BY POLICE: RAY FRAMED WAS JAMES EARL

MARK LANE
On Aug. 14, the House Select Committee on Assassinations will begin public hearings in Washington on the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King. These hearings are the culmination of over a year and a half of interviews, subpoenas, and hearings. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of both King and a half of his associates are the subject of the committee's investigation.
Just before the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968, the trial of James Earl Ray for the murder of King was scheduled to begin. Ray was convicted of the crime in 1969 and sentenced to 99 years in prison.

A decade later, the case is still unsolved. The murder of King was a pivotal event in the civil rights movement, and his death galvanized the struggle for racial equality. The House Select Committee on Assassinations began hearings on the murder in August 1976, and these hearings are the culmination of over two years of interviews, subpoenas, closed hearings, ballistics, and medical analyses related to the circumstances surrounding King's murder.

One of the first witnesses scheduled to appear before the committee is James Earl Ray, who was convicted of assassinating King. Ray is serving a 99-year sentence at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee.

Recently, Russell Byers, a former auto parts dealer from St. Louis, has emerged as a key figure in the investigation. Byers reportedly told the committee over three months ago that he was offered $50,000 to arrange the death of King in late 1967 or early 1968. The two Imperial, Mo., men named by Byers as the bearers of the offer are both dead. The source of the offer, reputed to be a businessmen's group, remains a matter of speculation.

Although Byers' testimony has not been corroborated by any physical evidence, the House committee is pursuing a series of circumstantial links between him, the men who are said to have made the offer, and people inside the Missouri State Penitentiary where James Earl Ray was incarcerated at the time.

"An administrative error" was the phrase used by an FBI spokesperson in explaining why five years ago, when Byers' account of the offer originally reached FBI officials in the St. Louis field office, no further investigation was initiated. The Bureau refers to this incident as a "technical error." The bureau refuses to identify the agent, who has since retired.

"It's possible that the report on the allegations was made and then filed, contrary to a regulation that requires any information on a specific crime to be forwarded to the agents working on that case. The bureau maintained it was an "honest error" and stated that the incident was not an attempt to block a full investigation."
Grace Walden was taken by the Memphis police after Ray's trial. She described the man she saw flee from the bathroom. He had bright plaid or checkered shirt under his hunting jacket of neutral color that was open near the neck and that she could see a hand and that he was approximately 5 feet 9 inches tall with a bright complexion, and was in his late 50s or early 60s. She said that he wore a hunter's green cap and a dark blue or green shirt and pants and had a beard. She described the man as looking like a criminal in a hurry.

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I the escape of King 's assassin.

Part One
The Burgeoning Coalition: Prologue to Murder

During the Spring of 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was engaged in perhaps the most important organizing work of his ... against the civilian population in Southeast Asia with those utilized by the Nazis a quarter of a century earlier.

Despite the illegal actions of American intelligence organizations, which were relatively effective in creating divisions in the leadership of the movements for ... other government buildings for as long as it took to dem-onstrate the need for fundamental changes in the social system.

The President and his advisors feared that confrontation. Leaders of the Sen-

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The police arrived on the scene and ... were questioned. Walden stated that the man she saw flee from the ... and unable to tell us anything at that time.” Smith is now a Memphis police captain in charge of homicide. Earlier this year he told a reporter for BBC-television that he had seen Stephens minutes after the ... that Stephens was drunk at that time and unable to provide information.

Approximately two months later, James Earl Ray was arrested in London. At that time, FBI agents asked Grace Walden to sign an affidavit so that Ray could ... look anything at all like the man I saw come out of the bathroom.” At the time Ray was 39 years old. Ray is 5 feet 11 inches. Ray has a light complexion. Walden re-
fused to sign the affidavit. She was threatened and frightened by the agents but ... defense team sought to prepare the case for James Earl Ray. The notation in the hospital record stated that she should...
The President and his advisors feared that confrontation. Leaders of the Senate and of the House felt obliged to indulge in orgies of racist rhetoric. The ... liberals more inclined to help finance Dr. King's southern struggles than to confront racism in their own communities.

The new coalition included the poor of every color and of every ethnic group, together with the tens of thousands of young people who opposed the war in Vietnam on every college campus in America and in every city and town as well, seriously discomfited the established leadership.

Publications like Reader's Digest, ..

Part Three

The Rooming House

The shot that killed King was fired at 6:01 p.m. Within minutes, the local police and the FBI had determined that it had been fired from a community bathroom on South Main St. One of the first reporters to arrive at the scene was Wayne Chastain, then a reporter for the Memphis Press Scimitar, now a practical joke. The FBI, not known for its subtlety, found a more direct way to encourage King to abandon the security of the Holiday Inn Rivermont and register instead at the more modest Lorraine Motel that provided no security.

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King was speaking, when he was killed, eloquently supported the demand. Later that day, Rev. Lawson and others led 5,000 people in a solemn march past the Lorraine Motel and into the Orpheum Theatre.

"I did not believe it then and I do not believe now that James Earl Ray pulled the trigger," he said. Later Lawson said, "There can be no question now as to where blacks in Memphis stand on the question of a trial for James Earl Ray."

Shock waves from the tenth anniversary celebration were immediately felt in the state capital. Black and white ministers and priests, supported by trade union leaders and masses of workers, demanded freedom for Grace Walden and a trial for James Earl Ray. A pro-FBI police reporter for a local television station was summoned to Bolivar, Tenn., where in violation of federal law and state statute, he was permitted to conduct a filmed interview with Grace Walden. The highly edited version was shown that evening on the Memphis CBS affiliate was designed to demonstrate that Grace Walden was mentally incompetent. Before the interview was over, the reporter asked Grace if she would like to accompany me to dinner. I assured the proprietors of the institution that the Probate Court Judge had said that I could have dinner with her. Grace put on her coat, tolcr the proprietor that "I'll be back in an hour or two," then looked at me and winked. We drove to the Memphis airport.

When we arrived in Los Angeles later that evening, more than half a dozen ministers and priests and 100 other supporters were at the airport. Two FBI agents monitored our arrival. Almost immediately the lawyer who had been appointed Walden's guardian filed a petition in the Memphis Probate Court citing me for contempt of court for having left the jurisdiction with Grace. I returned to Memphis to answer the citation and following a six-hour hearing, in which I was strongly supported by the Memphis clergy, the court dismissed the contempt citation and appointed me as Walden's guardian. I agreed to undertake that assignment with the understanding that my first act would be to secure all of her hospital records, which had been unavailable to us and to the law at the trial. The records, which had been promised to the defendants, were never delivered.

Part Seven
The Burgeoning Coalition: Prologue to Change

The Rev. James M. Lawson and others are demanding a new trial for James Earl Ray.
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Part Seven

The Burgeoning Coalition: Prologue to Change

Following the escape of Grace Walden, a new organization, the Committee for Truth and Justice Regarding the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, emerged under the leadership of Rev. James M. Lawson and others.

The Peopl...
beyond the bars watching him. Ray be-

ther just ten years before, read the state-

She said, "That would be just grand.

I arrived at the boarding house within

Memphis in December, and demand a

I flew to Memphis and while there I

The Memphis District Attorney Gen-

Two mo's after Ray had been con-

The bathroom from which King

I flew to Memphis and while there I

Part Six

Flight to Freedom

The Peo-

| 1. Arrived at the boarding house within |
| 2. The television and microphone |
| 3. The windows and doors |

In the early morning hours of the tenth anniversary of King's assassination, Dr. King was released from jail.

Part Five

The Tenth Anniversary

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