

## Guard Fired at Prison Where Ray Escaped

Petros, Tenn.

A guard who allegedly was either reading or "looked the other way" when James Earl Ray and five companions escaped from Brushy Mountain State Prison was fired yesterday for negligence.

Floyd Hooks, 38, was in the tower closest to the section of the wall the convicts scaled. He refused to comment on his firing or say whether he would appeal. "Right now, I don't care to talk about that," he said.

Hooks' tower was about 75 yards from the escape point.

"His (Hooks') primary responsibility is to keep an eye on that wall and see that nobody gets within ten feet of it," said Corrections Commissioner C. Murray Henderson.

"I know some people who said he was reading. Others said he looked the other way the whole time.

"Hooks said he was paying attention to the yard, but the evidence is overwhelming that he looked the other way. How can seven men get across the wall if you are paying attention? The evidence just doesn't weigh out," Henderson

said.

Although seven inmates made the escape attempt last Friday, only six got out. The seventh was stopped by gunfire. All were eventually recaptured.

Henderson said Hooks "did not start shooting until a guard further away started shooting. This escape lasted over ten or 12 minutes at least. Surely he could have looked over there at one time or another."

Henderson said Ray, serving a 99-year term for the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., apparently was the ringleader of the break,

although authorities had previously speculated that the break was masterminded by another of the escapers, Larry Hacker.

"As far as I am concerned, he was either the first or second man across the wall," Henderson said. "He was certainly dressed for the occasion since he was wearing dark shirt and dark pants. He was the only one who had a substantial amount of money — \$290. I think he was organized some. I think he had more experience with prison breaks than some of the others."

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