

of course, a great many major events words of it.

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Merry-Go-Round

Conspiracy Ruled Out In the King Murder



Drew Pearson

Today's column is by Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

IT NOW looks as if the FBI has exploded the generally prevalent theory that the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King involved a conspiracy.

The conspiracy theory has long been held, as a result of the large amounts of money spent by James Earl Ray, the suspected killer, and the manner in which he was able to travel around the United States, Canada, and Europe. It was believed his operations would have been impossible without help from other conspirators who were out to murder King.

For instance, Ray rented a safe deposit box in the Birmingham Trust National Bank, August 30 of last year, and suddenly began passing out crisp \$20 bills. He paid \$499 for dancing lessons. He also paid \$395 for mail-order photographic equipment that he didn't know how to operate.

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HE SHELLED out money for a bartending course, though he showed no interest in working behind any bar. He also took a course in lockpicking from a correspondence school in Michigan, which cost about \$400.

His white Mustang cost \$1995, which he paid for in cash. He drove it from Mexico to Montreal, from Los Angeles to New Orleans, and always seemed to have enough cash.

Occasionally Ray slipped \$20 tips to bar girls and prostitutes.

All told, Ray spent an estimated \$10,000 in seven months. Yet during this time he never held a job. After the King murder, the suspect went to Canada and then to England where he also seemed to be in

the dough.

So the big question was: where did he get the money?

For a long time the FBI toyed with the possibility that Ray was financed by a white supremacy ring. He had boasted to fellow prisoners that he intended to make a big "score" on the outside and that he might try to collect a rumored \$1 million bounty that a business group supposedly had offered for the death of Dr. King.

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NOW, HOWEVER, the FBI has found a robbery where Ray probably got his money. On July 13 the Bank of Alton, in Upper Alton, Ill., was robbed of \$22,000. Alton is across the Mississippi River from Missouri, and it was from the Missouri State Penitentiary that Ray escaped on April 23, 1967, three months before the July 13 robbery in Alton.

The holdup was pulled off by two robbers who wore stocking masks. Their faces could not be identified. However, the FBI has been checking very carefully, and one of the robbers answers the description of James Earl Ray. He had the same long hair, the same height and the same physical makeup.

At first the FBI was inclined to be skeptical. However, rechecking the Alton bank robbery has convinced them that Ray was involved and that this was where he got the money on which he lived so extravagantly prior to the King murder.

The idea that a group conspired to murder King and paid Ray to do it has now been dropped.

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