

James Ray's Elusive Trail

OTTAWA (AP) A dozen Canadian Mounties spent 19 nights scanning more than 200,000 passport applications to trace James Earl Ray.

The painstaking search by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which led to Ray's arrest in London June 8, began one week after the man charged with killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. left Canada May 6.

Ray's use of the names of four Toronto men helped him elude detection, live quietly in Toronto for nearly a month, then fly to Europe with a false birth certificate and passport under the name of Ramon George Sneyd.

He obtained the passport April 25 and flew to London May 6.

An FBI photo of Ray was sent to officers at 131 Canadian points of entry on April 22. There has been no explanation of the delay to May 13 before the search started, or what led the Mounties to suspect the wanted man might have obtained a Canadian passport.

After the Foreign Ministry gave permission for the search, the dozen Mounties headed by a corporal began scanning thousands of applica-

tions made since late April 1967, when Ray escaped from prison in Missouri.

The police worked after hours to avoid upsetting the routine in the office.

On June 1 a young constable matched the FBI photo of Ray with the passport photo submitted under the name of Sneyd.

The application listed Ray's transient Toronto address and

gave the name of a travel agency, which allowed authorities to find out quickly when Ray left the country. A week later Scotland Yard arrested him in London as he was about to board a plane for Belgium.

The name of the constable who spotted the Sneyd photo has not been divulged because of a Mountie tradition of anonymity. The constable is now back on regular duty.

The RCMP said Ray's features were similar to a dozen photos in the passport files, and a number of routine checks were made before Sneyd's file turned up.

The telling features were the shape of Ray's chin, the set of his ears and his hairline. He had disguised himself slightly by wearing heavy-rimmed glasses and tightening his mouth.

The Mounties are now trying to find out how Ray assumed the names of the four Toronto men, how he got the passport and what connections he may have had in Canada.

Ray, during the past year, has used the names of four men living in the Toronto suburb of Scarborough-Sneyd, a police constable; Eric St. Vincent Galt, a warehouse foreman; Paul Bridgeman, a teaching consultant; and John Willard, an insurance appraiser. He began using Galt's name after a visit to Montreal last summer, buying a car in the United States under the name of Eric Starvo Galt. Galt at the time signed his name Eric St. V. Galt, with small circles instead of periods, and the police believe Ray saw the signature and misread it.