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PETROS, Tenn. AP - James Earl Ray's unsuccessful escape attempt cost him his status Tuesday as an "honor grade" prisoner in Tennessee's maximum security prison.

The Brushy Mountain Prison disciplinary committee consigned Ray, confessed killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to 30 days in a single cell and loss of prison privileges. He is serving a 99-year term.

Ray, 42, slipped through a hole he had hacked in his cell early Monday, sawed a bar in an air chamber and got as far as a steam tunnel leading out of the prison compound.

But the 400-degree heat in the steam pipes turned him back and his escape bid was foiled in less than half an hour.

"You already know what happened," Ray told the three-member committee which holds disciplinary hearings weekly at the prison.

"There's no point in me saying anything."

Warden Robert H. Moore said Ray lost for 30 days such privileges as making purchases at the commissary, attending shows, recreation and going to the library. "Honor grade" prisoners receive these and other privileges.

"At the end of the 30 days, he will be reassigned to administrative segregation," Moore said. "This means he will get back some of his privileges but he won't be able to associate with the general prison population."

The prison's maximum security section where Ray is confined in a single cell is separated from other cellblocks, the warden said.

"We usually have anywhere from 10 to 12 men confined in this area for disciplinary reasons," Moore added.

Roy Morelock, Ray's cellmate who had been accused by Moore of supplying the tools used in the escape bid, received the same disciplinary punishment as Ray. Morelock was a member of the prison maintenance crew. He is serving a life term as an habitual criminal.

In his brief hearing, Ray made no statement other than his comment that the committee already knew what he had done.

"He wouldn't admit to anything," Moore declared. "He's a loner, you know."

Ray suffered minor burns in the brief period before he emerged from the steam tunnel into the prison yard.

Ray had escaped from Missouri State Prison at Jefferson City in April 1967 by hiding in a bread truck and was still a fugitive from Missouri when King was shot. But he had been regarded as a "model prisoner" before Monday's episode.

Heretofore, he has been housed in a cellblock along a corridor with 10 cells which have little confinement in the individual cells. Ray's job was to carry food to other prisoners in his section.

Ray has been treated like all other prisoners," the warden said. "He's just a number, more or less, to the other inmates."

King was shot at a Memphis motel on April 4, 1968.

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