

Ray to Go On Trial in King Killing

MEMPHIS — (UPI) — James Earl Ray goes on trial Tuesday for the murder April 4 of Dr. Martin Luther King, and—in one of the strangest cases on record — the question of whether he did or did not kill the civil rights messiah is almost secondary.

The question before the world is: Was the slaying of King the isolated violent act of one man, as the State charges, or the murderous fruition of a conspiratorial plot, with Ray set up as a decoy, as the defense contends?

Three times in five years, an assassin's bullets have cut down national leaders — first President Kennedy, then King, then Sen. Robert E. Kennedy.

This is the first time the alleged killer has been brought to trial.

Lee Harvey Oswald, accused of slaying President Kennedy, was murdered before he could be tried. Whatever he knew about the assassination was buried with him. Sirhan B. Sirhan, the alleged murderer of Sen. Kennedy, is due to come to trial in Los Angeles next month.

The result is that all the nagging doubts about "plot" now focus on the first man to face the assassination charge in open court, a man whose background as a habitual criminal, bumbling thief and escaped robber raises the big questions:

- Why would a man like James Earl Ray murder such a man as Martin Luther King?
- Was there a conspiracy and if so, who were the con-

—Turn to Page 8, Col. 1

—From Page 1

spirators and where are they now?

There is a small television camera in the hall outside county courtroom three, where the trial will be held. Anybody who goes in that courtroom has to be recorded, picture and voice, by a camera.

Memphis is not taking chances; it is determined that one way or another this case will be settled, and that everybody involved stays alive until it is.

The jury will settle only whether Ray was the sniper who just before dusk, at 6:01 p.m. Thursday, April 4, put a .30-06 caliber rifle slug through the throat of the Nobel Peace Prize winner. A decision is not likely before Christmas.

JUST ONE MAN

Whether the question of conspiracy will be answered may be depend on Ray himself, if he takes the stand, if he knows anything and whether he will talk.

The government says there is no puzzle to unravel. Attorney General Ramsey Clark assured the world the day after King was shot that one man, acting alone, was responsible.

Prosecutor Phil Canale, the Shelby County (Memphis) attorney who has not argued to a jury in seven years, has had his case drawn for him by the Justice Department and the FBI.

That case is this:

Ray, a man with no known history of deep or violent racial prejudice, acting alone for a motive yet unknown, shot King as the non-violence apostle stood on the second-

floor balcony of the black-owned Lorraine motel in downtown Memphis.



JAMES EARL RAY
Defendant

DEFENSE VIEWS

But another man who will be in the courtroom Tuesday, the chief defense counsel, sees a conspiracy.

At 51, Arthur J. Hanes Sr., is a dapper dresser who always looks as though he just stepped out of a steam bath and into a crisply pressed suit. His son, Arthur Jr., 26, will assist him in the defense.

Hanes knew King four years ago when King led Negro marchers through Birmingham, Ala., while Hanes was mayor.

Hanes will tell the jury he intends to prove a "Communist, left-wing conspiracy" plotted the assassination, using Ray knowingly or unknowingly as a decoy.

CONTRADICTIONS

The story the jury will hear is a complicated one strewn with contradictions and ranging from the Mis-

souri State prison in Jefferson City from which Ray escaped last year to the flophouse at 422½ South Main St. in Memphis from which the fatal shot was fired.

The trail to Memphis begins on Sunday, April 23, 1967, the day Ray escaped from prison. The contradictions begin there.

Warden Harold Swenson at the Missouri prison said Ray hid in a bakery truck to escape. Ray, telling his story to author William Bradford Huie, published in a copyrighted series in Look magazine, said he climbed over the prison wall.

The trail is full of bits and pieces that don't quite fit, from Jefferson City to Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, Mexico, Birmingham, Memphis, Atlanta, Toronto, London, Lisbon and London again.

69-DAY SEARCH

The FBI spent \$1.4 million in its 69-day search that ended with Ray's capture in London June 8.

But for all that time and money spent, the FBI assertedly did not know until Ray began telling his story to Huie, that Ray had worked as a \$117-a-week steam table helper at a restaurant in Winnetka, Ill., a Chicago suburb, the first two months after his prison break.

The whole case is much like a jigsaw puzzle with many pieces that don't quite fit:

• A dramatic, but phony, broadcast over the Memphis police radio network minutes after the sniper-slaying: told of officers chasing a white Mustang, a chase that never happened. It could have been

a decoy broadcast to throw police off the track of the killer, but who made the broadcast?

• A duplicate driver's license was issued and mailed to Eric S. Galt, one of many aliases Ray allegedly used, during March, 1967, in Birmingham, and the 25-cent service charge was duly mailed back to the Alabama Highway Department, while all this time Ray was in a bartenders' school in Los Angeles.

• Solomon Jones, King's driver that Thursday, April 4, was standing under the balcony when the heavy slug completed its 205-foot-3-inch path from the flophouse to King's throat.

HOODED MAN

"I ran to the street and I looked across and I saw a



The World Long Ago Judged James Ray

man jump up from behind the bushes and run back toward Main Street. He had something white on his head, like a hood."

The man Jones said he saw could have been, as Hanes argues, the man who pulled the trigger of another .30-06 Remington rifle. But then who was upstairs in the flophouse?

Prosecutor Canale has more than 300 witnesses and perhaps two dozen pieces of tangible, physical evidence, the kind a jury can put its hand on. But, apparently, he does not have an eyewitness.

Canale has a circumstantial evidence case against Ray. And, he contends, there is a thread of fingerprints that runs through the rifle, binoculars abandoned with the rifle next door to the flophouse,

the white Mustang found in Atlanta, a glass in an Atlanta hotel room, and maps in an Atlanta rooming house, connecting to Ray.

4 WITNESSES

To support these bits and pieces, to tie the hard evidence, together, the prosecution must rely on testimony from four flophouse residents who are as close as the state can come to eyewitnesses.

The Nashville Tennessean, in a copyrighted article, said Ray's defense will claim he was promised \$12,000 to \$15,000, to act as a decoy; that he did not know who masterminded the plot; and that in the end, Ray never got all his money and was left stranded on his own to escape the manhunt.

Even in the Second Grade, He Was Branded a Loser

family was hard-scrabble poor.

From Alton, the Rays moved up river to Quincy, Ill., and a social worker there wrote a thumbnail sketch of the Ray home in those early depression days:

"The mother drank. The father absconded. The children grew up in a red light district."

From Quincy, the wandering Ray family moved across the Mississippi to Ewing, population today, 324. At 14, James Ray was still in the seventh grade. He picked fights with children smaller than he. He was caught stealing the class hot-lunch money.

FAILURE AS CROOK

The Rays moved back to Quincy, and a few months later, James drifted off to join the army. He spent most of his tour in Germany, an infantryman and a military policeman. He also spent three months at hard labor for "being drunk and breaking arrest," a result of a string of fights.

From the Army, Ray in 1948 went to Chicago. He landed a factory job, built up a bank savings account and bought a new car. But he was fired. The bank account was depleted. The car was repossessed.

In the fall of 1949, Ray moved to Los Angeles, a failure in school, a failure in the army, a failure at his job. He became a failure as a crook.

First he bungled an office theft. Ray tried to steal a typewriter from a cafeteria office. An assistant manager caught him in the act. Panicky, Ray fled, dropping his bank savings book and his army discharge.

MEMPHIS — (UPI) — The world had judged James Earl Ray by the time he was in the second grade in the Mississippi River town of Ewing, Mo.

"Attitude toward regulations — violates all of them," said his school record.

"Honesty — needs watching. Appearance — repulsive. Courtesy — seldom if ever polite."

DEPRESSION DAYS

The oldest of nine children born to George and Lucille Ray, the man charged with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King has been a loser most of his life.

James was born March 10, 1928, in Alton, Ill. His father was a drifter, a railroadman, a tenant farmer. The

A 21-year-old veteran with no criminal record, Ray got only a 90-day sentence. But three years later, back in Chicago, Ray was trying and failing at crime again.

MORE PUNK CRIMES

This time it was a taxi driver stickup. The prize: \$11. He was caught in the act. He chose a one-way alley as escape route.

Ray was released from Illinois State Prison on March 12, 1954, after two years imprisonment. Five months later, while trying to break into a dry cleaners in East Alton, Ill., Ray lost his loafers kicking out the window. He fled in bloody stocking feet.

Seven months later, Ray and a partner were caught passing forged money orders. He got two years and nine months in Leavenworth Penitentiary.

A year after he was released from Leavenworth in 1958, Ray and an accomplice held up a supermarket in Ray's old neighborhood in Alton. They fled with \$2200. Ray was in such a rush driving off in the getaway car that he forgot to shut the door. As the car swerved around a corner, Ray fell out. He escaped, but the partner did not.

NAMED 'THE MOLE'

Two months later, in St. Louis, Ray and another partner held up another supermarket for \$190. Several hours later, Ray was arrested in his rooming house.

It took a jury 20 minutes to find Ray guilty and sentence him to 20 years in the Missouri State Penitentiary. James Earl Ray hasn't stood trial since.

For seven years in the Missouri pen, Ray kept trying, and failing, to escape. His incredible solitary attempts earned him the prison nickname, "The Mole."

Finally, last year, success came when Ray hid in a bread truck and got a free ride out the prison gates — or climbed a wall, stories differ. What he has been doing, since, especially around dusk on April 4 in Memphis, is the subject of the trial in Memphis.