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Ray 500

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - In his flight from the scene of the Martin Luther King assassination James Earl Ray abandoned a pocket radio in a plastic case bearing his number as an inmate of the Missouri State penitentiary.

The meaning of the number eluded the authorities until weeks after Ray's capture last June 8 in London, it was disclosed Monday.

James Beasley of the Shelby County attorney general's staff said Ray dropped his rifle, a pair of binoculars and the case with the radio in it in a doorway near the rooming house from which he shot the Negro civil rights leader.

On the case was etched the number 00416 in numerals half an inch high. That was Ray's number at the Missouri prison, where he was serving 20 years for robbery when he escaped April 23, 1967.

Beasley said the radio was turned over to the FBI the day of the slaying.

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Ray Insert

MEMPHIS, Tenn. Ray Bjt AO13, to clarify insert after 5th graf: slaying.

He said an attempt apparently had been made to file or sand the numerals off the case.

"I couldn't: 6th graf.

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"I couldn't see the numerals until they were pointed out to me," he said, "but the FBI found them within 24 hours by treating the case so the numerals showed up."

Fred Wilkinson, director of the Missouri Department of Corrections, said that if the number had been made public perhaps "someone would have made an association between the two."

The number was kept secret, but the FBI traced it to the penitentiary about a month after Ray was caught.

Warden Harold Swenson said Ray had bought the radio in the penitentiary canteen on April 21, 1967—two days before he got away. It cost \$9.75. In accordance with prison practice, Ray etched his number on the case with an electric stylus to establish ownership.

Elsewhere there were these developments in the Ray case:

Russell X. Thompson of Memphis, a lawyer who said he had investigated the assassination, met in New York with attorneys of the Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Thompson said he had presented some new information about the slaying and there had been a discussion of whether it could be "raised to the dignity of evidence."

In Philadelphia the Rev. James Bevel, a former King aide who was with King when he was killed, said that Memphis police knew of an assassination plot "a couple of days" ahead of time but took no action.

Bevel said evidence of a plot had been suppressed, Ray had been promised prison instead of the electric chair in return for a guilty plea "and the real killers are walking around freely."

There was no police comment.

In Washington a group known as the Committee to Investigate Assassinations called a news conference, appealed for funds and said the King killing resulted from a conspiracy which might be linked with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Bernard Fensterwald, executive director of the committee, said it hoped to hire experts to make a "thorough, objective and professional investigation."

The committee said there was a possibility that the slaying of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy last June might be linked to the other two.

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