

Ray Lays Guilty Plea To Greedy Attorney

By Paul W. Valentine

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MEMPHIS, Tenn., Oct. 25— James Earl Ray took the witness stand in his own behalf today, claiming his former attorneys had been more interested in book and movie royalties than in defending him in the 1968 assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

Thin, ashen and dressed in a rumpled suit, the 46-year-old Ray told a crowded federal courtroom that attorney Arthur Hanes Sr., former mayor of Birmingham, Ala., and Hanes's successor, attorney Percy Foreman of Houston, signed lucrative contracts with author William Bradford Huie for a share of revenues from any books, magazine articles or films based on details of the King murder.

Ray's present attorneys contend Foreman browbeat Ray into pleading guilty in March, 1969, thus avoiding a trial and preserving details of the case exclusively for Huie.

Huie ultimately wrote three articles for Look magazine and a book called "He Killed the Dreamer."

James H. Lesar, one of Ray's three current attorneys, has estimated Huie received a minimum of \$100,000 and Hanes and Foreman lesser amounts. Ray testified today that he received nothing, although at least one of the contracts provided that he was to receive 30 per cent of gross revenues.

"Huie told my brother (Jerry Ray) that if I took the stand, it would probably destroy his book," Ray told the court.

Ray testified in the fourth day of an evidentiary hearing at which he hopes to win a court order permitting him to withdraw his guilty plea and face trial in the King murder. His testimony will resume on Tuesday.

Hanes is also expected to testify, but not Huie or Foreman. The latter two have submitted depositions, however, in which they generally deny coercing Ray into pleading guilty.