

Ray's Strange Sympathy

George McMillan spent eight years researching the life of James Earl Ray and the killing of Martin Luther King Jr. In the second excerpt from his book "The Making of an Assassin," he explores Ray's sympathy with children and his antipathy toward adults.

By George McMillan
Special to the Chronicle

James Earl Ray did have fantasies. He had them at the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, Mo., and they were not quite the usual criminal daydreams. Ray's dream was to start an orphan asylum.

"When I pull a job," Ray used to tell his friend, Ray Curtis, "I'm gonna take that money and start an orphans' home. If people didn't want their kids, I'll take them, just go pick them up myself and take them to this orphans' home in the country. I'm going to pick the doctors and nurses myself. I won't let anybody else do that. Don't worry. I'll keep the place going! I'll do a job or two now and then."

This was a curious dream for a man who seemed not to have any close relationships at all, a loner. And yet there was more evidence that the plight of children, neglected children, struck some profound chord in him.

Once Curtis and Ray were watching a documentary on India on the cellblock TV. Some bloated-bellied, starving children were shown. "That's a disgrace," Ray said angrily, "with all the money there is in the world."

Oddly, Ray's sympathy did not extend to adults. He seemed to hate them as much as he sympathized with children. When starving Indian adults appeared on the TV tube, Ray said: "I don't give a damn about those niggers." When the news program showed a crippled man fleeing on crutches from a burning Vietnamese building, Ray spat out: "Why, that sorry son of a bitch. All he wants is sympathy." To a radio item about a man who had been burned to death, Ray said: "He got what he deserved."

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There were the fantasies about children, about adults, and then there were fantasies of violence. He would brag about what he would do if he were surrounded by cops, when and if he did his next job.

"If the cops had me pinned down," Ray said, "I'd pretend to give up. I'd throw my gun down. Then when they stepped up to take me, I'd take them with me. I'd do it



JERRY RAY
He suggested a kidnaping

with maybe two ounces, maybe four ounces of nitroglycerin."

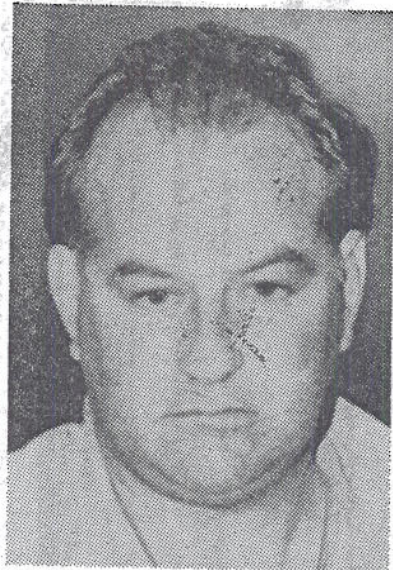
What do these reveries mean, what did they reveal about Ray and his inner life, his unconscious, and do they tell us about the motives that led to his conscious acts? His concern for children and his hatred of adults, the way both seemed to set off explosions of feeling in him, show that his passions came from his own childhood, more exactly from his infant experiences.

Ray thought all children were people who have not received their due, who have been treated unjustly; infancy and childhood stand to him as periods of unhappiness. His daydream of starting an orphan asylum proves that he felt unloved and unwanted in some way that was important to him.

But why did Martin Luther King magnetize and become the focal point of these emotions?

King stirred Ray's feelings by being a figure who offered love and warmth to thousands of people. King reminded Ray in a pointedly bitter way of how he had not been taken care of. In this sense, King became, in the symbolic functions of the mind, the mother Ray had not had; King performed the functions that his mother did not.

What made King an even more highly charged figure was that he made up for the vacancies of Ray's father, too. King was not effeminate. He may have had the loving capacities of a mother, but he had also combined the love and strong, dependable affections of a father. In the symbolic sense, Ray's decision to murder King was a parricide, a revenge for the withholding, unloving aspects of both his actual



JACK RAY
He helped in an escape

parents.

A truck from the Renz honor prison farm backed up to the platform at the Jefferson City penitentiary on Sunday morning, April 23, 1967. Because it was Sunday, the truck was driven by a relief man. He did not notice that something was a little unusual that day. One of the boxes in which the bread was shipped out of the prison was already sitting on the lip of the platform. The usual practice was to wheel the boxes out when the truck arrived. Each box held 60 loaves; they were four feet long, three feet wide and three feet deep. The truck was covered, but open at the back.

There was a reason that box was out there ahead of time. The people who had put it there wanted to make sure that it got into the load that day. It contained a special cargo — the living body of James Earl Ray. Its presence there meant that someone had helped Ray, taken a risk in helping him, had certainly been well paid.

The truck came on schedule, Ray's box was rolled into it, and when the order for Renz was filled, the truck was driven out through the Jefferson City walls. Somewhere out there, Ray unloaded himself, his radio (and \$300 in stash) and hit the road, a free man.

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The Hotel Atlantic an old, gray-stone building with 450 rooms, had gone badly to seed. It had once served train passengers who arrived in Chicago at the La Salle street station.

On the afternoon of April 24, 1967, two men approached the desk of the Atlantic and registered. One was James Earl Ray and the other was his brother Jack. Before night-

for Children

fall, the two were joined by Jerry, another brother. They had business to discuss.

The three of them had not been together for nearly 20 years. It was not that they had all been in jail all that time, but it was that there had never been a moment in that 20 years when all of them were out at the same time. They were genuinely glad to see each other, and they put pleasure before business. As soon as they were all settled in their rooms, they went next door to the bar of the Hotel Victoria to hang a few on, and to catch up.

As they talked in the Victoria, Jimmy grew tense with excitement. It was the first time he had been in a bar in seven years. The very strangeness, the noises, the pace and unregulated movements of the people in the bar, all the life around him seemed to be anarchic and chaotic after the minutely regimented life of the penitentiary.

Finally, when they rose to go to bed, each of them got a girl.

"The main reason we took separate rooms," says Jerry, as if his reason were self-explanatory, "is that Jimmy had been in a long time."

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The next morning the brothers got down to business.

Jack had already helped Jimmy to escape. When Jimmy had kited a letter out to Jack asking him to come visit in Jefferson City, Jack had gone; they arranged a rendezvous and Jimmy escaped the next day. They had driven to Chicago together. That was a sacrifice on Jack's part; if he, an ex-convict, had been caught for helping another convict escape, it would have gone hard for Jack. He would have done flat time.

"What we talked about was mainly legal stuff," Jerry says.

In fact, nothing they talked about was legal. It appeared that

their definition of legal was — any job where you don't have to use a pistol.

Jerry suggested that Jimmy, and perhaps all of them, do a kidnaping. They could make a lot of money quickly; they would not need to shoot anybody; the victim would probably cooperate. It seemed "legal" by their standards.

"And one of us would have to get out of the country with the money," Jimmy said. He told them that they should all three have passports. The easiest place to get one, he told them, was Canada. He had studied it in Jefferson City. He mentioned that he would like to go, if he were going to be the one to leave the country, to Rhodesia.

"It began to look like getting out of the country was the biggest thing on Jimmy's mind," recalls Jerry.

Jerry had some names for them of people he believed could be kidnaped, and for whom there would be a big reward. He cited Otto Kerner, then the governor of Illinois, and another man whose name was a household word in Chicago: Jack Brickhouse, a sports broadcaster for WGN-TV.

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They talked about those names, and the talk was conducted in a fuzz of unreality. They never got down to it. In fact, Jimmy seemed to have something else in the back of his mind. Porno seemed the very thing for Jimmy to go into now.

The porno business looked good. But long before agreement was reached, it had begun to be apparent that Jimmy had something more on his mind. Suddenly, he said:

"I'm gonna kill that nigger King. That's something that's been on my mind. That's something I've been working on."

Actually, neither Jerry nor Jack was that much surprised. It

Jail for Ad Sale Scheme

Kurt Wolfgang Mueller was sentenced by Municipal Court Judge Raymond Arata yesterday to 1½ years in the county jail and three years' probation for selling advertisements in a non-existent shopper. Mueller also was ordered to make restitution in the amount of \$1868 to the small businesses he had deceived.

Mueller, 34, was found guilty by a jury last month of nine misdemeanor counts of theft, all involving selling ads ranging from \$75 to \$400 in a publication that was to have been called The Redwood Shopper.

Evidence at Mueller's trial showed that he had collected between \$6000 and \$8000 since 1974 from Bay Area merchants for ads in the yet-to-be-printed shopper. He has already returned some of this money.

In his defense, Mueller claimed that he had every intention of publishing the shopper but that various financial and other obstacles prevented him from doing so.

was just like Jerry to get an idea like that, so big, so grandiose. As far as the notion itself, they could not agree more, at least as far as hating black people, hating "liberals," Jews, but neither of them would ever have conceived of killing King. For their separate personal reasons, they would not have killed King.

"That's crazy!" Jack said. "You can count me out of that deal. There ain't no money in killin' a nigger. I'm going back to St. Louis."

Tomorrow: Ray starts active planning for the assassination.

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