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NEW YORK AP - James Earl Ray, suspected assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., began his rebellion against authority during a poverty stricken childhood in the Midwest and was always known as a troublemaker, an article in the current issue of Life magazine disclosed Sunday.

Ray, alias Eric Starvo Galt, continued his troublemaking career in the Army, then turned to a life of small-time, usually unsuccessful crime, the article said. Life quoted one of Ray's brothers as saying that if he killed King, it was probably for money.

The article said Ray was absent from school 25 to 30 per cent of the time when a child. Virgil Oscar Graves, who was principal of the Ewing, Mo., school Ray attended, was quoted as saying, "He was a rebel. He rebelled against authority and his approach to most of his teachers was very bad . . . But he was a sensitive boy. I remember one day he came up to my desk wearing patched overalls and asked whether I thought the other kids would pay attention to his appearance."

Ray, the article said, was the eldest of nine children of George and Lucille Maher Ray. Ray's father died in 1951, probably of alcoholism, Life said, and his mother in 1961. One of his sisters and one brother are dead; two other brothers also have been in jail.

One of these two, Gerald, was quoted as saying Ray knew that if he were recaptured he faced a stiffer prison sentence, even without a murder accusation.

"A deal with a lot of money would have looked pretty good to a man in that circumstance," the brother said. "He sure didn't have any love for colored people, but I know he wouldn't have put himself in a spot like this unless there was something in it for him."

The article said Ray's military career was spent mostly in Germany and that in 1948 he received a general discharge that cited his "ineptness and lack of adaptability to military service."

In 1949, the article said, Ray went to Los Angeles and began a series of "almost clownish crimes." Ray was caught almost every time he tried a robbery, the magazine said, and did not succeed until 1959 when he and a partner stole \$800 from a grocery store in St. Louis.

Shortly after that success, the article said, Ray tried another holdup which turned out to be typical of his failures. During his escape, the article said, "Ray forgot to shut his car door and fell out as he swerved the car sharply around a corner."

In prison, having been sentenced late in 1959 to 30 years in the Missouri State Penitentiary, Ray "distinguished himself only by a series of solitary escape attempts which earned him the nickname, 'The mole.'"

Finally, a year ago, he succeeded in escaping by hiding in a truck from the prison bakery.

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