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Ray Outlines Events Before Assassination

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MEMPHIS, Oct. 29—James Earl Ray today acknowledged being with a group of men he believes responsible for assassinating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. here in 1968—but he steadfastly denied being the “actual shooter.”

In a federal court hearing in which Ray, 46, is seeking to overturn his 1969 guilty plea to King's murder, Ray for the first time described details of events leading to the shooting at 6:01 p.m. April 4, 1968, as the civil rights leader stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel here.

But Ray would not say where he was or what he was doing at the moment the shot was fired, reportedly from the window of a flophouse adjacent to the motel.

“I told Arthur Hanes (one of Ray's former attorneys) the truth on everything except what I left out . . . I told him everywhere I'd been up to 10 minutes of 6 that evening,” Ray testified.

He acknowledged renting a room in the flophouse and purchasing the rifle found abandoned nearby just after the shooting and later identified as the murder weapon.

When Tennessee Assistant Attorney General Henry Haile pressed for details, Ray's attorneys protested, asking for a private bench conference with U.S. District Court Judge Robert M. McRae. After a brief consultation, McRae ruled that Ray could continue testifying about details he had discussed with his previous attor-

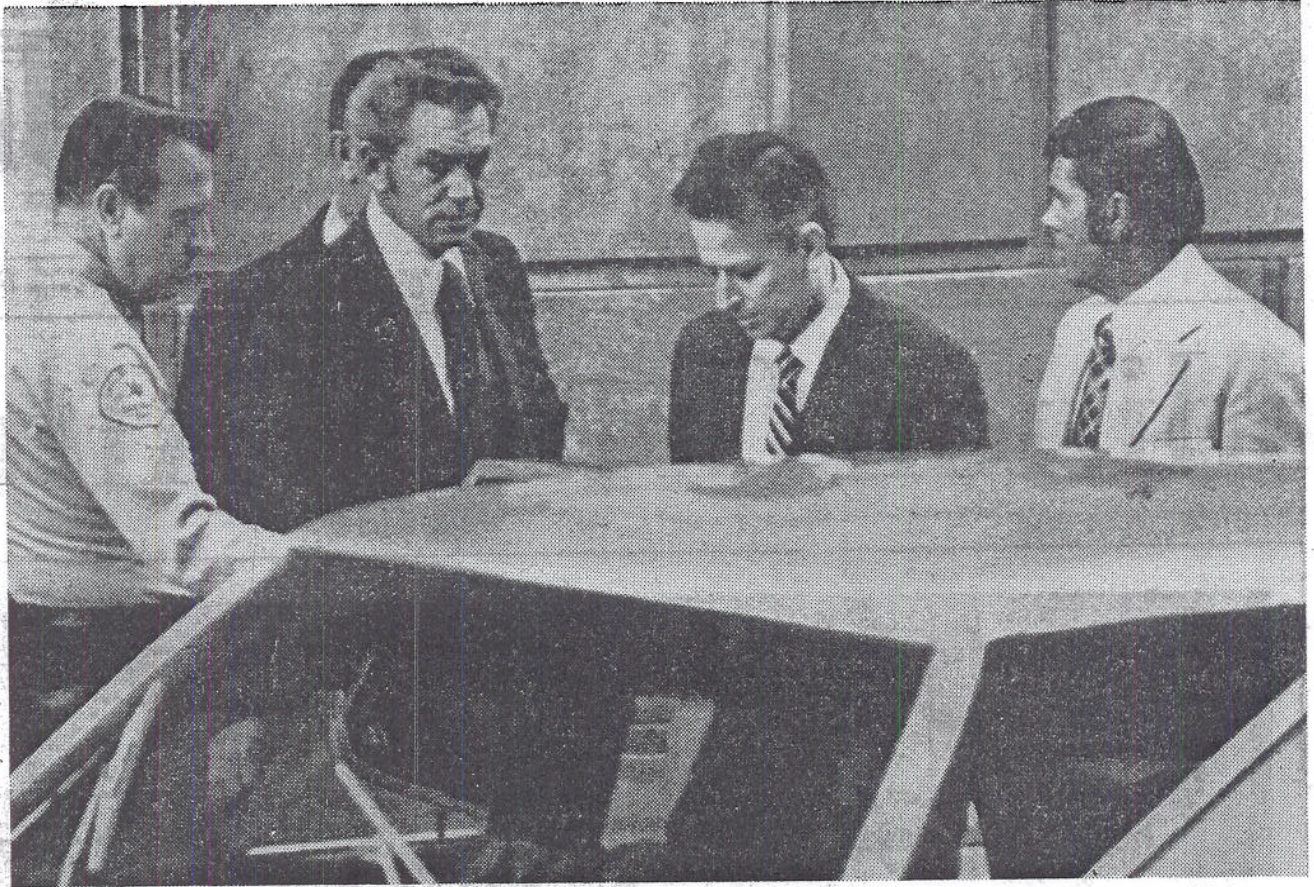
neys in preparing his defense but not about matters he had refused to discuss with them.

The ruling came in the context of Ray's attempts to show that his previous attorneys, Hanes and Percy Foreman, coerced him into pleading guilty.

Ray's current attorneys contend Foreman pushed for a guilty plea to avoid a trial so that he could share royalties from books and magazine articles with writer William Bradford Huie with whom first Hanes and then Foreman had agreed to give exclusive details of the murder.

Ray has contended since the day he pleaded guilty that there was a conspiracy to kill King. FBI, Justice Department and local law enforcement officials say there is no evidence of conspiracy.

Though Ray would not specify yesterday where he was at the moment King was shot, his attorneys have said privately he was in another part of the city and has an alibi witness to testify so if Ray wins a full-dress trial. They also contend Ray was unaware that the group he was with in Memphis intended to kill King.



Associated Press

James Earl Ray, second from right, is escorted by U.S. marshals as he leaves a Memphis jail to testify in court.