

HIS BROTHER'S STORY -- WHERE JAMES RAY WENT WRONG

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ST. LOUIS—The roller-coaster road that carried James Earl Ray into a tightly-guarded cell in Memphis began 20 years ago in the Army.

That is the belief of John Larry Ray, closest brother of the man due to stand trial Nov. 12 for the murder of the Dr. Martin Luther King.

"Something must've happened when he was in the army," said John, 35, who operates a bar in southeast St. Louis.

"When he came out, he acted altogether different, like he didn't care what happened."

'Something Must've Happened In Army,' Kin Declares

Before he enlisted in February, 1946, at the age of 17, James was a quiet, hard-working youth who saved his money and tried to stay out of trouble, his brother said.

Since shortly after James' return to civilian life in December, 1948, John said, "I've never seen him outside of jail."

James Ray entered the service a few months after

he was laid off from a job he had held for nearly two years at a tannery near his birthplace of Alton, Ill.

It was the only steady job he ever had, but John Ray recalled that James worked enough overtime, and lived frugally enough to have \$2800 in the bank when he enlisted.

OLDEST OF 10

James Earl Ray was born March 10, 1928, in the grimy Mississippi River mill town

of Alton, not far above St. Louis.

He was the eldest of 10 children born to Jerry Ray, a sometime truck farmer, laborer and railroad worker, and his wife, Lucille.

James was seven when the family moved to the tiny hamlet of Ewing, Mo., across the Mississippi from Quincy, Ill.

The father took over a truck farm there, said John Ray, who was two at the time, and James entered the local school.

It was in the depths of the depression, and times were hard.

ON QUIET SIDE

The elder Ray was consid-

ered quite a man with the cue stick, and was proud that, as John put it, "Jimmie was the only guy in town would could beat him" at the local parlor.

James was "on the quiet side, but he had good friends, people he knew," John said.

World War II came and the family pulled up stakes in 1944 and moved back across the river to Galesburg, Ill., where the father took a job as a switchman on the Burlington.

James quit school in the 10th grade and went to live with his maternal grandmother, Mrs. Mary Maher,

in Alton, where he found work at the tannery.

PLAYED HOOKEY

"He just didn't take to it," John said of his brother's school days.

James earned good grades in some subjects, but apparently he played a lot of hooky.

It was from a friend in the tannery that the first seeds of joining the army, possibly to "see the world" were first planted in his mind.

"In those days, if you enlisted, you got your choice of Asia or Europe, and Jimmie wanted to go to Germany," his brother said.

MILITARY POLICE

He enlisted in the Quarter-

master Corps but was shifted to the military police when he arrived overseas.

John could throw no light on the troubles that led to a three-month sentence for drunkenness and breaking arrest for his brother, or on the general discharge which, officials said, was because of "ineptness and lack of adaptability to military service."

James returned to Galesburg in 1949 and the paths of the two brothers parted.

John left home to seek work in Gary, Ind.

James began the winding trip from the Midwest to Los Angeles and back that finally has ended in a bullet-proof cell in Memphis.



JAMES EARL RAY

'Didn't care'