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Ray can't verify clue or explain Ruby link

James Earl Ray said Thursday he doesn't know of any connection between the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Jack Ruby, nor why a piece of paper with Ruby's telephone number on it was supposedly found in Ray's abandoned car 30 years ago.

Donald G. Wilson, stationed in the Atlanta FBI office during the time of the murder, said Monday that he removed and kept two pieces of paper from Ray's white Ford Mustang when officials first found it in a parking lot on April 11, 1968, a week after King's assassination.

One of the slips of paper contains a telephone number that was listed in Dallas in 1963 to Ruby and the Vegas Club, which he owned. Ruby, arrested on Nov. 24, 1963, for killing alleged presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, died in prison in 1967.

"I don't know anything about Ruby," Ray said. "That's why I want the classified records released."

Feeling better but still weak after a recent coma, Ray said he's glad nonetheless that Wilson came forth with the new evidence.

In addition to other words and some figures, each of the slips contains the name Raul. Ray, serving a 99-year sentence for killing King, has long maintained he was set up by a slippery smuggler he knew only as Raul. Prosecutors say Raul never existed.

"We've been trying to verify this for years," Ray said in a Thursday afternoon telephone interview from the Lois DeBerry Special Needs Facility in Nashville. "This definitely helps."

Ray, 70 and suffering from terminal liver disease, said his condition has improved since being released from the hospital one week ago. He has been hospitalized more than a dozen times in the past 15 months and has lapsed into a coma three times, most recently a couple of weeks ago.

"I feel a lot better but I'm kind of weak," Ray said in a thin voice. "I've almost died three times, and if it wasn't for the (Nashville) Memorial (Hospital) staff, I would have."

Ray said he is buoyed by a clemency petition one of his lawyers filed Wednesday.

Asked if he would go to live with one of his brothers in nearby Smartt, Tenn., Ray said, "That, or I got a hospital I can go to."

He declined to name the hospital.

Ray reiterated his desire that sealed records be released, saying they would prove his innocence. Ray said he is going to give Dexter King, younger son of the slain civil rights leader, permission to request the records.

The King family has professed its belief in Ray's innocence.

Wilson said this week he revealed his ownership of the documents to help the King family, not Ray. He kept quiet about them for 30 years, he said, out of concern for his family and because he did not know whom to trust.

Wilson wants to turn the documents over to Attorney General Janet Reno. He said Thursday night he has started preliminary discussions with the Department of Justice.

An FBI spokesman said Wednesday the bureau doesn't believe Wilson and is not interested in looking at the documents.

Although Ray said he was heartened by news of the documents, he doesn't expect them to help his case.

"It's too late for a trial," he said. "I'll never last that long."

But he hasn't given up.

"I want to get out, get the records released and try to get my health back."

Final Today's News

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Arthur Brice, Ray can't verify clue or explain Ruby link., 03-27-1998, pp A18; A18.



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