

Newspaper Story

Ray's Defense -- He Was a \$12,000 Decoy

Nashville, Tenn.

The Nashville Tennessean said yesterday James Earl Ray will claim he was only a "decoy" in a plot to kill Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in answer to the state's contention that he was the lone assassin.

In a dispatch written by reporter Jim Squires from Memphis, where King was shot to death April 4, the Tennessean story said "sources close to the case say that Ray's defense will content at his trial next month he was promised '12,000 to \$15,000' to lead police away from the real killers and become the lure in the greatest manhunt in history."

The prosecution, however, will subpoena witnesses to support its claim that Ray

acted alone in the murder and that there is no evidence to support a conspiracy theory, the newspaper said.

The Tennessean said District Attorney General Phil Canale of Memphis and defense attorney Arthur Hanes, both under a strict court order against public statements, declined to comment about reports concerning their trial strategy.

'SMALL PART'

The newspaper said numerous sources indicate "the defense will claim Ray played only a small part in a master plot so complex and far-reaching that even Ray does not know who masterminded it."

The Tennessean said the defense theory is that all of Ray's movements in Memphis were to set him up as

the killer. It said the defense will contend Ray was hired to go to Memphis, leave behind certain evidence, including a rifle, and then, as "the decoy," speed away in a white Mustang which was found in Atlanta.

HUIE ARTICLE

The first installment of a series of articles on Ray was published, meanwhile, by Look magazine. The series, "The Plot to Assassinate Martin Luther King," was rewritten by William Bradford Huie, who disclosed earlier this year that he had purchased the rights to Ray's life story and already had paid him \$25,000.

The Look article said Ray was tempted out of a Canadian hideout months before the killing by a \$12,000 offer to make the mystery mission to Birmingham, Ala.

At the time, August, 1967, Ray was a fugitive from the Missouri State Penitentiary, where he had brought off a successful escape the previous April.

Huie said Ray told him the money offer came in a Montreal waterfront cafe from "a man whom Ray called Raoul and described to me as being a blonde Latin about 35, and whom Ray took to be a seaman."

TERMS

Raoul said he would join Ray in Birmingham and buy him a "suitable car," according to Huie. After a few weeks or months "and a little joint activity," Raoul would pay Ray \$12,000 and give him a passport and "other identification" and help him go "anywhere in the world," Huie wrote.

Ray's reaction was cautious because he feared arrest and return to the Missouri penitentiary if he returned to the United States. But he had staged a holdup in a house of prostitution in Montreal to get funds and could not risk another holdup, and he could not get on a ship without identification papers.

As a last resort, the fugitive arranged a rendezvous with an unidentified woman government worker with whom he had an affair at a Canadian resort, hoping she would swear she had known him two years so he could obtain a Canadian passport.

FRIGHT

But he became frightened when she drove him around sightseeing Montreal and showed him her office and the headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. He decided that if he told her the truth about himself, she would turn him over to the authorities.

Ray was arrested in London last June 8, carrying a fraudulent Canadian passport.

Huie said he had not been permitted to visit Ray in the Memphis jail, but had received 20,000 handwritten words from the prisoner, expected another 30,000 and would polish the manuscript into a biography.

Associated Press