

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Canale Says Ray Eyeing Short Term

Phil M. Canale, Shelby County attorney general, said yesterday James Earl Ray admitted killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and accepted a 99-year prison term because he thinks he will be out of prison in two years.

Mr. Canale said defense attorney Percy Foreman told him Ray said he would be free in two years, but did not specify whether he intended to gain freedom through court action or a prison break.

There have been reports from the Tennessee State Prison in Nashville where Ray is confined in the maximum security unit, that he is having second thoughts about his deal and may try to have the sentence overturned.

Mr. Canale said on Wednesday's Press Conference the only legal way Ray could get this would be through a writ of habeas corpus, which would

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

PAGE 29

COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MEMPHIS, TENN.

Date: 3-17-69

Edition:

Author:

Editor:

Title:

GORDON HANNA

Character:

or

Classification: MEMPHIS

Submitting Office:

☐ Being Investigated

5649

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

5000 Pages Of State Evidence Convinced Ray To Plead Guilty

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

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ENCLOSURE

44-36861

5689

What did develop was a picture of Ray as a man who did not have a normal relationship with any other person — a loner.

"We talked with one of the dance instructors at Long Angeles and she said that when they had their get-togethers he kind of set off in the corner by himself. He just didn't mix," Mr. Beasley said.

[illegible][illegible]

Mr. Wessley is quite willing to believe that somebody, somewhere may have influenced Ray to kill Dr. King, but suggestions of an international Communist conspiracy, such as raised by Ray's first attorney, Arthur J. Hanes, are something else.

Mr. B... believe the... convinced... killed... big man"... in a bar, or... Missouri State Prison, before Ray's escape.

"I do think he was disappointed at the lack of support from white society -- the great outpouring of defense money. I think he finally came to realize that we (the attorney general's office) took a very dim view of him coming back and killing Dr. King."

Two of them quickly answered the query.

Winners have said Ray could have been the closest thing to Birmingham in the world. Ray, who had been, rented the house, wrote in the letter telling him what he

The incident was apparently no more than a news story at the time it was found mentioned though Mr. Bennett had no recollection of it. He said he thought it might be a report on the fact that the flag was taken apart. There was a flag of all the states found — broken on the Potomac river bridge, discarded, an old wine-wiper. Made in the United States. The flag was found in the city of Knoxville in the north. They had then written the two newspapers. They had tracked the flag to the Midwest. They had

Los Angeles when they were
new, although both cannot
be sure.

Mr. Beasley, a former
attorney, answered the ques-
tion definitely in Los Angeles when
someone called the state office
in Montgomery, Ala., and
told that the state office
was looking for a man from
Montgomery, Ala., who had
been in the state prison
system. He said he was
preparing to leave Califor-
nia. He already had filled out
change of address cards for
the Post Office, giving a new
address in General Delivery,
Atlanta. Mr. Beasley
said he could have made the
mail travel by long distance.
He said he was picked up
by a man who took him to
the state prison in
Montgomery, Ala.

One of the witnesses to
Ray's original trial
said on Nov. 19, 1969,
the state started checking out
some of the potential witness-
es. Mr. Beasley, Mr. Sawyer
and Mr. Beasley, who were
then in the attorney gener-
al's office, went to Washing-
ton, D.C., then to Canada,
London and Lisbon, Portugal —
all points on the trail of James Earl
Ray.

Mr. Beasley said these trips
allowed the prosecutor to de-
cide which of the many poten-
tial witnesses should actually
be called — how to present all
the evidence, but without im-
plication. Many of the witness-
es were reluctant to testify and
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Mr. Stanton Sr., the county
public defender who was
named co-counsel by Judge W.
Preston Battle on Dec. 12, said
he discussed a guilty plea with
Mr. Foreman on that day and
several days later approached
the attorney general (The
Commercial Appeal reported
the meeting as being at-
tached to both parties officially
denied it). Mr. Stanton was
convinced that the prosecutor
would be able to put the
spotlight on a trial which he
said "You'll never be able to plead
this case. There's too damn
much publicity." But he told
Mr. Stanton to give it a try
anyway.

Mr. Stanton said Mr. Canale
promised to discuss the possi-
bility with Mr. Sawyer and Mr.
Beasley and that several
weeks later he was informed
that Mr. Canale would accept
a plea, but only if Ray would
take a 99-year sentence and
only if the request came from
the defense.

"He (Canale) couldn't afford
to be in a position of offering a
deal because of all this publicity,"
Mr. Stanton said.

The day after Christmas,
Mr. Stanton called Mr. Fore-
man in Houston and told him
about the proposition. Mr.
Foreman said he doubted that
Ray would go along and when
he first broached the subject to
Ray that is what happened.

"Mr. Foreman, you don't know
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malice for himself. He was
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asked whether a guilty plea
could be settled with a 99-
year sentence. He said, "Whoa, that's
only 12 years in this state and
the very least I consider is 30
years." I told him that before
anything could be done there
would have to be a waiver of
the defense motions and that
examination of Ray would
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court at which time Ray would
have to make clear that he
understood what the plea
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There was running short,
with Ray's trial scheduled to
start on March 1. On Feb. 14,
the judge granted a five-week
postponement, to April 7. A
week later, on Feb. 21, Mr.
Foreman submitted to Mr.
Beasley a letter with a formal
offer of a guilty plea. It car-
ried a letter signed by Ray.

Mr. Beasley got to work
writing the stipulation. Briefly
this is what it said: the state
could prove.

That Ray checked into the
rooming house at 1227 South
Main on the afternoon of April
4 under the name of John Wil-
lard and that that name
Brewer could identify him.
That Ray selected a room and
erecting the furniture and
other things in the room.
That Ray was in the room
on April 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Lowmeyer said that clerks in the store and Capt. John DeShane, an Army doctor stationed now in Japan, would identify Ray as Lowmeyer.

That the white Mustang had been purchased from William D. Paisley in Birmingham, for \$1,500 cash, by Ray, using the alias Eric S. Galt, was an address of 3046 South Highland and that Ray subsequently got a driver's license and license plates under that name.

That Ray had Birmingham about Oct. 6, 1967, and went to Boston, staying there about two weeks, was also stated. That Ray became friendly with Miss Helen Harrison, a waitress at the South Street Tavern where they passed time, was also stated. Ray would sit at the bar at South and talk to Miss Harrison when she wasn't busy, but he never took her out to dinner or to a movie or anywhere.

That Martin Luther King Jr. cousin, Charles Stein, was shot on Dec. 4, 1968, and returned on Dec. 10 with Charles Stein, his wife, Rita, and two children.

From his hospital, the stipulation said, the state could call a laundry owner to identify marks on underwear dropped at the murder scene, a dance studio, a bar, a bar-tending school, a hotel, Robert Reynolds, a doctor, an Eric S. Galt, a nurse, a surgeon, a Russian, a lady, to tell about the surgery and the doctor's pointed finger.

The stipulation also said the state could produce:

On his way back from California stopped in March 22 at the Flamingo in Selma, Ala., near where Dr. King was supposed to make a speech. That he rented a room in an "apartment" rooming house on March 22 and that a city man found in the room had Dr. King's name, office and church address, that on April 4, 1968, at the Capital Center area in Atlanta saw a man park a white Mustang and walk away and that on the same morning Ray picked up a lady at the Capital Center, that she was a nurse, that she was called by the name and that human body found in the car was not switched with another's.

from the...
Harris...
Jail...

The stipulation also stated to Tennessee... Ray... Paul Bridge... Snod... than... name.

Mr. Beatty... dis-count the... Ray may... obtaining the... certificates... newspaper... library... waterfront... there's one... spot it's... somebody... about it.

The stipulation then stated Ray's trail to London, to London, Portugal, and back to London where he was arrested.

Mr. Beatty's document said that George Bonbrake, an FBI fingerprint expert, would testify that Ray's prints were on the rifle, on the binoculars, on a can of Schlitz beer, on a bottle of shaving lotion, purchased at a Reids store in Whitehaven (no great town) there, a ticket in the home... and on an April 4... in the bundle dropped in... of Campbell's store.

The mass of evidence apparently is what persuaded Ray to plead guilty. Two or three days after Foreman received Mr. Beasley's stipulation he said, Ray would agree to \$100,000 insurance, the appraisal of Ray's brothers, John and Jimmy, was obtained too.

Up to the last minute, Ray declined to waive and Mr. Tolson went over the documents again with him last Sunday before the special hearing.

Mr. Jackson said that investigators for the defense — and William Bradford Huie, the author who had bought Ray's handwritten story — found they could not verify many of the things they had been told. "We quickly established that all of this so-called favorable testimony — like the man in the bushes — just didn't exist."

Mr. Beasley has his own ideas.

"I think he came to realize that his conspiracy story wouldn't stand up under intense cross-examination. I feel sure he planned to take the stand. I think that's one of the reasons he fired Humes. Humes didn't want him to. I think he figured that by pleading guilty and making a statement in court like he did he would keep the conspiracy story alive."

There was plenty of ammunition for the cross-examination, a special skill of the more fiery Mr. Dwyer.

After Bry bought the first rifle, a .243-caliber bolt action, he called Aeromarine Supply and said he wanted to trade it in for a .30.06 weapon, saying his brother thought the .243 wasn't the right rifle. (His mention of a brother, incident-

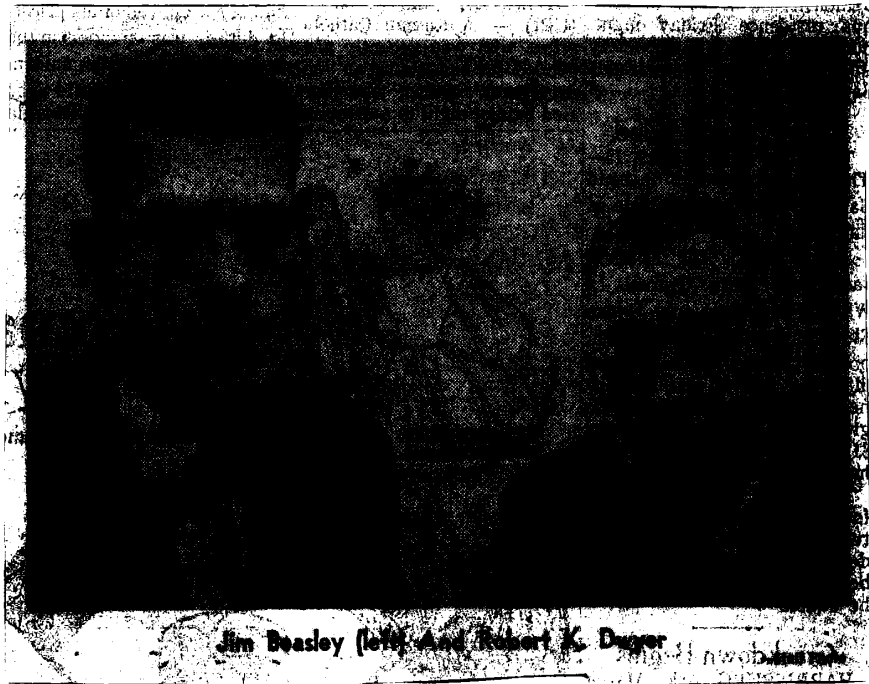
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nab [illegible]

which was the only agency that had a store here. They're flawed in the way they're closing the economy. It could not have been

“I don’t know,” said the man, “but I told him to get out of here and have a good time. I like that kind of rifle, and I didn’t want to see it not used. It’s the same kind of figure out of the water.” Mr. Benson

with a
tended

in the FBI
FBI
parson



Jim Beasley (left) And Robert K. Dugger

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

5,000 Pages Of State Evidence Convinced Ray To Plead Guilty

By JAMES KILLPATRICK

The tightly woven net of evidence responsible for convincing James Earl Ray to plead guilty was gleaned from a staggering mound of investigative reports which began to arrive at the prosecutors office shortly after the crime.

There is no doubt the circumstantial case was strong enough to convict Ray of being the man who pulled the trigger on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. here last April 4. Whether it will prove, in the end, strong enough to quiet fears of a conspiracy is uncertain. In light of the widespread criticism found around the world which followed Ray's guilty plea and 99-year sentence last May, this appears doubtful.

The man most responsible for compiling the state's case, Asst. Atty. Gen. James Beasley, is satisfied the matter has been explored as thoroughly as humanly possible.

Mr. Beasley, a tall, strong-jawed man who normally works with Exec. Asst. Atty. Gen. Robert K. Dwyer as the attorney general's top courtroom team, has lived with the Ray case for nearly a year. His tiny office on the third



James Killpatrick

This report was prepared after a detailed study of the court transcript and interviews with the attorney general's office.

floor of the Shelby County Office Building became the center of the prosecution effort. Behind a door fitted with special security equipment the reports from police officers and FBI agents began to pile up. The total was to pass 5,000 pages and some reports on minor points are still arriving.

When it became apparent that Ray was willing to

guilty plea for a 99-year term, Mr. Beasley wrote the long stipulation of evidence — facts that the defense agreed the prosecution could prove — which he read to the jury which approved the sentence. But in the earlier stages, everything was aimed at a full-scale trial.

As the reports mounted — and a glance at the bulging filing cabinet sustains the FBI's reputation for painstaking thoroughness — Mr. Beasley's secretary began a numbering system. The names of persons mentioned in the reports were transferred to a card file. The page number of any subsequent reference was added, giving the prosecution instant access to information about any individual who had figured in the investigation.

This system also figured in the check on any conspiracy, an aspect which hung over the whole case like a shroud.

"We kept our eyes open for any pattern of associations," Mr. Beasley said. "We checked to see whether any of the same people kept popping up — either meeting Ray, or

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

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even being registered at the same hotel or motel, or in the same town."

No such pattern developed.

What did develop was a picture of Ray as a man who did not have a normal relationship with any other person — a loner.

Does this jibe with the picture of a man who took dancing lessons and zipped around the country in a sporty Mustang?

"We talked with one of the dance instructors in Los Angeles and she said that when they had their get-togethers he kind of sat off in the corner by himself. He just didn't mix," Mr. Beasley said.

"As for the Mustang, the boy who sold it to him in Birmingham said he used to see it parked in front of that rooming house for a week at a time. He didn't seem to use it around town at all."

Ray did read a lot, including a paperback novel called "The Ninth Dimension" about a political assassin who wrapped the weapon in a green bed cover, strangely like the spread around the weapon dropped on Main Street after Dr. King was shot. He also read a lot of cheap magazines — and ordered items from the ads.

"If there's one thing he did, he did write letters," Mr. Beasley said. "His handwriting was like chicken scratches, but he turned them out." Some camera equipment is an example.

"He ordered this stuff out of a magazine, but when it arrived at the rooming house in Birmingham it was the wrong camera. He had left Birmingham by the time the right stuff was sent and Mr. Cherpes (the landlord) returned it. Then Ray wrote the company from Mexico, asking that his refund be sent there. He wrote them again from Los Angeles and asked for the refund again."

He also ordered a cheap set of Japanese handcuffs, a \$1 sample of something called EZ Do, which makes mirrors of ordinary glass, and faithfully kept up installment payments on a correspondence course in locksmithing. All his payments were in cash or money orders.

Mr. Beasley is quite willing to believe that somebody, somewhere may have influenced Ray to kill Dr. King, but suggestions of an international Communist conspiracy, such as raised by Ray's first attorney, Arthur J. Hanes, are something else.

And hints that the FBI, former U.S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark and even the local prosecutor's office are in some way covering this up are enough to shatter Mr. Beasley's calm demeanor, at least momentarily. "I resent the hell out of that," he said, the volume of his voice rising.

Mr. Beasley is willing to believe that someone may have convinced Ray that whoever killed Dr. King would be "a big man" — maybe somebody in a bar, or maybe even in the Missouri State Prison before Ray's escape.

"But under Tennessee law it takes more than talk to constitute a conspiracy there has to be an overt act. Of this there is no evidence," Mr. Beasley said.

"I do know he was disappointed at the lack of response from white society — no great outpouring of defense funds. I think he finally came to realize that we (the attorney general's office) took a very dim view of him coming here and killing Dr. King."

A national news service has made great capital of three points which it says will be the "grassy knoll" of the King assassination, referring to the persistent questioning of the Kennedy killing in Dallas. These are that Ray had a suit shipped from Montreal to a rooming house in Birmingham, that there were unexplained cigaret butts in the Mustang when it was found in Atlanta (Ray did not smoke) and that someone ordered a duplicate Alabama driver's license in the name of Eric S. Galt while Ray was known to still be in California.

Two of these points can be quickly answered by Mr. Beasley.

Writers have wondered how Ray could have known about the sleazy rooming house in Birmingham in advance. He didn't. Ray went to Birmingham, rented the room, then wrote to the tailor in Canada telling him where to ship the suit.

The mysterious cigaret butts apparently do not exist. A news story at the time the car was found mentioned them, although Mr. Beasley said he had no recollection of any. To be sure, he checked the FBI report on the car. Agents had literally taken it apart. There was a list of all the items found — trash on the floor, a Personna razor blade on the dashboard, an old windshield wiper blade in the trunk. (There was even a scrap of Kleenex in the trunk on which had been written the names of two prostitutes. The FBI tracked the women down in the Midwest. They had been in

Los Angeles when Ray was there, although both denied knowing him.)

But no cigaret butts.

The driver's license question remains unanswered. Ray was definitely in Los Angeles when someone called the state office in Montgomery, Ala., and asked that a duplicate license be mailed to the Birmingham rooming house, at 2608 South Highland. Ray at that time was preparing to leave California — he already had filled out change of address cards for the Post Office, giving a new address as General Delivery, Atlanta — and Mr. Beasley said Ray could have made the call himself by long distance. It is not known who picked up the license at the Birmingham address and mailed the 25 cent handling fee to the state.

Back at the prosecutor's office, as Ray's original trial date of Nov. 12 approached, the staff started checking out some of the potential witnesses. Mr. Beasley, Mr. Dwyer and John Carlisle, chief investigator for the attorney general's office, went to Birmingham, Atlanta, Los Angeles — then to Canada, London and Lisbon, Portugal — all points on the trail of James Earl Ray.

Mr. Beasley said these trips allowed the prosecution to decide which of the many potential witnesses should actually be called — how to present all the evidence, but without duplication. Many of the witnesses were reluctant to testify and had to be cajoled.

Shortly after Ray fired Mr. Hanes, the former Birmingham mayor who had made much of his Communist conspiracy theory, and hired Percy Foreman, on the eve of the trial, the strategy changed toward a possible plea of guilty. There is some difference of opinion as to just how this arose.

Atty. Gen. Phil M. Canale said he brought up the matter in a telephone call to the Justice Department on Dec. 19 and asked for the department's views. Mr. Canale said he acted alone and that "from the standpoint of a prosecutor seeking a compromise plea and punishment is the custom instead of the exception (better than 90 per cent of criminal cases in Shelby County are handled in that manner)."

Hugh Stanton Sr., the county public defender who was named co-counsel by Judge W. Preston Battle on Dec. 12, said he discussed a guilty plea with Mr. Foreman on that day and several days later approached the attorney general (The Commercial Appeal reported the meeting at the time, although both parties officially denied it). Mr. Foreman was convinced that no prosecutor would be able to resist the spotlight a trial would bring. "You'll never be able to plead this case. There's too damn much publicity." But he told Mr. Stanton to give it a try anyway.

Mr. Stanton said Mr. Canale promised to discuss the possibility with Mr. Dwyer and Mr. Beasley and that several weeks later he was informed that Mr. Canale would accept a plea, but only if Ray would take a 99-year sentence and only if the request came from the defense.

"He (Canale) couldn't afford to be in a position of offering a deal because of all this publicity," Mr. Stanton said.

The day after Christmas, Mr. Stanton called Mr. Foreman in Houston and told him about the proposition. Mr. Foreman said he doubted that Ray would go along and when he first broached the subject to Ray that is what happened. "Mr. Foreman, you don't know the facts. I'd rather take my chances with a trial," Ray said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Canale had contacted Gov. Buford Ellington and Dr. King's widow. The governor had no objection. Word was received from Mrs. King that there was no desire to see Ray executed, but that they would reserve judgment on whether there was a conspiracy.

Judge Battle said that Mr. Foreman approached him sometime in February.

"He asked me then, infor-

mally, for information regarding a guilty plea. He also asked whether a guilty plea could be settled with a life sentence. I said, "Whoa, that's only 13 years in this state and the very least I'd consider is 99 years." I told him that before anything could be done there would have to be a waiver of the defense motions and that examination of Ray would have to take place in open court at which time Ray would have to make clear that he understood what the plea meant."

Time was running short, with Ray's trial scheduled to start on March 3. On Feb. 14, the judge granted a five-week postponement, to April 7. A week later, on Feb. 21, Mr. Foreman shambled into Mr. Canale's office with a formal offer of a guilty plea. He carried a letter signed by Ray.

Mr. Beasley set to work writing the stipulation. Briefly this is what it said the state could prove:

That Ray checked into the rooming house at 422½ South Main on the afternoon of April 4 under the name of John Willard and that Mrs. Bessie Brewer could identify him. That Ray selected a room overlooking the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. King was staying. That shortly afterward he purchased a pair of binoculars from Ralph Carpenter at York Arms Co., a few blocks north on Main. That Mrs. Elizabeth Copeland and Mrs. Peggy Hurley who worked across the street, would identify a white Mustang which had been parked near the rooming house.

That Charles Q. Stephens, a tenant at the rooming house, had seen Ray when he checked in and later moved furniture being moved in Ray's room. That Willie Anschutz, another roomer, had tried to use the bathroom and found the door locked. That Mr. Stephens heard a shot from the bathroom at about 6 p.m. and looked out to see Ray hurrying down the hall with a package in his arms. That Guy Canipe, owner of Canipe Amusement Co. at 424 South Main, and two customers, Bernell Finley and Julius Graham, saw a man drop a package in the doorway there (it contained the rifle and a small zipper bag wrapped in a green bedspread) and then drive off in a white Mustang which had been parked in front.

That police officers who had been at Fire Station No. 2, at Main and Butler, heard the shot and ran toward the motel — and that some searched the brushy area behind the motel (a report by Dr. King's chauffeur, Solomon Jones, that he saw a man "with something white over his face" run from this area had been a key point).

That officers entered the room Ray had rented and found a chest had been moved away from a window which offered a view of the Lorraine and that straps from the binoculars (they were in the bag dropped on Main Street) were in the room. That a check of the bathroom showed scuff marks in the bathtub where someone had been standing and that an indentation on the window sill — which was cut away and sent to the FBI laboratory — matched marks on the barrel of the rifle found on Main.

That a check of motel records showed a man using the name Eric S. Galt had stayed at the Rebel Motel on Lamar the previous night and that Galt had been driving a white Mustang with Birmingham, Ala., license.

That the rifle, a 30.06 Remington pump with telescopic sight, had been purchased from the South Birmingham on March 2, and a trade-in of another rifle purchased the previous day by a man using the name Harvey

Lowmeyer and that clerks in the store and Capt. John DeShazo, an Army doctor stationed now in Japan, would identify Ray as Lowmeyer.

That the white Mustang had been purchased from William D. Paisley in Birmingham, for \$1,995 cash, by Ray, using the name Eric S. Galt and an address of 2608 South Highland and that Ray subsequently got a driver's license and license plates under that name.

That Ray left Birmingham about Oct. 5, 1967, and went to Mexico, staying there about five weeks and then moving to Los Angeles. That Ray became friendly with Miss Marie Martin, a waitress at the Sultan Room (here again Mr. Beasley pointed out the lack of a normal relationship. Ray would sit at the bar for hours and talk to Miss Martin when she wasn't busy, but he never took her out to dinner or to a movie, or anywhere.)

That through Miss Martin he met her cousin, Charles Stein, and that on Dec. 15 Ray drove Charles Stein to New Orleans, returning on Dec. 19 with Charles Stein, his wife, Rita, and two children.

From Los Angeles, the stipulation said, the state could call a laundry owner to identify marks on underwear dropped at the murder scene, a dance studio proprietor and a bartending school owner, Thomas Reyes Lau, to identify Ray as Eric S. Galt and a plastic surgeon, Dr. Russell C. Hadley, to tell about corrective surgery on Ray's distinctively pointed nose.

The stipulation also said the state could prove that:

On his way back from California stopped on March 22 at the Flamingo Motel in Selma, Ala., near where Dr. King was supposed to make a speech. That he rented a room in an Atlanta rooming house on March 24 and that a city map found in the room had Dr. King's home, office and church circled. That on April 5 residents of the Capitol Homes area in Atlanta saw a man park a white Mustang and walk away and that on the same morning Ray picked up laundry at the Piedmont Laundry. That six days later the FBI was called about the car and that human hair found on items in the car later was matched with samples taken

from Ray when he was given a haircut in the Shelby County Jail.

The stipulation then moved to Toronto, Canada, where Ray used the names Paul Bridgeman and Ramon George Sneyd, obtaining a Canadian passport under the latter name.

Mr. Beasley does not discount the possibility that Ray may have had some help in obtaining the passport, although all the information he used in getting duplicate birth certificates under the two names was readily available in newspaper files in the public library. "He spent a lot of time in waterfront bars and if there's one thing a con can spot it's another con. Maybe somebody told him how to go about it."

The stipulation then traced Ray's trail to London, to Lisbon, Portugal, and back to London where he was arrested.

Mr. Beasley's document said that George Bonebrake, an FBI fingerprint expert, would testify that Ray's prints were on the rifle, on the binoculars, on a can of Schlitz beer, on a bottle of shaving lotion purchased at a Rexall store in Whitehaven (no great detective story there, a sticker on the bottle identified the store) and on an April 4 issue of The Commercial Appeal, all found in the bundle dropped in front of Canipe's store.

This mass of evidence apparently is what persuaded Ray to plead guilty. Two or three days after Foreman received Mr. Beasley's stipulation he said Ray would agree to it. For insurance, the approval of Ray's brothers, John and Jerry, was obtained too.

Up to the last minute, Ray continued to waiver and Mr. Foreman went over the document again with him last Sunday, after the special hearing had already been set.

Mr. Stanton said that investigators for the defense — and William Bradford Huie, the author who had bought Ray's handwritten story — found they could not verify many of the things they had been told. "We quickly established that all of this so-called favorable testimony — like the man in the bushes — just didn't exist."

Mr. Beasley has his own ideas.

"I think he came to realize that his conspiracy story wouldn't stand up under intense cross-examination. I feel sure he planned to take the stand, I think that's one of the reasons he fired Hanes. Hanes didn't want him to. I think he figured that by pleading guilty and making a statement in court like he did he would keep the conspiracy story alive."

There was plenty of ammunition for the cross-examination, a special skill of the more fiery Mr. Dwyer.

After Ray bought the first rifle, a 243-caliber bolt action, he called Aeromarine Supply and said he wanted to trade it in for a 30.06 weapon, saying his brother thought the 243 wasn't the right rifle. (This mention of a brother, incident-

tally, is the basis for the original federal conspiracy charge, which is still open.) When FBI agents picked up the 243 at the store later, they found that a flaw in the bolt prevented it closing on a cartridge. The rifle could not have been fired.

"If he'd got on the stand and said his co-conspirator told him to switch rifles, we would have asked him something like: 'Isn't it true that the first rifle wouldn't operate and you didn't want to admit you were not such a big man by letting the store know you couldn't figure out what was the matter?' Mr. Beasley suggested.

But it was the little things with which the prosecutors intended to impress the jury.

A styrofoam box was found in the trunk of the Mustang. FBI experts did a little comparison shopping and concluded

it looked like a box in which the Polaroid 220 cameras were packed. When Ray was arrested in London he had a Polaroid 220 camera in his suitcase. It fit the box perfectly.

And then there was the transistor radio found in the bag he dropped in Memphis. One spot on the plastic case had been scraped away. The FBI lab was able to bring out the numbers "00416" but nobody could make any sense out of it.

Then, on April 19, FBI agents going through the 53,000 fingerprints in the bureau's fugitive file matched the prints found in Memphis and Atlanta with those of a Missouri prison escapee named James Earl Ray.

"The number then became another link in the chain," Mr. Beasley said. "James Earl Ray's prison number was 00416."



Jim Beasley (left) And Robert K. Dwyer

—Staff Photo