

HEAVILY-GUARDED RAY ENTERS PRISON

# Dr. King Assassin Starts 99-Yr. Term

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UPI)—James Earl Ray, manacled and surrounded by guards, was whisked into the Tennessee State Prison today and lodged in a lonely cell to begin serving his 99-year term less than 24 hours after pleading guilty to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ray ducked his head and stepped quickly to avoid photographers as he entered the prison after a 200-mile trip from Memphis, where he changed his plea from innocent to guilty yesterday and was sentenced after an "instant trial."

Ray traveled to the state prison on the outskirts of Nashville in an eight-car motorcade bustling with Tennessee state troopers and agents from the Tennessee Bureau of Criminal Identification.

When the motorcade arrived

at the front gate of the prison, Ray hopped out of a car and was quickly surrounded by guards. Wearing a dark checkered sport coat, dark slacks and a white shirt, he glared at the ground and refused to comment as he walked past a group of newsmen and photographers.

Flanked by State Safety Commissioner Greg O'Rear and Highway Patrol Inspector Mickey McGuire, Ray walked past a guard's post through the main gate of the prison, across a small courtyard and into the maximum security section to a six-by-nine-foot cell. Heavy manacles gleamed on his wrists.

Ray will spend at least 30 years in the Tennessee penitentiary before, at the age of 71, he will be eligible for parole. Should he be released then, he could be required to

serve eight years remaining on a 16-year term at the Missouri State Prison, plus any additional time he may be given for escaping from that prison.

TBI Chief W. E. "Bud" Hopton said Ray's motorcade left Memphis at 5:30 a.m. He refused to discuss the security imposed for the motorcade, which arrived in Nashville shortly after 8 a.m.

"The sheriff turned him over to us, we put him in the car and drove him to Nashville," Hopton said.

During his brief trial yesterday Ray discounted the theory that there was no conspiracy in the assassination of King last April 4.

Ray arose to tell Judge W. Preston Battle that he disagreed with the various "theo-

Continued Page 4, Col. 2

Continued from Page 1

ries" that there was no conspiracy to kill King. He did not elaborate.

Battle said the prosecution had not established there was a conspiracy but "if there was a conspiracy, no member of such a conspiracy can ever live in peace or lie down to pleasant dreams because there is no statute of limitations in capital cases in this state."

The FBI said in Washington, however, that "the investigation into the original allegations of a conspiracy is still open." The original FBI warrant charged Eric Starvo Galt, a Ray alias, and a man alleged to be "his brother" with conspiring to kill King. Ray's three brothers apparently never were seriously involved in the investigation.

Prosecutor Phil Canale said during the trial "there have been rumors that James Earl Ray was a hired dupe for others to kill Martin Luther King. We have no evidence that any conspiracy was involved."

Ray's attorney, Percy Fore-

man, said, "It took me a month to convince myself of this fact, what the attorney general of the United States (Ramsy Clark) and J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI said last year, that there was not a conspiracy."

King's widow, Coretta, and the man who succeeded him as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, said in Atlanta they did not believe the slaying was a one-man crime.

"This plea of guilty cannot be allowed to close the case, to end the search for the many fingers which helped pull the trigger," Mrs. King said.

Abernathy said his belief in the "conspiracy has been strengthened by the courageous admission of James Earl Ray . . . and the SCLC is committed to remain alert and vigilant until justice is meted out to all the perpetrators."

Many Negro leaders in the South also were skeptical of the quick trial and sentencing of Ray.

"I believe the majority of the Negro people expected a cover-up in this case," said Dr. John Cashin, chairman of the predominantly Negro National Democratic Party of Alabama.

Battle said there was little point in the state seeking the death penalty for Ray because the trend in the state and the nation is "in the direction of doing away with capital punishment altogether."

Mrs. King said she also would have opposed a death sentence.

"The death penalty for the man who pleaded guilty to the crime would be contrary to the deeply held moral and religious convictions of my husband," she said.

The jury, which included two Negroes, heard five witnesses present the state's case against Ray. A jury trial is required in Tennessee in all capital cases.

No defense testimony was offered and conviction came on a show of hands by jurors.

The jury, by prearrangement, set sentence at 99 years.

"I feel the prosecuting attorney had an ironclad case against Ray and if it had gone to trial he certainly would have been found guilty," said juror Joe Stovall Jr.



**JAMES EARL RAY DUCKS FROM CAMERAS AS HE IS TAKEN INTO PRISON**  
Maj. Mickey McGuire of Tennessee Highway Patrol leads him to cell.—(AP)