleans along the way doesn't change it since he always kept in touch with Jerry anyway, so maybe they weren't to New Orleans. And Raoul never wrote him. He decided to go the night before they left because he called that morning and cancelled his appointment with the hypnotist, so again, no Raoul.

On March 5, I had the tip of my nose cut off so I couldn't be recognized in any of these deals because Raoul wrote in February and said the deal was on for about May 1, the one we'd talked about, running guns, so I was to meet him in New Orleans about March 20 and finally I'd get the twelve grand and papers.

Sure, that was about when he decided to kill King, it was building in him, all the Wallace-hatred, the desire to make the Top Ten, and Ray had heard enough when King was in L.A. March 16 and 17 and he'd had the nose job, so he stayed out his rent like the tightwad he was and took off to go find King and shoot him, sure that's the way it was.

That's the way it is for each and the frames click madly as Galt leaves L.A. He drives to New Orleans, then to Birmingham to meet Raoul except, he vows, he got lost and had to spend the night of March 22nd in Selma (Wrong! the accusers say, you were stalking King who was close-by), then to Birmingham to meet Raoul and on to Atlanta to that hippie rooming house where we heard about the gun deal (no! you were alone and after King, marking his haunts those days on a map) . . . then faster, faster, the images melting . . .
it
I bought the .243 and then exchanged/ like Raoul told me in Birmingham the 29th and 30th (you did it alone!), and then by slow stops to Memphis, just me,

stopping to test-fire this gun they were going to use for a sample, Raoul said, for the buyers in Memphis who'd take that kind and hundreds of cheap foreign rifles . . . (sorry! you went back to Atlanta for King, but found he was going to Memphis the 4th, so you went the 3rd) . . . No, no, Raoul met me near Memphis in a Mississippi motel on the 2nd and took the rifle and told me to go the 3rd to Memphis and stay at the Rebel motel . . . (yes, you did, but you got there the 3rd, signed in, we have your handwriting, and found where King was and went the next day to kill him) no, Raoul came to the room 5B with the gun (but Mrs. Brewer doesn't remember anyone asking where "Mr. Willard's" room was), and I went to South Main, I've told you, and bought the binoculars and about five o'clock he sent me out for a beer, I guess they didn't want me there for the deal, and I went to Jim's Grill downstairs . . . (you can't describe the place and no-one remembers you there) . . . and then I was on the sidewalk and heard this shot and here came Raoul and dumped the bundle and jumped in the car and covered himself with that white sheet and we took off, then stopped a few blocks away and Raoul jumped out, the last I saw of him, and I was scared and took off for Atlanta. . . . (you say that? why, then, did you through your lawyers change your story later and say you were at a filling station with the Mustang, getting a low tire checked?) OK, I made up that sheet business because I was scared, trapped, Hue was pressing me to confess so his book would sell but I can prove it, there's a filling station attendant and some others who'll say they remembered the car and me, at about 5 o'clock, no, I didn't kill King, didn't fire that shot. ¶ And then, freeze-frame of King falling.

Every scene after that is anticlimactic, although fascinating. Ray admits he drove alone to Atlanta the night of April 4, and abandoned his car. He then returned to Canada, arriving in Toronto on the 8th. He lived again in rooming houses in which he read of the riots, the grief, the universal condemnation of King's murder (if Ray or someone had expected white America to applaud, they were disheartened). Ray says he was fleeing in fear that Raoul and those who had set him up would now come and kill him, that he hadn't even known King was dead until he heard it on his Mustang's radio.

Fleeing he certainly was, and in ways the prosecution said were con-wise and the conspiracy buffs say are sure signals he had help. Again, he needed money and I.D., however he got them. Ray has said he went to the library and looked up Toronto births for 1932, chose two males and giving his rooming house addresses, applied for birth certificates in their names: Paul E. Bridgeman and to verify a general resemblance, he floated in their neighborhoods and made sure they were medium-height, medium weight, dark haired. A clever scheme. Too clever for Ray, the conspiracy theorists say, especially since Ramon George Sneyd--in whose name Ray easily got a passport through a travel agent--was a policeman, and did not that imply an international conspiracy? Some people wonder, too, about Mr. Bridgeman's story that he got a call from someone who said he was checking to see if Bridgeman had a passport. But James Earl Ray said he did that.

In any event, on May 6 Ray as Sneyd flew to London on a \$345.00 21-day excursion ticket. He cashed in the return and went on to Lisbon, there to try to escape to Angola as a mercenary. It was none too soon, for now the world knew that Galt, Lowmyer and Willard were really James Earl Ray. His picture

had been in the papers, and police of several countries had been alerted (if, as the prosecution says, it was fame he sought, he must have been gratified). Even so, it had taken the FBI a long time--until April 19--to identify Ray, despite the mound of evidence at Canipe's. In fact, it hadn't been until April 18, when agents tracking Ray came upon his room in Atlanta and his thumb print on the map, that they started checking the fingerprint files of Federal fugitives. Ray was among them because of his money-order caper. Of the 53,000 cards, his was the 700th up. Lucky FBI. But why hadn't they immediately checked the serial number on the portable radio left in the bundle? They'd have found that. Ray bought it in the Missouri pen and that would have told the Bureau who had dropped all the stuff. Maybe, then he would have been picked up in Canada. Or did someone not want him picked up, as many have asked?

Yet he was picked up. There was nothing for Ray in Portugal except booze and whores, so he came back to England on May 17. There, it's said, he suffered headaches and lived in cheap hotels while trying through a Daily Telegraph reporter to get information on mercenary recruiting centers in Belgium. Apparently almost broke (an odd circumstance if he was financed by a conspiracy) Ray seems on June 4th to have robbed a savings bank of \$240.00. On the 8th he went to Heathrow for a flight to Brussels, but there Detective Sergeant Phillip Birch of Scotland Yard, on the look-out for someone using Ramon George Sneyd's passport with Ray's picture in it, brought his hand down firmly on James Earl Ray's shoulder. It was over. Ray handed over his cheap .38 and was taken to Brixton prison, where one man reported he uttered some of the few pitiable words anyone ever heard him say: "Oh, God, I feel so trapped."

That was true, in many ways. Take the judicial irregularities as one dimension of Ray's dilemma. His extradition from England--to which he agreed upon advice of counsel, though [↑] he could have declared King's murder a political act and so avoided extradition--was based on the questionable affidavit of Charles Stephens and the inconclusive ballistics and fire-arms evidence. Ray's return to the United States and subsequent imprisonment were of dubious ^{legality} constitutionality, and showed how scared the government was running. The first was accomplished in an Air Force C-155 with Ray strapped to a seat and surrounded by government cops who he says tried to elicit incriminating statements. He was then stripped, searched, manacled and transferred, in an armored car, to the Shelby County jail where for eight months he lived ^{alone} in a special cell-section which was continually flood-lighted, monitored by TV, and shuttered from the sense of day and night by quarter-inch steel plates. Guards always watched him (Ray and his attorneys had to lie down in the shower facility and whisper to keep from being overheard while planning his defense). He had special tasters for his food, and his mail and messages to lawyers were censored and even copied, with the copies ^{made by} ~~going to~~ his prosecutors in the Attorney General's office. The Gulag archipelago couldn't do much worse, Ray's defenders say. The extraordinary treatment continued after Ray's guilty plea. Until recently he was kept

why not name it? tell why?

don't think so

There was no switch to turn the TV off

block (A)

P31 - Lubbock

in solitary. It also seems clear the authorities once intended to send him to Springfield, Missouri, where Ray feared he would be declared insane and be put into START, a by-Orwell-out-of-Skinner behavior modification program. His lawyers managed to abort that. NB

Attorneys themselves have been a problem for Ray, one he has exacerbated by his jail-house lawyering. He first wanted F. Lee Bailey (an index of his sense of importance), but when Bailey declined, Ray got Arthur Hanes, Sr., the mayor of Birmingham back in the Bull Connors, cattle-prod and fire-hose, sick-the-dogs-on-the-niggers days. Hanes is a good lawyer. He successfully defended the Klannish killers of Viola Liuzzo, and he maintains he could have done the same for Ray. Hanes and his son investigated Ray's story as much as they could preparing the case, and both thought it possible there was a conspiracy. But it wasn't the key to their defense. They had detected largish holes in the State's circumstantial evidence, and they would attack those. But Ray fired the Hanes in November, 1968, two days before the trial was to start.

The reasons were unclear. Cynics think he did it to postpone the trial until George Wallace could be elected that month and then pardon him. More probably, the reasons lie, as Ray has suggested, in the Catch-22 agreement under which Hanes worked. Hanes actually was paid by William Bradford Huie, who was financing Ray's "defense" by gathering and publishing ~~information~~ ^{stories} which

Fiction

Not true in fact. He met with Frank...

Not in court records

indicated Ray was guilty. Thus, Ray may have decided that Huie needed him guilty since the big-bucks potential for Huie's articles and books depended on them being a killer's inside story. So couldn't Huie accordingly influence his partner's Hanes's conduct of the trial? Jerry Ray, for example, ~~claimed he~~ told Jimmy that Huie offered him \$12,000 to get Jimmy to stay off the stand, i.e. not to say he was innocent when Huie had decided Ray was guilty.

So, Jimmy decided to fire Hanes. For their parts, both Hanes and Huie say that's nonsense. Hanes says he had a fine case, and Huie says a fair trial would have helped his book, no matter the ^{result} / (as it was, Ray's guilty plea prevented a trial and turned Huie's book into a big loser).

Huie did not want any trial

Whatever the truth, Ray got his postponement, and into the case at Jerry Ray's behest strode Percy Foreman, the famous Texas criminal lawyer who boasted he'd won more cases than Clarence Darrow, had lost only one killer to the electric chair, that was just because his fees and / ^{tax} were punishment enough for any criminal. Now, the fur would fly. Except that several things happened.

First, Foreman found that Huie was the money-man, and like Hanes promptly struck a deal with the Huie-Ray literary enterprise for his fee, supposedly \$150,000. Second, he says he then found the State had a terrific case (Hanes violently disagrees, saying

Know from first 60% same

Foreman never even looked at his files), and so Ray was going to the electric chair unless he pled guilty. Third, the famous trial lawyer appeared in court in March, 1969, with his sheepish client, and instead of a furious legal battle, the on-lookers saw the pro-forma rigmarole of Ray agreeing with the fifty-five stipulations the State had ^{prepared} marshalled which said James Earl Ray alone had killed Martin Luther King. Was Mr. Ray guilty? "Yes, legally, guilty, uh-huh," came the reply. That was that, except for a potentially exhilarating moment that died aborning when Ray rose-up and said no, he just couldn't agree with Ramsey Clark and Mr. Hoover that there hadn't been a conspiracy. Nothing more was said. Foreman immediately departed Memphis, taking with him the \$9,000 left from Huie's original \$40,000 in payments to Ray. He left behind several questions. Was it true, as Ray claimed, that Percy had coerced him into the guilty plea--"you'll bar-be-cue, boy!"--even put pressure on Ray's family to influence Jimmy to cop the plea? Why hadn't Foreman spent more time on the case? (He was only with Ray one hour and 53 minutes in the first 70 days of preparing the defense, although he saw Jimmy a lot in the days ^{after he decided to enter} preceding the plea, the better to railroad him, Ray's advocates think.) Had Huie convinced Foreman that Ray was dead guilty (it's true Huie was summoned by the grand jury — Ray's current lawyers suspect he further incriminated their client

then) and so called Percy off? Was it true, therefore, that Foreman just plain sold his client down the river when he found there was no real money in it for him (by way of invidious comparison, Foreman not long ago was acquitted of charges in Texas that he and one of H.L. Hunt's sons conspired to bribe three private investigators who'd wire-tapped the Hunt clan). Finally, was Ray's accusation --related by John Ray--justified that Foreman had told him the trial judge would grant no more continuances, that Ray couldn't fire Foreman, and so that he had no choice but to plead guilty.

Those questions and many others inspired Ray's most recent lawyers to battle for a new trial. Bernard Fensterwald, a Washington attorney who heads the Committee to Investigate Assassinations, and who has spent much time trying to solve John Kennedy's murder, is the official chief counsel. Much of the legal legwork, however, has been done by a young attorney named James Lesar, who as a veteran SDS activist brings a full-blown skepticism about governmental practices to the case. The inveterate skeptic Harold Weisberg-²63-year-old angry man who especially distrusts any FBI's investigation--provides invaluable research and investigative talent. The necessary Tennessee lawyer (is) Robert Livingston, a slit-eyed gent who packs a pistol, resembles Spiro Agnew, and seems to specialize in processing various nutty stories about the killing. All four think Ray is innocent. They note that three days after

sworn to
by DA

his guilty plea he wrote the trial judge asking for a new trial, consistent with Tennessee law. Anti-Ray folks think, of course, that's just some more maneuvering by a professional convict and jail-house lawyer who knows how to use the system, just like he knows how to keep the pot boiling about all these other non-existent conspirators. Ray's request was rejected because the trial judge had died of a heart attack, which under Tennessee statute put the plea beyond recall. Since then Ray has kept trying through a succession of lawyers, ^{initially & briefly} including the racist Stoner, to secure a new trial on the murder charge (and to secure compensation for allegedly libelous statements published by Huie and others). The grandest attempt came in October, 1974, at a U.S. District Court evidentiary hearing which had been ordered by a U.S. Court of Appeals who'd found that Ray's judicial record reeked with "ethical, moral and professional irregularities" and that "Ray's attorneys Hanes and Foreman were more interested in capitalizing on a notorious case than in representing the best interests of their client." But in February, 1975, despite the success Ray's defense team had in re-introducing vital questions on the evidence, the ^{judge} court ruled against the petition. ^{Appeals are in process.} ~~An appeal is pending.~~ And so are the vital questions.

We've seen the weakness of Charles Stephens's identification of Ray as the man in the rooming house. (The police, by

not true

?

*How we
when he
said
not?*

the way, sequestered Charles after the killing, providing him bed and booze, while his wife Grace ^{secretly} Walden was put away in a state mental hospital ^{under his family name} (still contending Charley was wrong.)

If more were needed to impeach Stephens's testimony, ~~Ray's~~ ^{Ray} lawyers found a taxi driver named James McGraw who said he was dispatched to 422½ Main street to pick up Charley at "about 5:30" and found him too drunk to walk, so he left. McGraw also told a defense investigator that he had parked double in front of Jim's Grill--^{made up - & not the place it's known well} where ~~in one of Ray's stories he was sent by Raoul to have a beer--~~ and saw no white Mustang on the street (which fits Ray's second story about being away from the place altogether). Further, a newspaper man supposedly saw Grace and Charley at police headquarters later the evening of April 5th, and Charley was too drink-sotted to say why he was there. All of this leads skeptics to think Charles Stephens may have been encouraged to perjure himself.

We've seen, too, the suggestive but inconclusive ballistics data: A slug only "consistent with" a 30.06 (a slug that perhaps could conclusively have been matched to the rifle) allegedly fired from an awkward position. Indeed, a criminologist active in assassination inquiries--Herbert MacDonnell-- told the Federal court that it would have been impossible with the 42-inch-long Gamemaster to stand in the tub and get the needed angle on King, that to do so the rifle's butt would have to be six inches within the wall. There is also the prosecutions "dent," a semi-circular indentation in the bathroom window's inner-sill

*I did - Ray
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see him
Dad*

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*fast, many
Bum?
ing*

*not his
testi-?
ing*

which the State claims was made by the under side of the rifle's barrel.(or is, again, "consistent with" the barrel's machining). Unfortunately for that theory, if you lay either the barrel, or the muzzle in the dent, the rifle points straight out or slightly upward, not down at the balcony.

Also, the FBI's own documents--obtained by Harold Weisberg--show there are no splinters torn from the sill or powder marks on it as there would have been if the muzzle had rested in the dent. The defense now believes the dent was made by a hammer. They also think they can prove that the window in the sniper's nest was not open at the time of the shot, and furthermore, that an object sat on it which was substantial enough to prevent a rifle being shoved through the window and knocking a screen to the ground, as the State maintains. The shot simply had to come from elsewhere, they believe.

If those contentions sound like some advanced by doubters of the Warren Report so do the musings on the weapon itself. Why, for example, was the .243 exchanged for the 30.06? The .243 is a splendid sniper's weapon, with higher velocity and a flatter trajectory than the 30.06. The prosecution believes the exchange was made because the .243 had a tiny burr on the ^{bolt} chamber and so couldn't smoothly load the cartridges. Ray's defenders say that's absurd, that anyone as familiar with rifles

Nothing
to do
with
calibre

HW

as the State assumes Ray was could have used an emery board to file off the ^{soft preservative} imperfection. No, the exchange was made because those who were framing Ray were going to use a 30.06 and so needed a matching weapon. And one loaded with their pasty's fingerprints. They point out that a 30.06 Gamemaster was stolen from a Memphis sporting goods store shortly before the assassination. Truly, it is odd that the only high-powered ^{pump} slide-action rifle manufactured was found at the scene, rather than an automatic or conventional bolt-action weapon. But the oddity does not totally work to clear Ray, even if as he claims he was told to get that weapon. No experienced gun-runner would try to peddle such rifles (as Ray says Raoul was doing) and so some think the choice--like Oswald's--was the product of a novice assassin.

Who?
the
only

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class -
did not
fire bullet
on the
illegal rifle
to resist

silly - i.e., 22 in 9100 (MML)

The last speculations about the weapon and its effects also remind us of the John Kennedy case. Why were there five full-jacketed military 30.06 rounds found among the hollow-point hunting cartridges in the bundle of evidence? Ignoring the supposition that these mean the Government was involved (military 30.06 rounds are widely available), we can ask which sort of cartridge killed King. Harold Weisberg's suits under the Freedom of Information Act have unearthed documents which he says prove the FBI has covered up or distorted important facts about that. Their spectrographic tests, Weisberg claims, show only one metal on King's clothing, whereas hollow-points

all bullets are

not the case

no such thing

also non-sequitur

crazy HW

are alloys of ^{many} ~~several~~ metals. Thus, the FBI report is really on a fragment from another kind of round. They have suppressed that information because, Weisburg thinks, it means two bullets hit King, one in the throat--an impossibility from the bathroom window. There was a throat wound, but Memphis's medical examiner said it was a surgical incision, and that the only bullet hit King up around his right cheek. Obviously, Weisburg thinks that's a lie, and that autopsy records, also suppressed, will prove it. As of today the doctors say there was only one shot.

Even so, we have peculiarities. Was the assassin so confident--more even than Oswald--that he would have chambered only one round? There was no clip in the rifle found at Canipe's, though one was in the box. ^{It doesn't say - got old Frank done} The state believes that Ray, the bungling sniper, saw King come suddenly out, was surprised,

takes a last attempt to do it

jammed one round home, ran to the bathroom, and shot. But assuming Ray alone did the killing, and assuming he carefully chose his sniper's nest, perhaps by walking down Main seeking a flophouse overlooking the Lorraine, why would he not have the clip in his rifle? The State says he had been there since

shortly after 7:00

2:30. He'd brought his bag with him. Wouldn't a dedicated racist assassin be prepared to kill King? ^{or defend himself? or in a missed shot?} Or, if he were

expecting a quick job, one shot, why would his spread, zippered bag, and all the rest be with him? ^{he have all that stuff that could lead to him with him - not in the car ready for flight.}

Could he even have packed up all that gear and escaped in the time available? Ray's lawyers have long said they didn't

FU

Why have a newspaper with a rifle & not have the mechanism, the clip, & the extra bullets ready to shoot?

see how he could run from the bathroom, put the rifle in the box, wrap it and the overnight bag in the spread, run down the hall and stairs, drop the bundle, get in his car, and drive away when there were cops all over the place, many of them in the fire station on the corner, then also serving as a police observation post. Besides, ^{in the garage} they say, ^{the sheriff's} a Lt. J.E. Ghormley was on Main Street in time to see Ray escape, if Ray had done it. Ghormley was in the fire station with his crews from three Tactical Action Cruisers. When King was shot ^{the sheriff's} his men rushed toward the Lorraine, but Ghormley was impeded by a bad leg. He hesitated at the wall above Mulberry Street thought of the sniper's possible location, and walked briskly to South Main where he found the bundle, questioned Canipe, and put out ^{his find} the alert for the young man in a white car. In a recent reconstruction for CBS, it was said Ghormley took 3 minutes to get to Canipe's. Previously, however, he has estimated it could have taken no more than a minute. ^{The} Defense attorneys have duplicated ^{his} the move in less than a minute. ^{he could not have in less time} Ray could have escaped in three minutes, but not in one. And whichever time applies, of which he had a clear view all the time Ghormley saw nothing on the street. ^{at Canipe's} No car, no man, only the bundle in the doorway. ~~He also says he saw nothing in the parking lot next to Canipe's.~~ That fact, put next to a puzzling statement by Mr. Canipe, raised a defense version of what might really have happened.

rml

HW

no

in the sheriff's frequency

more only

They--or Weisberg ~~and Lesar~~--think the real assassins were in that parking lot. Two of them, a "hit man" and a "wheel man," in another white Mustang. Ray had already been set up by his prints, his gear, his presence in the rooming house, and ^{conspirators} now he'd been sent down to get a beer. The/ could make up the bundle while ~~Ray~~ was gone and he'd be easily caught at the scene. But Jimmy had noticed a tire was low and gone off to get it pumped up, he's such a nice guy. The killers didn't know that, and they're watching the motel, and out comes King, and the hit man says something like, "there's the son of a bitch now, go drop the bundle," and the wheel man drops it at Canipe's, but they can't shoot just then because King is with somebody ^{they wait a minute and} on the balcony, looking straight at them, and/then King is ~~alone, and the hit man blows him away.~~ They peel off in the Mustang. That was the car Canipe saw, and a bit later, Jimmy comes back, sees the confusion, and takes off, having figured it out that he'd been set-up. One bit of proof is that Canipe once said the bundle was dropped about five minutes before the 6:01 shot. Certainly Ghormley would say there was no-body in the parking lot. The killers were gone.

no

*not at all +
I'm not
giving it
away. It
is not
his defense
but it may
work*

Here, then, the outline of a possible defense for Ray.

It has never been tried in a court. No jury has heard what Canipe now believes, or decided whether Ghormley's recollections mean the killers could have been in the parking lot or that they couldn't. A trial--even the thorough review of the FBI's

*no
con-
no action*

*not on this - on
King's privacy
only + FBI's
brutal / King*

investigation ordered by Attorney General Levi--might answer such questions, as well as probe other stories embedded in the murder of Martin Luther King.

*all
look
stop
vent it*

Attributed to Harold

There is the tale told by a derelict called "Cornbread" Carter, who said he was drinking in the yard behind the rooming house, when he saw a rifleman shoot, pull the stock off the gun, drop it, and run off. Or that of King's chauffeur Solomon Jones who, from his position in the courtyard just below the balcony, said in the shot's echoes he'd seen a man, his head covered by a white sheet or hood, in the dense bushes along Mulberry Street, who then sans sheet emerged ^{only to} disappear ~~into~~

There was none of record of Wayne Chastain this man very

~~the gathering crowd (people remembering the white sheet said to be found in Ray's car thought that intriguing). Who?~~

There are accounts spread by a Memphis lawyer and former newspaper reporter named Wayne Chastain that a mysterious "advance man" visited the Lorraine and arranged for King to stay in a second-floor room instead of the usual ground-floor

King's aides later disavowed knowledge of such a man, who some think was a white man in black-face. Chastain also,

in an interview with Ray, seems to have elicited yet a third account of where he was during the shooting. Raoul gave him \$200.00 and told him to go to a movie (not to Jim's Grill), but he saw the vexing tire and went to have it fixed, and at 6:05

I told
Wayne in confidence. He was earlier helping me.

was on his way back when he saw an ambulance pass (presumably with King) and then he saw the mob scene and then he split. Ray, who pays close attention to the news and the speculations bruted about by his defense team, revealed a new supposition to Chastain; that since his marching orders were to get to Memphis on April 3, whoever told him that had to be privy to King's plans, perhaps was a black or some "high Justice department official" with access to wire-tap information.

never
except
Bob &
Ray has
done
this

Two older stories suggesting a conspiracy have recently been joined to another theory engendering a King-CIA-Cuba-Dallas mongrel reminiscent of John Kennedy. A week after the killing a man calling himself Tony Benevides told a Memphis attorney that his "Yoom-mate" had killed King for money with a .30-caliber rifle from the wall behind the rooming house, and then gotten away on a motorbike. The man struck the attorney as believable, especially since like a real mobster he knew the best place to conceal a pistol was in the small of the back. The man said he was from New Orleans, but was headed for Brownsville, Texas, to meet a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. The same day, a man calling himself J. Christ Bonneveche told two ministers that a man named Nick had killed King for \$20,000 for a well-known fraternal order, and that he himself worked for the Mafia, was now on the lam over some lost money. He showed the ministers some counterfeit travelers

RXT's
"work
products"
Taken
from
Frank

checks, and how his fingerprints had been filed off, and then said he was off for Brownsville. Queer as these stories seemed, they were regarded mostly as more of the "I did it" embroidery with which nuts decorate well-publicized murders. Now it's suggested that these two sinister men with the similar names may be one sinister man named Jack Youngblood, a former mercenary for Castro, a man alleged to have discussed gun running with, of all people, Jack Ruby, and a man whose friends think he had ties to the CIA. Youngblood, it's theorized, participated in the conspiracy, perhaps Raoul's, that killed King. He's reportedly been identified as a man who ordered "eggs and sausages" at Jim's Cafe about 4:30 the afternoon of the murder, then left about 5 p.m. The Memphis police supposedly then questioned Youngblood, but released him. Ray's attorney in Memphis, Robert Livingston, is said to believe Youngblood was the hit man for some agency of the federal government. But no-one has yet shown if Youngblood-Benevides-Benneveche are one, or who this multi-phasic personality worked for. Not a scintilla of evidence yet points to Youngblood as anything but one of those dark presences hovering around Cuban exiles during the palmy days when the CIA was waging its own little war on Castro. At last report, Youngblood had disappeared from his ranch in Arkansas, some think either to work for the fugitive millionaire Robert Vesco, or to pursue some deal concerning the Alaskan pipeline.

pilot

*Chastain's
work it
work it is*

*I know
where
he is*

The Youngblood story, predictably, is not the only far-fetched tale. For a time ^a attorneys Fensterwald and Livingston were taken by the story, related in spy-story meetings, of a convicted confidence man named Clifford Holmes Andrews who said he could say who killed King. A hint: it was two men, hired by four wealthy whites. Fine, except that Clifford Andrews next told CBS it was Raoul and members of the Quebec Liberation Front, again employed by four rich racists. And except that Andrews was in a Canadian jail from March, 1968, until long after King was killed. Then there's another prisoner, a young accused-dope dealer named Robert Byron Watson, who's said he overheard his employees at an Atlanta art gallery plotting King's assassination. It's also been reported that six months before the murder a bunch of people visited a jail in Atlanta looking for inmates to help murder King. Meanwhile, back in Tennessee, a black businessman named John McFerreean came forward right after the killing to say he'd overheard a white man in a produce house in Memphis, at about 5 p.m. April 4th, say over the telephone, "you can shoot the son of a bitch on the balcony . . . you can pick up the five thousand bucks from my brother in New Orleans." Still another man said a day or so before April 4th he'd heard men in Baton Rouge plotting King's death.

It could be that the last two rumors, even if unfounded, are correct geographically. As with John Kennedy, many strands

why not
CBS?
Andrews
at one was
black

John
from
Tenn

of the Ray yarn knit together in Louisiana, especially in
 New Orleans. James Earl Ray says he often was there, meeting
 Raoul, and it's been established he did visit New Orleans in
 December, 1963, and again on his way to that fateful appoint-
 ment in Memphis. He's also said that's where he headed when
 fleeing Tennessee only to turn toward Atlanta when he realized
 the conspirators might kill him, too. (Not incidentally, Harold
 Weisberg asserts the FBI flew some Viceroy cigarette butts found
 in Ray's car to New Orleans for analysis, and he wonders if
 since Ray didn't smoke, Raoul did.)

Further, Ray repeatedly has said he gave Percy Foreman
 two Louisiana telephone numbers so that the lawyer could con-
 tact people, presumably including Raoul, who knew something
 about the murder. Foreman says he clearly remembers only one
 number, that in New Orleans, and he found the phone disconnect-
 ed. (Not surprisingly, Harold Weisberg suspects the building
 where the phone was installed may yield a clue to King's
 murderers, though he is reluctant to specify why before
 Ray gets a new trial.) In 1973 Ray filed a \$500,000 suit
 against the State of Tennessee in which he alleged that Fore-

mw
 Part 2
 12/1/67
 HW

HW

?

stationed at 12400 Airline Highway, Baton Rouge. However, no connection between this Raul and Ray's shadowy accomplice has ever been found, and the number could have been planted with Stein, or even with Ray.

HW

Baton Rouge is interesting, though, at least to people who believe in a conspiracy. The state capital was a stomping ground for Leander Perez, the legendary Louisiana power broker who once publicly wished King were dead. Perez had strong allies among organized labor. One reputedly was Edward G. (Whitey) Partin, the former Louisiana Teamster's official immortalized by his statement to Justice Department investigators that Jimmy Hoffa had threatened to have Robert Kennedy killed. And Partin, it's alleged, had an associate who closely resembled the man Grace Walden described in the hall at 422½ Main Street: ". . . small bone built. He had on an Army colored hunting jacket unfastened and dark pants. He had on a plaid sport shirt. His hair was salt and pepper colored." Conspiracy fanciers quickly recall the field jacket supposedly found in Ray's car which, like other items, was too small for him. They seize, too, on rumors that this man--another shrouded figure--hung around Perez's followers and among Mafioso from New Orleans. Yet any role in King's assassination by this unnamed man, or the Mob, or Perez, or Partin, remains strictly conjectural.

?

?

Not so tenuous is the Teamsters' hypothesis. It was, after

all, a labor dispute that brought King to Memphis. A dispute by a black union. Men who drove trucks on their sanitation rounds. It's conceivable that in an atmosphere of hate and turmoil two or three angry union men could, in a Yablonski reaction, decide to take out this super-spade, this communist, who's leading people who want to get our jobs, worse, get so high on the ladder folks won't judge just by color anymore. Yes, that's feasible, but again, there is no proof.

False
No proof, really, of anything. Only rumors, stories, speculations, thick as flies around a battle field corpse, and as various in their directions. There are people who believe that Fidel Castro did away with King, in order to foment unrest, maybe revolution in this country, and as new reports appear saying there is proof that Castro killed John Kennedy (and Robert) to avenge attempts on his life, such ideas gain a frightening ghost-raddled currency. But other citizens point to King's reported association with known Communists, to his pacifism, and suggest that American right-wingers ordered him killed (one Roy E. Frankhouser, a government informer on Klan and American Nazi party activities, alleges that the FBI tried to use the Klan to kill King in 1966, even that Ray was chosen out of FBI files to kill King). Everyone is suspect, and like the echoes from Dealey Plaza, ^{the murder's mad music} goes on and on.

Would a new investigation help stop the carousel? Perhaps one is needed, ^{especially} if Attorney General Levi's current

*No
 such
 thing - not
 in any way*

probe of the original FBI investigation proves to be a sham.
Certainly the official explanation is doubted, with 80% of Americans joining Coretta King and Ralph Abernathy and Jesse Jackson in thinking King fell to a conspiracy. Certainly there still are worthwhile leads to investigate, witnesses to call, stories to assess, maybe even truths to find. The best witness-- James Earl Ray--is available. He seeks a trial, although he's said he won't help solve the crime by naming conspirators.

Are there in fact any? Or is he simply a lone killer, playing the law like a crazily-lit and flip bumpered game, taking revenge for a life tilted from the outset? Whatever, shouldn't Ray's various protestations of innocence be tested in a courtroom where his advocates and the State's can address the fundamental question, who killed Martin Luther King?

Nothing less, surely, would satisfy King himself. It was for justice he lived and died. The wooden casket, shiny in the thin April sunlight, the plain wagon, the brace of plow mules slowly bearing King's body to his grave, should have embued us with that simple imperative. Apparently we lost that message in the haze of time's slow burning. Or maybe it was only that we could no longer feel, so many were the blows. Martin Luther King's accused assassin had not even been caught before another American leader was murdered. This time he was white. Again he was a Kennedy.

#

?
!!
no other possibility,
if he not guilty?
not in a Ray trial