

DR. KING'S SON TELLS RAY: 'I BELIEVE YOU'

By ANDY SOLTIS

A dying James Earl Ray told Martin Luther King Jr.'s son yesterday he had "nothing to do" with the 1968 slaying of the civil-rights legend — and King's son replied, "I believe you."

Dexter King said his meeting with Ray in a Nashville, Tenn.,

prison hospital was "spiritual" and "very moving," and helped convince him to support the convicted assassin's demand that the case be reopened.

Ray, who pleaded guilty shortly after the slaying to avoid the death penalty, recanted almost immediately and has been claiming since

then that he was framed.

Dexter King said he always had doubts about the case, but it was Ray's sharply declining health that led his family to examine evidence assembled by the inmate's family.

Now 69 and dying of liver disease, Ray was brought by wheelchair to a hospital meeting-room

where he spoke quietly with King, 36, who sat three feet away.

"I just want to ask you for the record, did you kill my father?" King asked.

"No, no, I didn't. No," the fra- Ray, serving a 99-year sentence, replied.

"My family believes you," said King. "We are going to do every- thing in our power to try and make sure that justice will prevail."

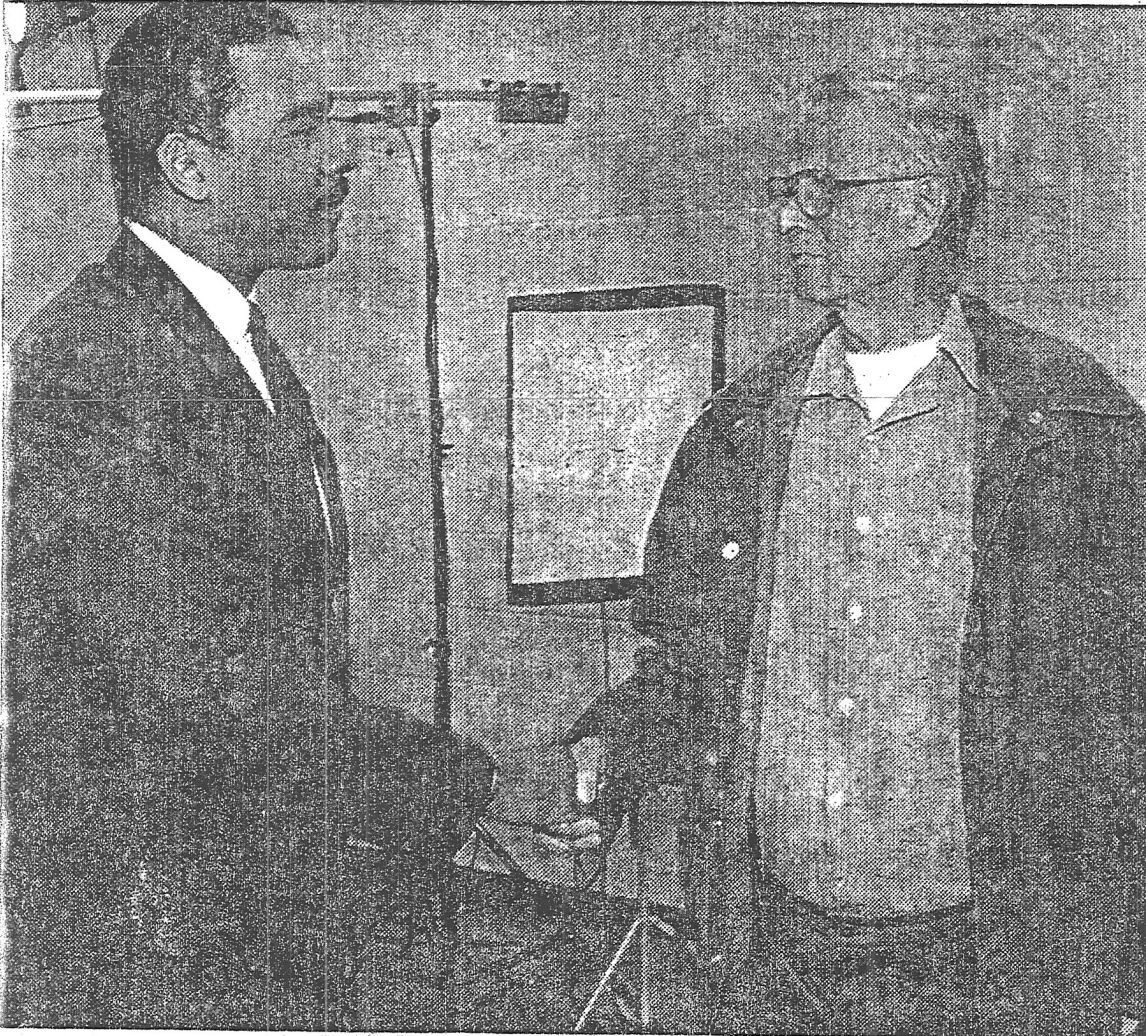
The two men shook hands and met privately for 25 minutes.

King told reporters afterward that seeing Ray "was a very mov- ing moment" for him.

"There's something about looking another person in the eyes and asking them a question, spiritually speaking, to get a feel firsthand," King said.

He said they discussed the theory that Ray's fingerprints were planted on the murder weapon by government conspirators.

"I guess in some strange way our destinies, that of my father's and that of yourself, somehow got tied up together, and we still don't see as a family that we have all of the questions answered," King said.



UNLIKELY ALLIES: Dexter King, son of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (right), shakes hands with James Earl Ray, after what King called a "very moving" meeting yesterday at a Nashville prison. AP

