

RAY PLEADS GUILTY TO MURDER OF DR. KING

Hints of Others In Plot He Gets 99 Year Term

Examiner News Services

MEMPHIS — (UPI) — A 12-man jury convicted James Earl Ray today of the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King and — as it had promised — sentenced him to 99 years in prison.

MEMPHIS — James Earl Ray indicated today that he had conspired with others to assassinate Dr. Martin Luther King as he pleaded guilty in a deal to escape the electric chair.

Ray was the only person in court to suggest others may have taken part in the April 4, 1968, sniper slaying of the Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Ray pleaded guilty to murdering Dr. King and accepted a sentence of 99 years in the Tennessee State Prison rather than risking the chance that a jury might sentence him to death.

Ray said he did not agree with a theory — apparently held by his own lawyer — that there was no conspiracy to assassinate Dr. King. But, he said, "I agree with the stipulation" to plead guilty.

Single Killer Theory

Ray's attorney, famed trial lawyer Percy Foreman, and prosecutor Phil M. Canale both told the jury they were convinced Ray alone killed Dr. King with a rifle shot last

—Turn to Page 8, Col. 4

—From Page 1

April 4, and that there was no conspiracy.

Canale told the jury, "We have no evidence that there was any conspiracy involved. If at any time there is evidence that such a conspiracy is involved we will take prompt action."

"I've never had hopes of anything except . . . to save this man's life," said Foreman. "It took me months to prove to myself . . . that it was not a conspiracy."

Five Witnesses

Five witnesses then testified to the actual fact that Dr. King's slaying, at the Lorraine Motel here April 4, 1968. This is necessary under Tennessee law in a case where the death penalty could be involved.

Then, the jury must retire to go through the formality of setting the 99-year sentence.

A jury of 12 men, two of them Negroes, was selected from the first 12 names on the jury list. Each juror agreed to the deal, and all 12 were promptly sworn in only 20 minutes after the trial began.

Criminal Court Judge Preston Battle asked Ray, who was called to the stand, whether he understood that his guilty plea meant he waived all rights to appeal. He also was asked if the decision to plead guilty was his own and of his own free will.

"I agree with the stipulation," Ray said, and then told the judge he wanted to add something.

Asked what it was, Ray said he wanted to go on record as saying he did not agree with "the theory that there was no conspiracy."

At that point, testimony began simply to establish the fact that Dr. King was killed. Five witnesses were called, in this order:

- The Rev. Samuel B. Kyles, a Memphis Baptist minister with whom Dr. King was to have had supper on



PLEADS GUILTY TO KING ASSASSINATION
James Earl Ray is sentenced to 99 years

the eve of his death.

- Chauncey Eskridge of Chicago, a lawyer and close friend of the civil rights leader.

- Dr. Jerry Francisco, the Shelby County coroner, who discussed the single rifle

wound which Dr. King received.

- Inspector N. E. Zachary, chief Memphis homicide officer.

- Robert Jensen, in charge of the Memphis FBI office.

If the jury agrees to the

99-year sentence, and there are indications it will, Ray could be eligible for parole in 33 years.

The state previously said it would edemand the death penalty, but the state's electric chair has not been used since 1961.