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An AP News Analysis

Editor's Note—For more than six months now, AP Newsfeatures Writer Bernard Gavzer has practically lived with the case of James Earl Ray. To gather material for a recent 15,000 word story on Ray and the King murder, Gavzer traveled 10,000 miles, tracking down all possible clues.

By BERNARD GAVZER
AP Newsfeatures Writer

James Earl Ray's plea of guilty to the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. put the lid on a court trial which may have aired puzzling questions about his escape from prison, his motive in killing King and his flight from justice.

Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison. His attorney, Percy Foreman, said his goal was to save Ray's life and he was satisfied there was no conspiracy. Ray said he disagreed there was no conspiracy but that he wasn't going to fight it.

His imprisonment without the searching inquiry a trial would have produced leaves a number of key questions unanswered:

1. How did he pay his way? From the time of his escape from Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City, Mo., April 23, 1967, until his capture in London, June 8, 1968, it is estimated he spent at least \$10,000. He had traveled variously to Toronto, Montreal, Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, Los Angeles, Memphis, Portugal and London. He reportedly robbed a Montreal house of prostitution of \$800 and a London bank of about \$400.

2. Published accounts from prison of Ray's version of his flight say he was contacted in Montreal by a light-haired, or blond, Latin man named "Raoul." This man, Ray said, gave him thousands of dollars. But the Royal Canadian Mounted Police say no evidence of such a man has been found. Was this a fantasy or was there a person named Raoul?

3. Minutes after Dr. King was shot as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, one police radio channel was occupied with details of a fake pursuit of a white Mustang, which apparently concentrated police attention in directions away from the more logical and immediate routes of flight to adjoining Arkansas or Mississippi. Police said this was a hoax, but so far as is known there has been no public explanation of the coincidence that the white Mustang of the hoax was to be the same kind of car which Ray used.

4. Dr. King had previously housed himself in the white-operated Rivermont Motel but he moved into the Negro-operated Lorraine on April, 4, 1968, the day King was slain. How did Ray know for certain that King was there and that he had a room on a balcony that was exposed to possible attack from a number of positions across a street?

5. How did Ray pick the rooming house on Main Street and how did he know that the best vantage point would be from the hallway bathroom, from which the fatal shot was fired? He had been offered a kitchenette in another part of the establishment, but this would have looked out to Main Street, away from the Lorraine site.

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6. Of the aliases he used, three were of living men all residing within the Toronto area: Paul Bridgman, Ramon George Sneyd, Eric Starvo Galt. Galt's actual middle name is St. Vincent.

Did someone select the names? What were the odds that he could randomly select such names and then find sufficient information to be able to use them, such as he did in seeking passports and other official documents in the names of Bridgman and Sneyd?

7. While in Birmingham, before the King assassination, Ray bought a white Mustang for \$1,995 cash. Later, when he was in Los Angeles, two unexplained events regarding the license occurred. On Feb. 28-29, 1968, the Alabama Highway Patrol received a telephoned request for a duplicate license for "Galt," as Ray was known. It was sent to a Birmingham rooming house on March 1, with a request for 25 cents fee. The quarter was received by the highway department on March 6. Who placed the call, who sent the quarter, why?

8. In an Atlanta rooming house before the slaying, Ray had departed, leaving behind a map which bore his fingerprints and

had four places circled on it: King's home, the headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King's church and a project housing area where the white Mustang was found abandoned after the slaying. Who furnished the information for the map? Did Ray figure it out on his own, or were others involved?

9. Before the slaying, Ray went to the Aero Marine Supply Co., near the Birmingham airport, where he first bought a .243 Remington. He returned the next day, to get a more powerful Remington Gamemaster. Why would he have risked making an exchange which would fix his appearance in the minds of others? Why would he have decided on a more powerful weapon? The .243 would have been just as deadly, say some hunters.

10. Ray's published accounts of his escape from the Missouri State Penitentiary say he scaled the wall with the aid of a long-handled kitchen tool. Examination of the inside of the wall indicates this was a highly fanciful account. Had he indeed gone over the wall at the point he claims, he still would not have been out of the prison because there is an additional supervised area he would have had to negotiate. Prison authorities still contend he got into a breadbox with the aid of one or perhaps more prisoners. If so, who helped him?

11. After the slaying, Ray managed to obtain a passport in Toronto under the name of Ramon George Sneyd. There are conflicting versions of just how his passport was obtained, especially since the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Toronto has no record of sending a duplicate "Sneyd" birth certifiat to him. One was sent to Ray, as "Paul Bridgman," but it was returned, unreceived. Without any document to show his identity, it remains a mystery as to how Ray was able to get the passport in the name of Sneyd.

12. Once he went abroad and arrived in Portugal, Ray was safe from the long arm of American law. The United States has no extradition agreement with Portugal involving such capital cases and he would have been safe here. He went to London. Why?

There are other questions, pertinent but in a way, secondary. The answers to these key questions may have emerged had witnesses been called and evidence presented, and had Ray been on the stand for cross-examination.

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