

James Earl Ray Out of His Coma

James Earl Ray, the convicted killer of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., came out of a coma yesterday and was laughing and talking in his hospital bed, his brother said.

"He looked 100 percent better," Jerry Ray said after leaving the hospital in Nashville, Tenn. "He's talking and everything."

Ray, 68, who suffers from liver and kidney damage and had been in a coma for days, was upgraded from critical to serious condition at Columbia Nashville Memorial Hospital.

Doctors did not respond to a request for an interview.

Unruly Passenger Gets 4-Year Term

An airline passenger who became so unruly that the pilot turned the plane around and went back to Savannah, Ga., was sentenced to more than four years in prison.

U.S. District Judge William Moore last week also ordered Gary Lee Lougee, 40, of Pooler, Ga., to perform 200 hours of community service and pay USAir \$611.35 for fuel spent in returning the Boeing 737 to Savannah.

Lougee appeared drunk when he boarded the flight to Charlotte, N.C., on July 6 and began to demand that flight attendants serve him drinks, said a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office.

Cleric Detained By Secret Service

The Secret Service said yesterday its agents appropriately detained an anti-abortion activist who told President Bill Clinton during a Christmas Eve church service that "God will call you to account."

"That was an unusual situation, during a church service," Secret Service spokesman Arnette Heintze said. "Our agents responded appropriately."

The Rev. Rob Schenck said he was

approaching the altar rail during a communion service at Washington National Cathedral when he spoke quietly to Clinton. Schenck said he was referring to the president's veto of a ban on a late-term abortion procedure.

Secret Service agents detained Schenck as he left the service, Schenck said. One agent took his wallet and pulled his driver's license from it, he said. Agents then followed him outside the building, he said. No charges were filed.

2nd Texas Woman Slain in Bathtub

A young Texas woman was found bound and slain in her bathtub at an apartment complex where a neighbor died under nearly identical circumstances three months ago.

The body of Wendie Prescott, a 22-year-old elementary school teacher's aide who lived alone, was discovered early Wednesday in Arlington. Police would not say how she was killed or whether she had been sexually assaulted.

On Sept. 17, Christine Vu, a 25-year-old elementary school teacher, was found bound and slain in her tub in an apartment about 150 feet away. Police said she had been strangled and held under water.

Virginia Inmate Stabs Warden

An inmate stabbed his warden in the neck yesterday in a Virginia maximum-security prison, setting off a stampede of inmates who tried to take over the room that controls the prison's doors.

The melee at the Buckingham Correctional Center in Dillwyn ended when a guard in the control room opened fire on the prisoners, injuring four of them, none seriously, said David Botkins, a Corrections Department spokesman.

The warden, Eddie L. Pearson, 49, was hospitalized in stable condition after the 1:15 p.m. stabbing.

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