

## The Making of an Assassin

# How Ray Plotted the

Writer George McMillan spent eight years researching the King assassination and complexities of Ray's character. This continuing report is taken from McMillan's book, "The Making of an Assassin: The Life of James Earl Ray."

By George McMillan  
Special to The Chronicle

A couple of days after the Hotel Atlantic meeting, James Earl Ray took a \$12-a-week basement room on the north side of Chicago and in accordance with his strategy of lying low, getting used to life in the free world, took a dishwashing job at the Indian Trail Restaurant in suburban Winnetka. He kept his nose clean, worked hard, even got a promotion.

He spent his lunch hour avidly reading the day's newspapers, which he brought to work with him, and he would certainly have read then that the U.S. Supreme Court, on June 12, 1967, upheld the 1963 conviction of Martin Luther King for defying an Alabama state court injunction, and the report that King meant to go to jail in Birmingham the next month and serve his sentence.

Ray quit his job at the Indian Trail on June 24. His next business was in Canada and on July 16, 1967, he crossed the border driving a 1962 Plymouth for which he had paid \$200.

This is the time James Earl Ray was supposed to have come in contact with "Raoul," an agent of a foreign government. The story about Raoul was related by Ray to William Bradford Huie, a writer who had entered into a contract with Ray under which Huie paid Ray for his "story."

Huie was not able to interview Ray face to face. Ray sent a tale about Raoul out from his cell in Memphis through his lawyers. Huie was writing the story concurrently with his receipt of these handwritten notes from Ray, and published it in Look magazine.

The question of whether there was a Raoul was asked of Percy Foreman, one of Ray's lawyers, when he was giving a deposition under oath about his handling of the Ray case. Foreman swore:

"Ray bragged about the fool he was making out of Huie. Ray told me he invented Raoul for Huie. He said there wasn't any Raoul."

I once asked Jerry about Raoul.

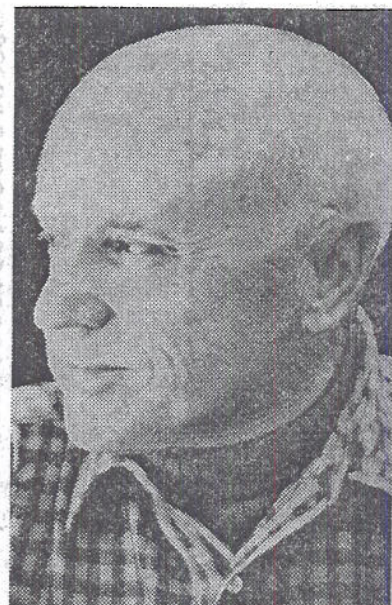
"That's just bullshit stuff Jimmy made up for Huie," he answered with a hearty laugh.

"Raoul" was many of the things James Earl Ray had never succeeded in being, a successful big-time criminal with international connections and influence with powerful figures in the straight world; Raoul was a man who could pay others to do the dirty work for him.

## Slaying



PERCY FOREMAN



WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE

Lawyer and writer were told differently about 'Raoul'

Even the word "Raoul" is not without its significant overtones. Indeed, words that are chosen for purposes like this are never idly chosen, never without their own meaning.

"Raoul" was not only glamorous and foreign-sounding, but it was also only a variation of Ray — Ray-oul, a perfect choice for an idealized self, a fine mask to wear to cover the inadequate identity of the real self.

Of course, Raoul is nothing but a phantom. Not even Ray himself ever gave Raoul a last name, never even bothered to claim that anyone had ever seen Raoul and himself together. Of course not: they are the same person.

Jimmy crossed the border into Canada in his 1962 red Plymouth, reached Montreal and stayed at the Bourgade Motel. He signed the register as "John L. Rayns."

That signature was the last vestige of the old James Earl Ray. That was to be the last time in many months that anyone (outside his family) was to know him by anything that linked him to his real name and his real past.

The next day, July 18, he took an apartment in Montreal. The place was called the Har-K Apartments. The name he signed to the Har-K lease was "Eric Starvo Galt."

With that new name, ringing with its aristocratic sound and having its origin in his political attitudes, there emerged the new James Earl Ray — the new Jimmy who was really the original Jimmy, the Jimmy his family had pinned their hopes on, the smart Jimmy, the ambitious Jimmy, the Jimmy who was going to be somebody.

He was going to kill King and he was going to get away with it. He was not going to run stupidly through the streets as Oswald had done. He, Ray, was going to know

where he was going after he had done the deed. He was going to have an escape plan. And more. He was going to have a plan for a better life, the life he would live after he killed King.

He would do something for society, kill King, but he would also do something for himself. He was never again going to be a small-time criminal, crawling in and out of fleabags, getting his ashes hauled by whores. He was determined to wear good clothes, a tie, to be able to go into a decent place and know how to act, not stand out, know how to make the women there like him.

He had a list of things he was going to learn, social graces and vocational skills he was going to acquire, at the very same time he was working out his plan to kill — and to escape after killing — King.

He did not see anything absurd or contradictory in his plans to learn at the same time how to forge a Canadian passport and how to dance.

On this trip he was laying out Montreal, familiarizing himself with the cheap bars and hotels he would want to fold himself inconspicuously into when he returned this way — a hunted man.

He looked into the idea of escaping from Canada on a ship and concluded that it was not easy. He wouldn't have time to stand around a hiring hall waiting for a job call after he had done what he was planning to do.

In another compartment of his mind, he was planning his future career. On July 24, he wrote Futura Books at Inglewood, Calif., asking them to send three sex manuals they had advertised in an underground newspaper. He wanted to study the poses. He was going to hire models and make his own blue pictures as the raw material of his porno enterprise.

Four days later, he bought a Canadian money order for \$17.50 and used it to make a first payment on a mail order course in locksmithing.

He did this, says Jerry, because "Jimmy always was afraid he would lock himself out of a car at the very minute he wanted to use it."

Perhaps. Or perhaps he wanted to be able to get into other places to which he had no key. It was a handy skill for a straight life or a crooked life.

He had not neglected in his days in Montreal the contents of yet another compartment of his mind. He was going to upgrade his looks. One of the first things he did in Montreal was get a new wardrobe.

He went to the Queen Elizabeth Hotel and got a haircut and a manicure. A manicure? Well, wasn't that what Capone used to do? Wasn't Arnold Rothstein shot in a barber chair while getting a manicure?

Thousands of words have been written speculating about other events that were supposed to have happened to Ray in Canada on this trip, that he met and got instructions from "Raoul," that he smuggled drugs across the border, that he held up a supermarket, that he robbed a Montreal whorehouse.

No evidence whatever to support any of these fictions has ever been turned up by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, by the FBI investigators, by narcotics investigators, by local or state police forces.

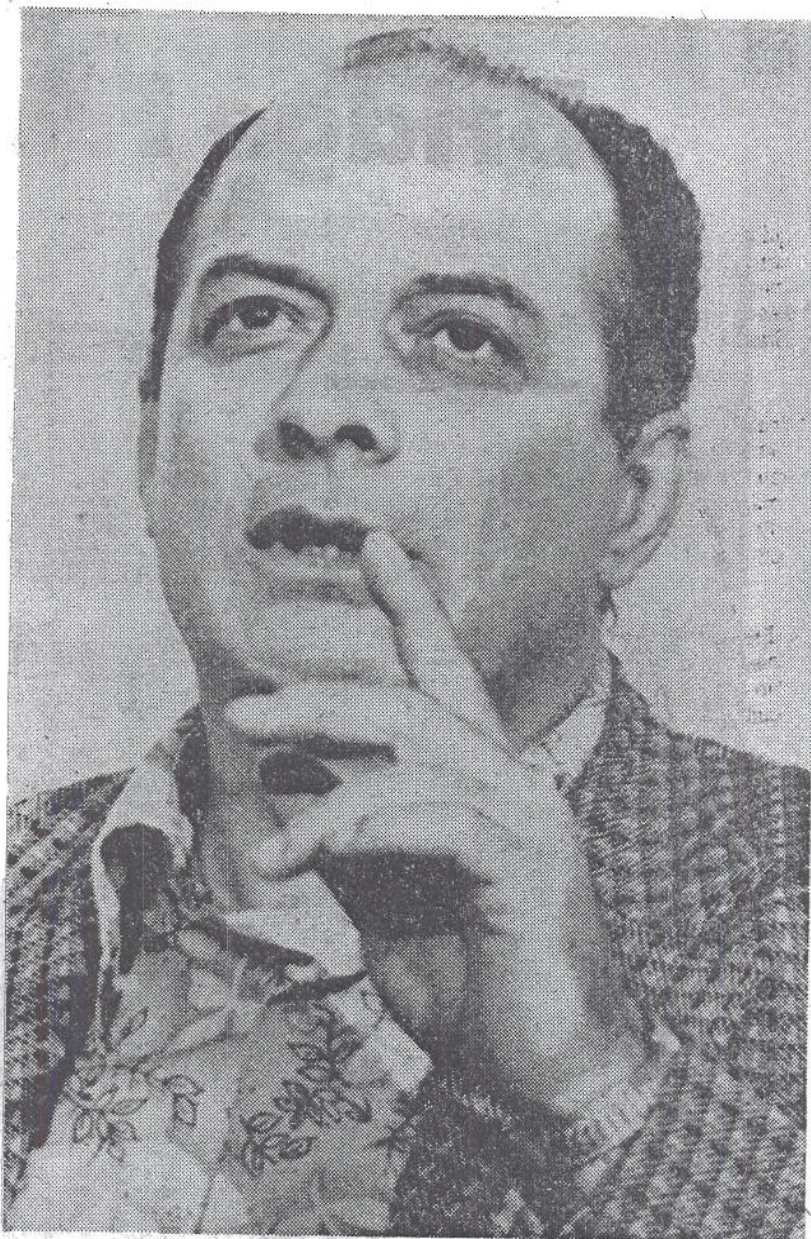
Ray is the author of the stories and he has admitted that at least one of them — that he got \$1700 from the whorehouse — was "a little lie."

Jerry says: "The whole thing about Raoul and running drugs from Canada was bullshit. He went to Canada the first time to look the place out, how to get out of the country."

James Earl Ray crossed the border back into the United States at Windsor on August 21, his business in Canada done, apparently to his satisfaction.

"Jimmy was going to Birmingham to take out citizenship papers in Alabama," says Jerry. "He believed that if he killed King in Alabama, or if he killed him anywhere in the South, it would help him if he showed he was a resident of Alabama. He was determined to kill King in the South. Of course, if he killed King in Alabama, he believed Wallace would eventually pardon him, not at first, but after a few years when things had cooled off."

This was the time when the presidential campaign of Alabama Governor George C. Wallace was



AP Wirephoto

**JERRY RAY, THE KILLER'S BROTHER**  
**He said there never was a 'Raoul'**

beginning to be taken seriously outside the South.

"Jimmy was getting caught up in the Wallace campaign," says Jerry. "He was talking as much that night in Chicago about getting Wallace in as he was about rubbing King out. He had it in his head that it would help Wallace if King wasn't around."

Ray had some important things to do in Birmingham. He needed some transportation and equipment, and he needed to establish Eric S. Galt as a legal entity — and it was Ray's plan to combine the two things, to make one thing work for the other. For example, Ray intended to buy a car.

A driver's license was good ID for Eric Galt. It is the kind of thing that most people will readily accept as identification.

On October 1, Ray answered an ad in the Birmingham News, placed by Water L. Spain, who wanted to sell a revolver. Ray went to Spain's house, pulled out a roll of bills, paid Spain \$65, pocketed the gun and left.

For him, by this time, killing King was not a luxury. He needed the mission, he needed the concept of killing King to hold himself together. It gave him the cohesion he was utterly dependent on. It was not just a twisted ideal that led him on. It was a compulsive obsession, and he was having trouble sustaining it over the period of time he

had set to accomplish his disparate plans. Killing King had become Ray's destiny. And now he was struggling inside himself to fulfill it.

**Tomorrow: King and Ray**  
**move in on Memphis.**

Copyright 1976 by George McMillan. Excerpted from "The Making of an Assassin: The Life of James Earl Ray."