

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Brother Says Ray Told of Conspiracy

By MANUEL CHAIT

Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Two days before pleading guilty of the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, James Earl Ray confided to his brother, "I'm not the only one in on this," the Post-Dispatch was told today.

John Larry Ray, who operates a rooming house in south St. Louis, said he spoke to his brother Saturday night in his jail cell at Memphis and the latter "was still trying to figure out what to do — whether to take a plea (of guilty) or insist on going to trial. He wanted to testify.

"My brother said there was someone else in on this 'deal,' but it had been hushed up by the Federal Bureau of Investigation," John Ray said, adding, "I didn't press him on what he meant."

Magazine Articles

John Ray said he discussed with James the series of Look Magazine articles on the Ray case that intimated that Ray was a dupe in a complex conspiracy to kill the Rev. Dr. King.

Ray told me that he had

just read a proof of the third article that will appear and that Huie (Alabama author William Bradford Huie) had done a 'pretty accurate' job.

"He said the articles had been substantially correct except for making Raoul a blond; he was actually red-haired."

In the first two articles, written by Huie from notes passed by Ray from his cell, Ray contended that he was recruited by a Cuban named Raoul into a plot to kill Dr. King.

Ray maintained that he first received \$5000 from Raoul and a promise of more money for smuggling some packages, presumably narcotics, into the United States from Canada and, on a second occasion, into Mexico from the United States.

John Ray scoffed at the con-

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attention by Tennessee authorities that his brother was motivated by racial hatred in the killing of the Negro Nobel Prize-winner last April 4. "Jimmie never associated with Negroes and he probably didn't even meet one personally until he was 13 years old and went into the Army.

"He may not have admired them, but he certainly didn't hate them enough to make him come back into this country from Canada after breaking out of Jefferson City (state prison) and knowing he was a wanted man," John Ray asserted.

Missouri Escapee

"My brother always said that when he got out, he was heading for Argentina or some other South American country that didn't have an extradition treaty with the United States. Something must have kept him from heading there when he did get out. (After two unsuccessful attempts, James Ray escaped from the Missouri prison April 23, 1967).

Similarly, John Ray challenged the theory that his brother earned the \$12,000 it is estimated he spent traveling around the country and Europe by committing robberies and through illegal trafficking in the Missouri prison.

"In six years at Jefferson City, Jimmie may have made \$700 or \$800 by gambling, running a baseball (betting) pool or selling bakery products on the side to other convicts. (Ray worked in the prison bakery.)

Lawyer's Fee

"But most of that money went to his lawyer in Columbia

who was working on his appeal (of his conviction and 20-year sentence for armed robbery in St. Louis)" Ray said. "Why, from time to time, I sent him \$100 to help pay for the lawyer."

John Ray said he was convinced that his brother was first approached by conspirators in Canada. "Before going to Canada he worked as a dishwasher and a cook in a Chicago restaurant for six weeks; he wouldn't have stayed there and done work like that if somebody had given him the kind of money he was later throwing around."

Tennessee authorities contend that James Ray robbed a London bank plus one or two others in Montreal. John Ray said his brother denied Saturday that he "pulled any stickups."

John Ray cited several unanswered questions concerning the murder case. He noted, for one, that his brother was a nonsmoker, but that the ashtrays in the 1966 Mustang purchased by him, under the alias Eric S. Galt, were filled with cigarette butts when the car was seized by police in Atlanta after the assassination.

"Another thing," John Ray said, "concerns who called the Alabama Highway Patrol office in Montgomery last Feb. 28 to ask that a duplicate driver's license for 'Galt' be sent to an address in Birmingham. My brother was in Los Angeles that day taking a course in a bartending school."

Finally, John Ray said, "Jimmie was not that big of a damned fool — to leave behind a rifle, binoculars and a radio

that could easily be traced to him. (The items, recovered a short distance from the rooming house from which the fatal shot was fired, carried fingerprints which matched those of James Ray.)

An overwhelming array of circumstantial evidence impelled Percy Foreman, Ray's attorney, to urge Ray to change his plea from not guilty, John Ray said.

At a meeting two weeks ago at the home of Ray's sister, Mrs. Carol Pepper, in St. Louis county, John Ray said "Foreman told us there was just too much evidence in the hands of the prosecution."

Also at the meeting was another brother, Jerry Ray, and their father, Jerry Rayns of Hannibal.

Hired Killer

"Foreman said he wouldn't agree to pursue any conspiracy angle, because it would make Jimmie sound like a hired killer, rather than someone who may have killed King because he thought he was a Communist or differed with his beliefs," John Ray said.

"Foreman warned us that if the trial were to take place, Jimmie would possibly go to the chair to be made an example of, even though Tennessee hadn't electrocuted anyone in 10 years," John Ray said.

Shortly thereafter, John Ray said, he received a letter from James Ray indicating that he was in a mentally depressed state. "He wrote that he didn't care a ny more how the case came out."

9 Months in Cell

John Ray said that in his subsequent meeting with his brother, the latter expressed apprehension over the possibility of remaining in total isolation through a long trial and any subsequent appeals if he were convicted. "He had spent nine months by himself in that cell and he was starting to show the strain. He was nervous and was losing weight," said John Ray.

"He told me, 'I don't care if I get 30 years, 99 or 199, because I ain't going to do that much time anyway,'" John Ray said his brother did not elaborate.

John Ray said he was certain that his brother would have provided answers to many questions remaining had he been offered "a better deal than 99 years."

But, John Ray said, "I don't think he would ever have

named any names under any circumstances. That's not his way."

John Ray said he intended to visit his brother in the Tennessee state prison at Nashville after he was classified and assigned to a regular cell. "I have to arrange a trust fund for the royalties from books on my brother to pay Foreman's \$165,090 fee.

Foreman, John Ray said, is trying to get possession of the rifle from the court. "He said actually he wasn't too interested in the fee; the publicity was worth \$2,000,000."