

Motive Association - known armed robber & extortionist.

- Childhood history of theft (Ewing, Mo.)
- Served time in prison armed robbery (Chicago)
- Self-confessed armed extortionist (in Canada)
- No visible means of support, funds obtained by method he knew best.

Description - very similar.

- Youngish man wearing glasses.

Get-away Auto - similar color.

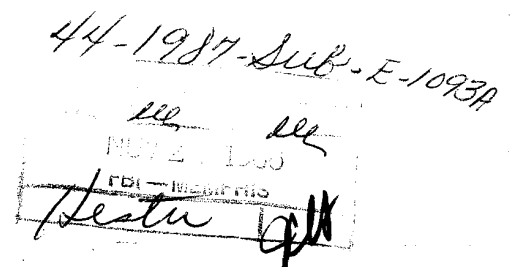
- Had white mustang.
- Model hard for witness to identify, color is easy.

Date Association - 2/12/68 possible.

- There seems to be a school of thought that perhaps someone was building an alibi for J.E.R. in a school in L.A. area while J.E.R. was on path to Alabama in his white auto. In any event S. Mo. area would lay on path to this area.

Area Association - logical perimeter of travel.

- Southern Missouri has always been a haven for outlaw types. This perhaps due to its remoteness and other factors.
- J.E.R. living or operating in the following places, no doubt, was aware of this region's special characteristics.
- Raised in childhood - Ewing, Mo.
- Mother and relatives - in St. Louis.
- Jailed and escaped - Fulton, Mo.
- Activities in Alabama, New Orleans, Canada, Los Angeles, St. Louis, would have put his path close to South Missouri region most every time.
- Unknown relatives may live in this remote section of State.
- A loner, with J.E.R.'s basic culture and taste, would find this area reasonably suitable except for money.



320 W. Hacienda Dr.  
Corona, Calif.  
11/15/68

Re: James E. Ray as a possible suspect in my Fathers Murder.

Dear Sir:

Inclosed reprint of details of my Fathers slaying 2/12/68. To date this case has not been solved.

Circled items point out cumulative similarities in activities & etc. of James E. Ray and details surrounding my Fathers demise.

There is other data and information on file available from-

Lyman Cardwell, Taney County Sheriff, Forsyth, Missouri.

Peter H. Rea, Prosecuting Attorney, Taney County, Branson, Mo.

Some of that material consist of-

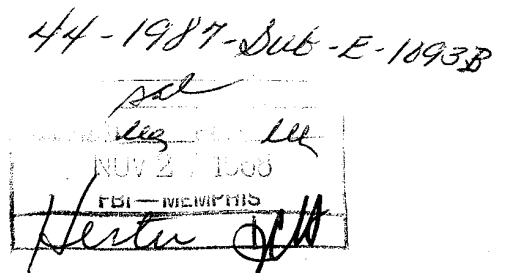
- A ballistic report.
- Practice target suspect was using prior to murder, which was a childs doll with shots in the head.
- Plaster cast of suspects footprints.

It might be interesting if you could check shoe size of J.E.R. and see if they also approximate size of impressions on file.

Thank You

*Shelby G. Coody*  
Shelby G. Coody

*This man killed in  
Missouri February, 68,  
and subject Ray was in  
California during that time.  
JH*



November 26, 1968

Mr. Shelby G. Coody  
320 West Hacienda Drive  
Corona, California 91720

Dear Mr. Coody:

Thank you very much for your letter of November 15, 1968, and the information contained therein.

If anything develops from the investigation of this matter, I will certainly be in contact with you.

Sincerely yours,

PHIL M. CANALE, JR.  
District Attorney General

PMCIJr:MEF

44-1987-Sub-E-1093C

sal  
llh  
llh  
llh

REC-11-1-10

13

ROBERT K. DWYER  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

LLOYD A. RHODES  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

JOHN L. CARLISLE  
H. J. BEACH  
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EARL E. FITZPATRICK  
NON-SUPPORT DIVISION

PHIL M. CANALE, JR.  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF TENNESSEE  
COUNTY OF SHELBY

SHELBY COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
157 POPLAR AVENUE  
MEMPHIS, TENN. 38103

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DON A. DINO  
JOSEPH L. PATTERSON  
BILLY F. GRAY  
EUGENE C. GAERIG  
HARVEY HERRIN  
F. GLEN SISSON  
JOHN W. PIEROTTI

November 26, 1968

Mr. Robert Jensen, Special  
Agent in Charge  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Federal Building  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

Dear Mr. Jensen:

For your information I am enclosing herewith  
a copy of a letter dated November 15, 1968, which I  
received from Mr. Shelby G. Coody together with a  
copy of the enclosures with his letter.

Sincerely yours,

*Phil M. Canale Jr.*  
PHIL M. CANALE, JR.  
District Attorney General

PMCJr:MEF  
Enclosures

44-1987-Sub-E-10930

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lee  
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FBI - MEMPHIS  
Hester  
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## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date December 19, 1968

Mr. LAMAR L. MCGREGOR, Record Clerk, Record Room, Georgia State Prison (GSP), furnished the GSP file on RAYMOND RUSSELL, GSP #55435. A review of this file revealed the following:

Name	RAYMOND RUSSELL
serial Number	A-62084
GSP Number	55435
Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Age	36 years
DOB	
POB	Fulton County, Georgia
Height	5'6"
Weight	155 pounds
Build	Medium
Hair	Black
Eyes	Brown
Complexion	Dark
Received in Penitentiary	10/13/65
Received in GSP	7/1/67
Violation	Burglary (2 counts)
Sentence	20 years (2 counts consecutive)
Wife	BERTHA MAE RUSSELL 1156 Simpson Road, N. W. Atlanta, Georgia
Occupation	Brickmason
Scars	Burn scar on left leg
Marks	1 gold crown on tooth
FBI Number	151 846 A
Father	CHARLIE RUSSELL 12 Holyoke, Massachusetts
Mother	MATTIE RUSSELL Atlanta, Georgia

On 12/11/68 at Tattnall County, Georgia File # 44-1987-Sub-E-1094  
Savannah 44-1768

by SA SYDNEY J. SMITH/fme

Date dictated 12/17/68

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date December 19, 1968

RAYMOND LEE RUSSELL, SR., Georgia State Prison (GSP), #55435, was contacted in the Visitors' Section of the prison, just off the rotunda, GSP. RUSSELL was advised that he was to be interviewed in regard to a letter that had been received by Mrs. DONNELLY, 2731 North Sheffield, Chicago, Illinois, from "RAY RUSSELL", "SEC-M-4-55435, Reidsville, Ga."

RUSSELL was given a rights and waiver form which he executed by signing it.

RUSSELL stated he did not desire to furnish a signed statement, however, he provided the following information orally:

In November, 1968, he read an article in Look Magazine. An issue of Look Magazine dated November 12, 1968, was displayed to RUSSELL, which had an article entitled "The Story of James Earl Ray and the Plot to Assassinate Martin Luther King" by WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE.

He especially took note of the part of the article in Look Magazine in which there was a reference to a rooming house located at 2731 North Sheffield, Chicago, Illinois, owned by a Mrs. DONNELLY. He recalled that several years ago while he was in jail he wrote a letter to a woman whose name and address had appeared in a newspaper article telling of the death of her son. On that occasion he told the woman that he had known her son and that her son had owed him (RUSSELL) \$200.00. As a result of this letter the woman had sent him \$200.00 to repay the alleged debt, when actually he was only playing on the sympathy of the woman and the memory of her son.

He is searching, at all times, for ways to play on the sympathy of other persons and when he read the article in Look Magazine, he immediately felt that here was a woman, Mrs. DONNELLY, who seemed to be ideal for the purpose of sending a request for money. The story had even given Mrs. DONNELLY's home address.

On 12/11/68 at Tattnall County, Georgia File # Savannah 44-1768

by SA SYDNEY J. SMITH/fmc

12/17/68  
Date dictated

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SV 44-1768

2

He desired to get a radio and some money so when he read the JAMES EARL RAY story, he immediately thought of the scheme or plan to get the radio or some money from Mrs. DONNELLY. He had hoped that Mrs. DONNELLY would send him the radio and the money without notifying anyone. He was actually trying to "con" Mrs. DONNELLY out of the radio and money. He then wrote a letter to Mrs. DONNELLY, 2731 North Sheffield, Chicago, Illinois, in which he related that he had stayed in the back basement room and that he had left a radio in the room. He also related in the letter that it was a good radio and that he needed it so much. He also wrote that if Mrs. DONNELLY could not find the radio then he wanted her to get him one. He also related in the letter that he wanted Mrs. DONNELLY to help him get \$169.00 so that his lawyer could help him. He also wrote that he had some money but did not trust his lawyer and that he would tell her (Mrs. DONNELLY) where to go and pick up the money. In the letter he had written to Mrs. DONNELLY he had also mentioned the name, JOHN LARRY RAYNS, which name he had also obtained from the Look Magazine article.

He had never known JAMES EARL RAY, either by the name JAMES EARL RAY or JOHN LARRY RAYNS or any other name. He had never met RAY. He had never talked with anyone who knew RAY. He had never been in Chicago, Illinois, and had never lived at 2731 North Sheffield, Chicago, Illinois. He had never known Mrs. DONNELLY or even met her.

He is not involved and never has been involved in any conspiracy with any other individuals in a plot to kill MARTIN LUTHER KING.

He never told anyone about writing the letter to Mrs. DONNELLY and wrote the letter solely to "con" a radio or money out of Mrs. DONNELLY.

A description of RUSSELL as obtained by observation and interrogation is as follows:

Name	RAYMOND LEE RUSSELL, SR.
Also Known As	Raymond Russell
	Ray Russell

SV 44-1768

1a

Race	Negro
Sex	Male
Age	36 years
DOB	
POB	Atlanta, Georgia
Height	5'7"
Weight	163 pounds
Build	Medium stocky
Hair	Black
Eyes	Brown
Complexion	Dark
Military Service	None
Social Security	
Account Number	Unknown
Wife	BERTHA RUSSELL, nee Thomkins 1156 Sampson, Apt. #7 Atlanta, Ga. Telephone 758-7852
Children	Two RAYMOND LEE RUSSELL, JR., 6 years old JUANITA DENISE RUSSELL, 4 years old
Scars	1" scar at corner of left eye; 1/4" dent scar on end of nose; burn scar on calf of left leg; burn scar on left hip
Other	Gold crown on upper right tooth; one tooth missing in lower front
Received Sentence	1964



12/19/68

PLAINTEXT

AIRTEL

AIRMAIL

TO: SAC, CHICAGO (44-1114)  
FROM: SAC, SAVANNAH (44-1768) (RUC)  
RE: MURKIN  
OO: MEMPHIS

Re Chicago airtel to Savannah dated 12/3/68.

RE: RAYMOND LEE RUSSELL, SR., aka  
Raymond Russell  
Ray Russell *m-296*  
*1A-256*

Enclosed herewith for the Chicago Division are the following:

One (1) copy of an FD-302 indicating contact with Mr. LAMAR L. MCGREGOR, Record Clerk, Record Room, Georgia State Prison (GSP), Tattnall County, Ga., on 12/11/68.

One (1) copy of an FD-302 indicating contact with RAYMOND LEE RUSSELL, SR., GSP #55435, GSP, Tattnall County, Ga., on 12/11/68.

Enclosed herewith for the Memphis Division are the following:

Eight (8) copies of an FD-302 indicating contact with Mr. LAMAR L. MCGREGOR, Record Clerk, Record Room, GSP, Tattnall County, Ga., on 12/11/68.

Eight (8) copies of an FD-302 indicating contact with RAYMOND LEE RUSSELL, SR., GSP #55435, GSP, Tattnall County, Ga., on 12/11/68.

2 - Chicago (Enc. 2)  
2 - Memphis (Enc. 16) (44-1987)  
1 - Savannah  
SJS/fme  
(5)

*44-1987-Sub-E-1094B*  
*Shuter*  
*Shuter*  
*12/18*

ROBERT K. DWYER  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

LLOYD A. RHODES  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

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JOSEPH L. PATTERSON  
BILLY F. GRAY  
EUGENE C. GAERIG  
HARVEY HERRIN  
F. GLEN SISSON  
JOHN W. PIEROTTI

December 4, 1968

Mr. Robert Jensen  
Special Agent in Charge  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Federal Building  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

Dear Mr. Jensen:

Judge W. Preston Battle called me this morning and reported to me the following:

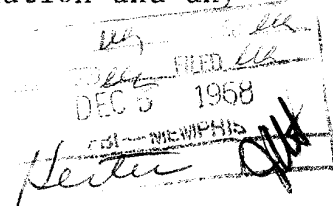
At approximately 1:00 a.m. this date, Judge Battle received a telephone call at his residence (Judge Battle assumes this was a long distance call but does not know for sure.) from a person identifying himself as Robert Clayton Cole of 1037 North Second Street, Hamilton, Ohio, telephone number 1-513-895-9878. Cole stated he had a brother that lived in Highland Springs (What state this is in was either not related by Cole or not remembered by Judge Battle.).

Cole related to Judge Battle that on January 5, 1968, he was with Ray in Winchester, Virginia, traveling in a truck. A red Volkswagen with red license plates was following the truck. According to Cole, Ray had killed a Negro who was a known communist and whom Mr. J. Edgar Hoover had called a liar. Cole stated he knows about the conspiracy to kill Dr. King. He further stated the FBI knows about his knowledge of the case, but is not treating him right. Cole mentioned the name of a Robert Longsdorf of Cincinnati, Ohio, and a FBI agent by the name of Mr. Warren. Cole stated he is interested in seeing that Ray gets a fair trial.

Judge Battle states that in his opinion Cole, at the time he was talking to Judge Battle on the phone, could have been under the influence of alcohol or something else, or could possibly be a mental case.

I pass this on to you for your information and any

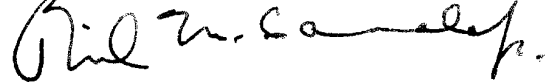
44-1987-Sub-E-1093



Page 2  
Mr. Robert Jensen  
December 4, 1968

appropriate action the FBI feel needs to be taken in the premises.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Phil M. Canale, Jr.", written in dark ink.

PHIL M. CANALE, JR.  
District Attorney General

PMCJr:MEF

12/5/68

AIRTEL

AM

TO: SAC, CINCINNATI  
FROM: SAC, MEMPHIS (44-1987) P  
MURKIN.

Submitted herewith for the information of Cincinnati is a Xerox of letter received this date at Memphis. The letter is self-explanatory.

It is requested that Cincinnati advise of information in its files regarding ROBERT CLAYTON COLE and an evaluation of COLE's mental stability. For the information of Cincinnati, indices at Memphis do not disclose any relationship between COLE and JAMES EARL RAY.

2 Cincinnati (Enc.) AM  
1 Memphis

RGJ:BN  
(3)

*Hester*  
*Tell Conale*  
*of info w/*  
*Cinc. responds*  
*RV*

44-1987-Sub-E-1095A

~~44-1987-Sub-E-1095A~~

*[Redacted]*  
*[Redacted]*  
*[Redacted]*  
*[Redacted]*

*Hester*

6/25/68

AIRTEL

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, CINCINNATI (157-1893) (P)

SUBJECT: MURKIN

Re NY tel to Bureau, 6/21/68.

Efforts to locate an WNU COLE at 137 North Second Street, Hamilton, Ohio, on 6/22/68, were unproductive.

On 6/24/68, ROBERT CLAYTON COLE was located and interviewed at this address. He furnished the following information:

He is a chronic alcoholic, who receives a \$79 per month pension check from the U. S. Government for a non-service connected injury, and has received this money since approximately 1956 after being discharged from the service due to extreme nervousness. He has not been employed on any regular basis since approximately 1953 and also receives a 100 % disability payment under Social Security since he is unable to work because of this nervousness. He has been in the VA Hospital at Cincinnati, Ohio, on two occasions for nervousness and his alcoholic problem, and has been confined at the VA Hospital at Cincinnati approximately 30 times for the same reasons. He has also been committed on one occasion to the Longview Mental Hospital at Cincinnati, Ohio.

3-Bureau (RM)  
1-New York (RM)  
1-Cincinnati

FJB/LLH  
(5)

44-1987-Sub-E-1025B

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
JUN 26 1968	
FBI - MEMPHIS	

Hester

157-1893-287

T. E. [Signature]

Searched \_\_\_\_\_  
Serialized \_\_\_\_\_  
Indexed \_\_\_\_\_  
Filed \_\_\_\_\_

CI 157-1883

Around 12/25/67, he began to drink heavily, and around 1/2/68, after being drunk for approximately 6 days, he went to Cincinnati, Ohio, and obtained a room at the Fort Washington Hotel. He had received his \$79 check from the government on 1/2/68, and after arriving at Cincinnati, he continued to drink heavily at the Bayhorse Tavern. On approximately 1/3/68, he was still drunk and had spent all of his money and spent that night in the Newport, Kentucky Jail in protective custody. He was released on 1/4/68, and again returned to the Bayhorse Tavern where he "bused" more drinks. He met an FNU MURPHY, whom he had known at the VA Hospital at Chillicothe, and MURPHY invited him to go to Richmond, Virginia, where he knew a woman that would reportedly take care of them.

They left Cincinnati, Ohio, on 1/4/68, in an old white Ford which belonged to MURPHY. It was cold and snowing heavily, and the car's heater was inoperative. When they reached the vicinity of Winchester, Virginia, COLE got out of the vehicle because he was cold. MURPHY continued on towards Richmond in the automobile.

COLE attempted to "bus" whiskey at Winchester, Virginia, but was unsuccessful, and began to hitchhike at the outskirts of town. He was picked up by a white male driving a semi tractor and trailer, which was freshly painted a dark green. This truck had lettering on the cab's doors, but he could recall no further details about the vehicle.

On 1/5/68, he was riding in this vehicle toward Richmond, Virginia, and was asleep. He felt the driver shaking him, and when he was fully awake, he realized that the driver was very upset and was saying "Give me the gun" as he pointed toward a small green over-the-hill bag on the seat of the cab. COLE handed him a small plated .45 automatic with black handles, and the driver, who was very upset, stated that he had just seen a car load of Negroes pass the truck and he was going to "get him some nigger bait". The driver calmed down shortly thereafter, and they stopped at a truck stop where COLE attempted to call, on a collect basis, his sister at Hamilton, Ohio, to obtain funds. His sister would not

CE 157-1893

accept the call. The driver of the vehicle stated that he was from California and was going to Jacksonville, Florida.

COLE got out of the truck at the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia, and took a bus to his brother's residence at Highland Springs, Virginia, and there obtained his Social Security check, which was being mailed to him in care of his brother. The following night he was jailed on drunk charges at Richmond, Virginia, and on approximately 1/7/68, returned to the Cincinnati, Ohio, area by train.

In April, 1968, he was confined to the VA Hospital at Chillicothe, Ohio, and while there observed photographs of JAMES EARL RAY, which appeared in the Newswatch magazine. He immediately recognized RAY as the driver of the green truck, with whom he had ridden on approximately 1/5/68.

He obtained his release from the hospital without mentioning this to any officials.

On 6/21 or 22/68, exact date not recalled by COLE, he placed a telephone call to CBS in New York, New York, and told them that he had seen RAY at Winchester, Virginia. He received a telephone call later in the day from CBS, but he recalls no further details concerning either of these telephone calls.

On 6/24/68, the files of the Hamilton PD were reviewed, which shows that COLE has had numerous drunk arrests. The files also indicate that he was charged and convicted of resisting arrest in September, 1954, and that he attempted suicide in November, 1954, by cutting his wrists. On the same date, the files of the Hamilton Credit Bureau and the Butler County SO at Hamilton, Ohio, were reviewed, but no record identifiable with COLE was located.

A review of Cincinnati indices show that COLE has contacted this office on three occasions.

CI 157-1893

In June, 1964, he appeared in a drunken condition at the office in possession of an application, and stated that he wanted to apply for "FBI work." He was immediately rejected as a very undesirable applicant.

On 7/25/66, he again appeared at the Cincinnati Office in a drunken condition, and stated that unless he was locked up for a thirty-day period, he would commit suicide. The Cincinnati PD was advised, and he was arrested by them and removed from the office.

On 5/13/68, COLLE appeared at the office and again had been drinking prior to his arrival. He talked to the Complaint Clerk, after demanding a sound-proof room for interview purposes, about non-specific information which made little if any sense. When questioned further in an effort to make some sense out of his rambling conversation, he became very belligerent and left the office. He has been recommended for inclusion in the Chronic Complainant Index.

UACB, no further action being taken by Cincinnati.

The following description of COLLE was obtained from observation and interview:

Race:	Caucasian
Sex:	Male
DOB:	[redacted] at Hamilton, Ohio
Height:	5'9½"
Weight:	154
Hair:	Brown
Eyes:	Blue
Tattoos:	Left forearm: "Bob" and "Joy" inscribed on a heart and cross; right leg, outline of a naked woman
Mother:	MOLLY ETHEL COLLE, 137 North Second, Hamilton, Ohio
Father:	LEE COLLE (deceased)



CI 157-1093

Brother: LEE BAKER COLE,  
#7 North Fern Avenue,  
Highland Springs, Virginia

Sister: Mrs. HENRY LOPRIGIO,  
114 South "G" Street,  
Hamilton, Ohio

FBI #: 830 115 B

COLE SHOULD BE APPROACHED WITH CAUTION AND  
CONSIDERED AS A POSSIBLE THREAT.

F B I

Date: 12/10/68

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
(Type in plaintext or code)Via AIRTEL \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority)

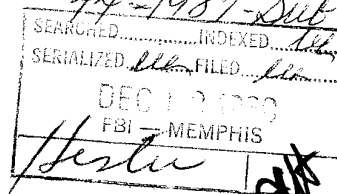
TO : SAC, MEMPHIS (44-1987)  
FROM : SAC, CINCINNATI (157-1893) (RUC)  
SUBJECT: MURKIN

Re Memphis airtel to Cincinnati 12/5/68, and  
New York teletype to Bureau, Cincinnati, and Memphis, 6/21/68,  
concerning COLE.

Enclosed herewith for Memphis is a xerox copy of  
a five page airtel to the Bureau dated 6/25/68, concerning  
contact with ROBERT CLAYTON COLE. As pointed out in  
enclosed airtel, COLE admits to being a chronic alcoholic,  
and has spent time in Longview Mental Hospital, Cincinnati.

2 - Memphis (Enc. - 1) (RM)  
1 - Cincinnati

CWH:jms  
(3)



Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Sent \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Agent in Charge

841 Federal Office Building  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103  
December 12, 1968

Mr. Phil M. Canale, Jr.  
District Attorney General  
Fifteenth Judicial Circuit of Tennessee  
157 Poplar Avenue  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

Dear Mr. Canale:

Reference is made to your letter of December 4, 1968, concerning Robert Clayton Cole, who has been in touch telephonically with Judge W. Preston Battle.

Cole has visited our Cincinnati Office on several occasions and on one such occasion on July 25, 1966, he threatened to commit suicide if he were not locked up for a 30-day period. As a result of this, he was taken into custody by the Cincinnati Police. We have interviewed him as recently as June 24, 1968, at which time he admitted being a chronic alcoholic and admits having been confined to the Veterans Administration Hospitals at both Cincinnati and at Chillicothe, Ohio, on approximately 30 separate occasions for "nervousness" and because of his problem with alcohol.

This is being furnished for your information in the event you or Judge Battle should be contacted by Cole.

Very truly yours,

*RCV*  
ROBERT G. JENSEN  
Special Agent in Charge

2 Addressee  
① Memphis (44-1987)  
JCH:BN  
(3)  
*L E*

SEARCHED *UH*

INDEXED

FILED *14*

*44-1987-Sub E-10920*

OFFICE OF  
**CLERK OF SUPREME COURT**

**STATE OF TENNESSEE**

**KNOXVILLE 37901**

JOHN A. PARKER, CLERK  
ANNA S. BOYD, D.C.  
HELEN BISHOP, D.C.

P.O. BOX 444  
TEL. 615/525-5171

January 28, 1970

Mr. Robert C. Cole  
Veterans Hospital  
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

Re: STATE OF TENNESSEE  
vs.  
JAMES EARL RAY  
Shelby County - Murder

Dear Sir:

I have received your letter addressed to the Supreme Court of Tennessee dated January 27, 1970, but postmarked January 26, 1970, at Chillicothe, Ohio.

Inasmuch as you claim to have been with James Earl Ray before he was supposed to have shot Martin Luther King, I am relaying copies of your letter of January 27th to appropriate investigative and prosecutive agencies who have a possible interest in this matter.

Yours truly,

*Robert Clayton Cole ✓ Sub E-1095  
1095A  
1095B  
1095C  
1095D*  
**John A. Parker**  
Clerk of the Court

JAP:br

~~cc:~~ Hon. David M. Pack  
Attorney General of Tennessee  
Supreme Court Bldg.  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)

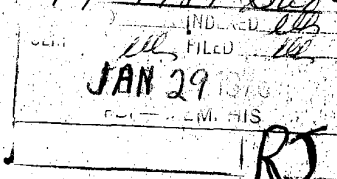
cc: Hon. Phil M. Canale, Jr.  
District Attorney General  
Shelby County Court House  
Memphis, Tenn. 38101 (Encl.)

cc: Hon. Ross W. Dyer, Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of Tennessee  
Halls, Tenn. 38040 (Encl.) (Info.)

cc: Mr. Harry J. Morgan, SAC  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
415 U. S. Post Office & Court House Bldg.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202 (Encl.)

✓cc: Mr. Robert G. Jensen, SAC  
F.B.I.  
841 Federal Office Bldg.  
Memphis, Tenn. 38103 (Encl.)

cc: Gov. Buford Ellington  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)



RECEIVED

JAN 28 1970

JOHN A. PARKER, Clerk

By *JP*

January 27, 1970

Dear Sir;

I was very sad and disappointed, when you denied James Earl Ray a new trial. I can see now, very clearly that you and the people of the State of Tennessee and the Federal Government are afraid of the ~~the~~ truth. You are afraid of trouble from negroes, if the truth is told. I was with James Earl Ray, before he was suppose to have shot Martin Luther King. Under circumstances, that will prove a giant conspiracy, by many people to kill Martin King. I told the Cincinnati, Ohio FBI Office about Ray the first part of May 1968. Governor Ellington of Tennessee also knows my story. I told Judge William Preston Battle my story about 2 weeks before Ray's trial and everything went wrong for him. Because you people are afraid of the truth to be told. I believe that Ray deserves a new trial with me as a witness. I hope to hear from you soon, if you are not too cowardly to answer.

Yours truly,

Robert C. Cole

Robert C. Cole  
Veterans Hospital  
Chillicothe, Ohio



State of Tennessee  
Supreme Court  
Knoxville, Tennessee

1-29-70

AIRTEL

AM

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (44-38861)  
FROM: SAC, MEMPHIS (44-1987)  
MURKIN

Submitted herewith for the information and completion of Bureau files is copy of letter received from JOHN A. PARKER, Clerk of the Supreme Court, Knoxville, Tennessee. It is noted PARKER has furnished copies to numerous people in the State of Tennessee, including the SAC at Memphis, and also furnished a copy to the SAC, Cincinnati.

In addition to PARKER's letter, a copy of a letter written by ROBERT C. COLE was also furnished. Xerox copy of this letter is also enclosed to Bureau.

The Memphis Division has furnished a letter to Mr. PHIL M. CANALE, District Attorney General, Shelby County, advising of receipt of PARKER's letter and the enclosure from ROBERT C. COLE. Mr. CANALE has been advised this office contemplates no additional action in this matter.

For the information of the Bureau, Cincinnati by Airtel 6-25-68 in captioned case furnished a 5-page Airtel re ROBERT CLAYTON COLE, who appears identical with correspondent in this matter. COLE at that time was described by Cincinnati as a chronic alcoholic who has not been employed on any regular basis since about 1956. COLE had been in the Veterans Hospital at Cincinnati, as well as the Veterans Hospital at Chillicothe. He has also been committed on one occasion to the Longview Mental Hospital at Cincinnati, Ohio.

Memphis indices disclose that in December, 1968, ROBERT CLAYTON COLE had telephonically contacted Judge W. PRESTON BATTLE re information in the KING killing. COLE claimed that he knew of a conspiracy to kill Dr. KING and that he had mentioned his knowledge to the Cincinnati Office. Cincinnati did furnish Memphis a copy of its 5-page Airtel concerning COLE.

2 BUREAU (Enc.2) (AM)  
1 MEMPHIS  
RGJ:BN (3)

*RJ*  
*Copy to Cincinnati*

SEARCHED  
SERIALIZED *llh*  
INDEXED *llh*

*44-1987-Sub-E-1095F*

841 Federal Office Building  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103  
January 29, 1970

Mr. Phil Canale  
District Attorney General  
157 Poplar Avenue  
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

Dear Mr. Canale:

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King

Reference is made to letter dated January 28, 1970, forwarded by John A. Parker, Clerk of the Court, Supreme Court, State of Tennessee.

Based on my review of this matter, it appears that Robert C. Cole may well be identical with the Robert Clayton Cole concerning whom we sent you a letter dated December 12, 1968. In that letter we pointed out that Cole had visited our Cincinnati Office on several occasions. He had been interviewed as recently as June 24, 1968, at which time he admitted being a chronic alcoholic and having been confined to the Veterans Administration Hospital at both Cincinnati and Chillicothe, Ohio, on approximately thirty occasions. This office contemplates no further action in this matter.

Very truly yours,

ROBERT G. JENSEN  
Special Agent in Charge

1 - Addressee  
1 - Memphis (44-1987)  
RGJ:BN  
(2)

44-1987-Sub-E-10950  
-10950

llb

llb

llb

F B I

Date: **2/3/70**

Transmit the following in \_\_\_\_\_  
(Type in plaintext or code)

Via **AIRTEL** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Priority)

TO: SAC, Memphis (44-1987)

✓ FROM: Director, FBI (44-38861)

**MURKIN**

Reurairtel 1/29/70 and its enclosure.

Incorporate pertinent information in referenced communication and Cincinnati airtel 6/25/68 in LHM suitable for dissemination to Department.

*Handled  
2/6/70*

44-1987-Sub-E-1095H

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
FEB 5 1970	
FBI - MEMPHIS	

Sent Via \_\_\_\_\_ M Per \_\_\_\_\_



OFFICE OF  
CLERK OF SUPREME COURT

STATE OF TENNESSEE

KNOXVILLE 37901

JOHN A. PARKER, CLERK  
ANNA S. BOYD, D.C.  
HELEN BISHOP, D.C.

P.O. BOX 444  
TEL. 615/525-5171

February 5, 1970

Mr. Harry J. Morgan  
Special Agent in Charge  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
415 U. S. Post Office & Court House Bldg.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Re: STATE OF TENNESSEE  
vs.  
JAMES EARL RAY  
Shelby County - Murder

Dear Sir:

Under date of January 28, 1970, I disseminated copies of a letter from Robert C. Cole, Veterans Hospital, Chillicothe, Ohio, wherein Cole claimed to have information concerning James Earl Ray, the convicted slayer of Martin Luther King.

On February 4, 1970, I received another letter from Robert C. Cole dated January 30, 1970, copies of which I am enclosing for your information.

Very truly yours,

*John A. Parker*

John A. Parker  
Clerk of the Court

44-1987-Sub-E-1095I

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
FEB 10 1970	
FBI - MEMPHIS	

JAP:br  
Enclosure

cc: Hon. Ross W. Dyer, C. J.  
Supreme Court of Tennessee  
Halls, Tenn. 38040 (Encl.) (Info)

cc: Honorable David M. Pack  
Attorney General of Tennessee  
Supreme Court Bldg.  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)

cc: Mr. Robert G. Jensen, SAC  
F.B.I.  
841 Federal Office Bldg.  
Memphis, Tenn. 38103 (Encl.)

cc: Hon. Phil M. Canale, Jr.  
District Attorney General  
Shelby County Court House  
Memphis, Tenn. 38101 (Encl.)

cc: Gov. Buford Ellington  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)

Jan. 30, 1970

Dear Mr. Parker;

I was very glad to receive your letter you wrote to me January 28. I got it today. I see that you are a very dedicated person. At least you were concerned enough to take notice of my letter and information. Only Attorney J.B. Stoner has written to me in this case. I talked to Robert W. Hill Jr. over the phone, who is Mr. Ray's other lawyer. We agreed with each other. He said his mail was being tampered with, since he took this case. My mail also has been tampered with. Since, I told the FBI in Cincinnati, Ohio the first part of May 1968. Now, I also write to the Shelby County Legal Aid Society and the Prosecutor's Office in Memphis. And Governor Buford Ellington of the State of Tennessee. I was very furious from their reactions. Exceptionally the FBI's reaction and the rest of them except Mr. Ray's lawyers. The FBI told me to go to Church and pray. And the rest of them hid themselves and wouldn't write or answer me.

(over)

If I can be of any more assistance to you let me know right away. I only want Mr. Kay to have a honest to goodness fair chance and the truth to come out. If Mr. Kay deserves a new trial then I want to know for sure that he gets one. And not a bunch of wispy waspy run around. You are free to write to me at anytime. I will close for now. Lots of good luck to you.

Yours Truly,  
Robert C. Cole  
Veterans Hospital  
Chillicothe, Ohio

Memphis, Tennessee  
February 6, 1970

RE: ASSASSINATION OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

By letter dated January 28, 1970, John A. Parker, Clerk of the Supreme Court, State of Tennessee, furnished a copy of a letter which had been forwarded by him to Mr. Robert C. Cole, Veterans Administration Hospital, Chillicothe, Ohio. This letter is set forth as follows:

"January 28, 1970

"Mr. Robert C. Cole  
Veterans Hospital  
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

Re: STATE OF TENNESSEE  
vs.  
JAMES EARL RAY  
Shelby County - Murder

"Dear Sir:

"I have received your letter addressed to the Supreme Court of Tennessee dated January 27, 1970, but postmarked January 28, 1970, at Chillicothe, Ohio.

"Inasmuch as you claim to have been with James Earl Ray before he was supposed to have shot Martin Luther King, I am relaying copies of your letter of January 27th to appropriate investigative and prosecutive agencies who have a possible interest in this matter.

"Yours truly,

/s/ John A. Parker  
Clerk of the Court

cc: Hon. David M. Pack  
Attorney General of Tennessee  
Supreme Court Bldg.  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)

44-1987-Sub-E-1095J

4 Bureau  
1 Cincinnati  
1 Memphis  
RGJ:BN  
(6)  
44-1987

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-2-

- "cc: Hon. Phil M. Canale, Jr.  
District Attorney General  
Shelby County Court House  
Memphis, Tenn. 38101 (Encl.)
- "cc: Hon. Ross W. Dyer, Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of Tennessee  
Halls, Tenn. 38040 (Encl.)(Info)
- "cc: Mr. Harry J. Morgan, SAC  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
415 U. S. Post Office & Court House Bldg.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202 (Encl.)
- "cc: Mr. Robert G. Jensen, SAC  
F. B. I.  
841 Federal Office Bldg.  
Memphis, Tenn. 38103 (Encl.)
- "cc: Gov. Buford Ellington  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)"

As an enclosure to the above-quoted letter, Mr. PARKER furnished a Xerox of a letter which he had received from Robert C. Cole dated January 27, 1970. This letter is set forth hereafter:

"January 27, 1970

"Dear Sir:

"I was very sad and disappointed, when you denied James Earl Ray a new trial. I can see now, very clearly that you and the people of the State of Tennessee and the Federal Government are afraid of the truth. You are afraid of trouble from negroes, if the truth is told. I was with James Earl Ray, before

-2-

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-3-

"he was suppose to have shot Martin Luther King. Under circumstances, that will prove a giant conspiracy, by many people to kill Martin King. I told the Cincinnati, Ohio FBI Office about Ray the first part of May 1968. Governor Ellington of Tennessee also knows my story. I told Judge William Preston Battle my story about 2 weeks before Ray's trial and everything went wrong for him. Because you people are afraid of the truth to be told. I believe that Ray deserves a new trial with me as a witness. I hope to hear from you soon, if you are not too cowardly to answer.

"Yours truly,

/s/ Robert C. Cole"

On December 4, 1968, PHIL M. CANALE, JR., District Attorney, Shelby County, Tennessee, advised the Memphis Office of the FBI that Judge W. PRESTON BATTLE (who was Presiding Judge in this matter) reported the following information to him:

At approximately 1 a.m. on December 4, 1968, Judge BATTLE received a telephone call at his residence from a person who identified himself as ROBERT CLAYTON COLE of 1037 North Second Street, Hamilton, Ohio, Telephone 1-513-395-9878. COLE reportedly told Judge BATTLE that on January 5, 1968, he was with RAY in Winchester, Virginia, traveling in a truck. A red Volkswagen with red license plates was following the truck. According to COLE, RAY had killed a Negro who was a known communist and whom Mr. J. EDGAR HOOVER had called a liar. COLE stated he was interested in seeing that RAY gets a fair trial.

Mr. CANALE further advised that Judge BATTLE stated in his opinion COLE at the time he talked to Judge BATTLE on the telephone was under the influence of alcohol or something else, or could possibly have been a mental case.

-3-

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-4-

On June 24, 1968, ROBERT CLAYTON COLE was interviewed by representatives of the Cincinnati Office of the FBI. COLE at that time was located at an address of 137 North Second Street, Hamilton, Ohio. During the course of the interview, ROBERT CLAYTON COLE advised he was a chronic alcoholic who received a \$79.00 per month pension check from the U. S. Government from a non-service-connected injury. He also stated he has received this money since about 1956, after having been discharged from the service due to extreme nervousness. He claimed no employment on a regular basis since about 1956 and also claimed he had received 100% disability payment from the Social Security Administration since he is unable to work due to nervousness. He stated he had been in the Veterans Hospital at Cincinnati, Ohio, on two occasions for nervousness and his alcoholic problem. He also said that he had been committed on one occasion to the Longview Mental Hospital at Cincinnati, Ohio. In addition, COLE advised he had been confined at the Veterans Hospital at Chillicothe, Ohio, approximately thirty times for the same reason.

After furnishing this background information he furnished this story:

Around 12/25/67, he began to drink heavily, and around 1/2/68, after being drunk for approximately 6 days, he went to Cincinnati, Ohio, and obtained a room at the Fort Washington Hotel. He had received his \$79 check from the Government on 1/2/68, and after arriving at Cincinnati, he continued to drink heavily at the Bayhouse Tavern. On approximately 1/3/68, he was still drunk and had spent all of his money and spent that night in the Newport, Kentucky Jail in protective custody. He was released on 1/4/68, and again returned to the Bayhorse Tavern where he "bummed" more drinks. He met an FNU MURPHY, whom he had known at the VA Hospital at Chillicothe, and MURPHY invited him to go to Richmond, Virginia, where he knew a woman that would reportedly take care of them.

They left Cincinnati, Ohio, on 1/4/68, in an old white Ford which belonged to MURPHY. It was cold and snowing heavily, and the car's heater was inoperative. When they reached the vicinity of Winchester, Virginia, COLE got out of the vehicle because he was cold. MURPHY continued on towards Richmond in the automobile.

-4-

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-5-

COLE attempted to "bum" whiskey at Winchester, Virginia, but was unsuccessful, and began to hitchhike at the outskirts of town. He was picked up by a white male driving a semi tractor and trailer, which was freshly painted a dark green. This truck had lettering on the cab doors, but he could recall no further details about the vehicle.

On 1/5/68, he was riding in this vehicle toward Richmond, Virginia, and was asleep. He felt the driver shaking him, and when he was fully awake, he realized that the driver was very upset and was saying "hand me the gun" as he pointed toward a small green overnight bag on the seat of the cab. COLE handed him a .38 Smith & Wesson .45 automatic with black handles and the driver, who was very upset, stated he had just seen a car load of Negroes pass the truck and he was going to "get him some nigger bait." The driver calmed down shortly thereafter, and they stopped at a truck stop where COLE attempted to call, on a collect basis, his sister at Hamilton, Ohio, to obtain funds. His sister would not accept the call. The driver of the vehicle stated he was from California and was going to Jacksonville, Florida.

COLE got out of the truck at the outskirts of Richmond, Virginia, and took a bus to his brother's residence at Highland Springs, Virginia, and there obtained his Social Security check, which was being mailed to him in care of his brother. The following night he was jailed on drunk charges at Richmond, Virginia, and on approximately 1/7/68, returned to the Cincinnati, Ohio, area by train.

In April, 1968, he was confined to the VA Hospital at Chillicothe, Ohio, and while there observed photographs of JAMES EARL RAY, which appeared in the Newsweek Magazine. He immediately recognized RAY as the driver of the green truck, with whom he had ridden on approximately 1/5/68.

He obtained his release from the hospital without mentioning this to any officials.

On 6/21/68 or 6/22/68, exact date not recalled by COLE,

-5-



Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-6-

he placed a telephone call to CBS in New York, New York, and told them that he had seen RAY at Winchester, Virginia. He received a telephone call later in the day from CBS, but can recall no further details concerning either of these telephone calls.

Other information available discloses that in June, 1964, COLE appeared at the Cincinnati Office of the FBI in a drunken condition, seeking employment. He again appeared on July 25, 1966, at the Cincinnati FBI Office in a drunken condition, requesting that unless he was locked up for a 30-day period he would commit suicide. He was taken into custody at this time by the Cincinnati Police Department. On May 13, 1968, COLE again appeared at the Cincinnati Office and gave every indication of having been drinking prior to his arrival there. He requested a soundproof room for interview purposes, furnished non-specific information, became belligerent, and thereafter left the Cincinnati Office.

**ROBERT CLAYTON COLE is described as follows:**

Race	Caucasian
Sex	Male
DOB	[redacted] at Hamilton, Ohio
Height	5'9½"
Weight	154
Hair	Brown
Eyes	Blue
Tattoos	Left forearm, "Bob" and "Joy" inscribed over a heart and cross; right leg, outline of a naked woman
Mother	MOLLY ETHEL COLE, 137 North Second, Hamilton, Ohio
Father	LEE COLE, deceased
Brother	LEE BAKER COLE, #7 North Fern Avenue, Highland Springs, Virginia
Sister	Mrs. NANCY LOPRIORE, 114 South "G" Street, Hamilton, Ohio
FBI #	830 115 B

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-7-

By letter dated February 5, 1970, JOHN A. PARKER, Clerk of the Supreme Court, State of Tennessee, furnished a copy of a letter which he had forwarded to the Agent in Charge, FBI Office, Cincinnati, Ohio. This letter is set forth hereafter:

"Dear Sir:

"Under date of January 28, 1970, I disseminated copies of a letter from Robert C. Cole, Veterans Hospital, Chillicothe, Ohio, wherein Cole claimed to have information concerning James Earl Ray, the convicted slayer of Martin Luther King.

"On February 4, 1970, I received another letter from Robert C. Cole dated January 30, 1970, copies of which I am enclosing for your information.

"Very truly yours,

/s/ John A. Parker  
John A. Parker  
Clerk of the Court

"JAP:br  
Enclosure

"cc: Honorable David M. Pack  
Attorney General of Tennessee  
Supreme Court Bldg.  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)

"cc: Hon. Phil M. Canale, Jr.  
District Attorney General  
Shelby County Court House  
Memphis, Tenn. 38101 (Encl.)

"cc: Hon. Ross W. Dyer, C. J.  
Supreme Court of Tennessee  
Halls, Tenn. 38040 (Enc.1)(Info)

-7-

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-8-

"cc: Mr. Robert G. Jensen, SAC  
F.B.I.  
841 Federal Office Bldg.  
Memphis, Tenn. 38103 (Enc.1)

"cc: Gov. Buford Ellington  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219 (Encl.)

As an enclosure to the letter from Mr. PARKER, there was a letter dated January 30, 1970, which had been prepared by ROBERT C. COLE, Veterans Hospital, Chillicothe, Ohio. This letter is set out hereafter:

"Jan. 30, 1970

"Dear Mr. Parker:

" I was very glad to receive your letter you wrote to me January 28. I got it today. I see that you are a very dedicated person. At least you were concerned enough to take notice of my letter and information. Only Attorney J. B. Stoner has written to me in this case. I talked to Robert W. Hill, Jr. over the phone, who is Mr. Ray's other lawyer. We agreed with each other. He said his mail was being tampered with, since he took this case. My mail also has been tampered with. Since, I told the FBI in Cincinnati, Ohio the first part of May 1968. Now, I also wrote to the Shelby County Legal Aid Society and the Prosecutor's Office in Memphis. And Governor Buford Ellington of the State of Tennessee. I was very furious from their reactions. Exceptionally the FBI's reaction and the rest of them except Mr. Ray's lawyers. The FBI told me to go to Church and pray. And the rest of them hid themselves and wouldn't write or answer me. If I can be of anymore assistance to you let me know right away. I only want Mr. Ray to have a honest to goodness fair chance and the truth to come out. If Mr. Ray deserves a new trial then I want to know for sure that he gets one. And not a bunch of wishy washy run around. You are free to write to me at anytime. I will close for now. Lots of good luck to you.

-8-

Re: Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-9-

"Yours truly,

/s/ Robert C. Cole  
Veterans Hospital  
Chillicothe, Ohio"

This document contains neither recommendations  
nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property  
of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and  
its contents are not to be distributed outside  
your agency.

- 9\* -

2-6-70

AIRTEL

AM

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (44-38861)  
FROM: SAC, MEMPHIS (44-1987)  
MURKIN

ReBuAirtel 2/3/70.

Submitted herewith is LHM suitable for dissemination.

In addition to previous information received and  
furnished the Bureau we are incorporating recent information  
received from Clerk PARKER.

2 BUREAU (Enc. 4)(AM)  
1 CINCINNATI (Enc. 1)(AM)  
① MEMPHIS

RGJ:BN  
(4)

*Harold J. Sullivan*

"A FUGITIVE WITHOUT THE CONNECTIONS"

Millions of words have been written about the small time country boy who grew into a small time hoodlum, James Earl Ray, after the senseless slaying of Martin Luther King. Many of the words written about this individual have been distorted to such an extent that they tend to picture James Earl Ray as a big time operator within the criminal underworld with countless underworld connections. When one hears the name James Earl Ray, two thoughts automatically appear within one's mind, that James Earl Ray is the assassin of the Negro leader, and that he is a escape artist who while on escape from the Missouri State Penitentiary conspired with others, unknown to assassinate the Negro leader.

While it is factual that Ray was an escaped convict, he was far from being another Willie Sutton, and it is fatuous to believe that such an infinitesimal hoodlum with infinitesimal ideas could have possessed the connections to become a hired killer for others.

The above statement however doesn't mean that Ray wasn't capable of murder as he was, but he wasn't capable of others having the confidence or trust in him to carry out such a assignment as assassinating King. While it is enigmatic to many how Ray after the assassination was able to elude the F.B.I., and other law officials by traveling all over the country, it is erroneous to believe that underworld sources aided him in his flight. I say this because he made too many stops in too many different places, and didn't have any money to speak about while he was in flight. If Ray would have been a hired killer, he would have had plenty of money, and would not have been traveling all over the country. Just one check of the F.B.I. files would show he was a fugitive, as his connections would have seen to it that he was rapidly carried out of the country, and concealed in places, probably beneath the name of a third party. He would have been a big time operator, and if possibly hired to slay King, could not have been trusted after the slaying.

44-1987-Sub-E-1696  
EE  
EE

9/15

Page Two

Within the underworld of crime there is a ladder. Although it is an invisible ladder to the eyes of the ethical, to the unethical it's many rungs are transparent, and the criminal element constantly strive to climb higher upon each rung. As the criminal steps higher, he is greeted by more important criminals with connections and these connections are extremely important to the climbing criminal regardless if he is a Burglar, "Contract" man, "Pistol Man," "Booster", and so forth.

Nineteen years ago in 1949 Ray commenced his climb upon the ladder when in Los Angeles, California he stole himself a pistol and stuck up a ceteraria. He was caught outside with less than fifty dollars he had taken at gun point. He served a small hitch in the County Jail for this first offense, and when released he decided that he would still remain in the world of crime but remain in it doing something less bold than sticking a pistol in someone's face. He walked into a office, looked around and saw that only a man was inside. Numerous typewriter's were resting upon the scattered desk inside the office so Ray reached over and snatched one and raced out the door with it under his arm. The man inside the office witnessed Ray extract the typewriter, but couldn't catch the benefit as he raced down the street with it, but he did the next best thing, he caught Ray's Army Discharge Paper's as they fell out of his back pocket, and Ray was arrested a few days later and sentenced to a few months in the county jail for petty larceny. This time in jail he couldn't brag to the other cons that he was inside for using a "piece", so he kept quiet about the larceny snatch, served his time, and decided that it was about time that he tried his duel skill in other parts of the country.

He traveled back to Illinois stayed there for a few days, until he got himself another pistol, then decided to make a "big score". He couldn't make up his mind just what to, or who to rob so he hired himself a cab to look the Windy City over. The memory of the LA. robbery must have penetrated his brain, and he decided that he would not take a chance of robbing another



business establishment for fear of receiving receipts duplicate to that he received in I.I., so he robbed the cab driver of about fifteen dollars. After the cabbie turned the "Big Score" over to Ray, the benefit raced from the cab, and shot down a alley in order to make his getaway, but the inauspicious "Pistol Man" ran into a deadend alley, and was rapidly apprehended by the Chicago Police.

This time Ray was found guilty and sentenced to the "Big House". It was his first time at serving a prison sentence, and he served two years. When he was released in March of 1954 he decided that the gun method of making money the easy way wasn't so easy, and that he would try to be a burglar. He was still thinking small in the way of criminal acts and five months after his release, he tried to burglarize a cleaners by kicking in the front plate glass window. Naturally the falling glass made quite a noise, and half of the Alton, Illinois Police Department arrived at the scene, and arrested the hapless Ray. He was rapidly sentenced back to the "Iron Castle" where he could think about what profession within the underworld that he would be best suited for. He was a failure at robbery, a failure at stealing penny ante objects, and a failure at burglary.

While serving his second hitch in the "Joint" he was introduced to a small time "Paper Hanger", and when they were released he decided that he would try the forgery "bit", but he soon discovered that the government didn't appreciate him passing forged money orders when he was arrested with his confederate and sentenced to four years in Leavenworth.

Ray was thirty years old when he was released from Leavenworth. He had been inside three penitentiaries, and served a few jail sentences in that thirty years and hadn't stolen two hundred dollars. While he stepped upon that first rung of the ladder of crime nearly ten years before, he was still there he had been about ten years before. He was not the type of individual who would even think of working for more than a few months at a time, and

when he was released from Leavenworth he decided that he would now hit the big time. There wouldn't be anymore cab driver robberies for him, no more stealing nickel and dime objects from downtown office buildings, and especially, no more passing phoney money orders. He decided that he was going to be a "Pistol Man", as even though he had been "Busted" twice for it, he believed he could do it better than anything else that he had attempted in the past ten years.

After being released from Leavenworth Ray journeyed to the "Show-Me-State" and committed a armed robbery, it was the largest "Score" that he had made in his ten year criminal career, about eight hundred dollars. When Ray committed a robbery, he went in the place like "Gangbusters", and came out like "Gangbusters". He believed in practicing the philosophy, "Terrify the victims first so that they'll freeze in their tracks, then you'll have them under control."

Shortly after the eight hundred dollar "Score", Ray and a confederate decided that a busy supermarket in Alton, Illinois would be a good spot to make a big "Hit" at. Ray was the pistolman and shouted to all the customers that he would kill them if they moved a muscle. His partner grabbed two handful of cash totaling \$ 2,200.00, and raced for the stolen car sitting outside the store with Ray a shadow on his heels. The money grabber switched to the role of a "Wheelman", and the inauspicious Ray still feeling the nest of butterflies floating around inside his stomach forgot to shut his side of the car door and fell out as the car turned the first corner. The "Wheelman seeing his partner "Evaporate" became excited and smashed the stolen car into a tree. Somehow Ray escaped apprehension, and returned to St. Louis a month later in October, 1935. He walked into another corner grocery store, flicked his pistol, screamed his demand for all the money, and walked out with two hundred dollars. He was breezing again in his new trade, as this time he used a stolen car to make his get-away, and then switched to his own car. His own car was

witnessed by a passer by as the switch was made, and Ray was quickly arrested later on that week. He went to trial in St. Louis for this robbery and was convicted and sentenced to his longest prison sentence, twenty years, in the Missouri State Penitentiary.

As the judge pronounced the huge sentence upon the bandit, Ray must have thought to himself, "I can't do that much time", as when the Deputy Sheriff started to take him back to the cell block behind the courtroom, Ray smashed the Sheriff against the cell door and broke away from him. Inside the small corridor behind the courtroom was a steel mesh fence that climbed to the top of the ceiling. Ray ran for the fence, and seeing that he could not climb over it, turned and raced for the elevator. When he tried to open the door he was amazed to see that it was the type that was essential for a key to be inserted inside it in order for the doors to open. He was apprehended on the spot. It was his first attempt at escaping, but far from his last.

When Ray Arrived at the Missouri State Penitentiary in 1959 he was incarcerated in one of the most corrupt prisons in the United States of America. Three years before he was convicted and sentenced to "Jeff City", the two thousand convicts confined behind the twenty-five foot high, gray prison walls rebelled against the Warden and brutal guards, and rioted, destroying the "Tag-plant, the Church, Movie, School, and the pants and shirt factories

By the time that Ray was printed and numbered inside the walls, a new Warden by the name of Nash had taken control of the prison and his main concern was to make a profit out of his role as the Warden. When Nash was the Warden anything could be purchased inside the "Walls", even a mans life. Life came cheap inside the prison in those days. One convict could have another strangled in the back for as little as fifteen yards of clothing, and in the single year of 1960, more than one hundred fifty convicts were strangled by other convicts, while a few were killed. Cell changes, along with job changes could be purchased inside the prison, and anyone who possessed the slightest connections and money did

absolutely as they pleased.

While Ray couldn't make it very many steps up the ladder of "Crime" in the "Free-world", his infinitesimal, and homosexual ways kept him from being anything other than a "Hoosier" at "Jeff City". A "Hoosier" inside the "Walls" of "Jeff City" was a convict who other "Cons" used to do their dirty work, and paid to keep their contraband for them. Some of these "Hoosiers" washed the other cons dirty socks, cleaned the other cons cells, and did anything in order to make a pack of smokes. While Ray was serving his time at the prison he had two things on his mind, escaping, and homosexuality. When he wasn't engaging in perverted acts in J. and K. Diningroom, he was associating with other so-called "Hoosiers" the majority who were homosexuals, in feeble attempts at escaping.

Ray worked in J. and K. Diningroom, and worked for a nickel a day, seven days a week. No convict inside the penitentiary wanted to labor in the Diningrooms, as they worked countless hours, and wasn't able to make any extra money for themselves, but any convict who had the price of twenty dollars could get, that is buy a job change without any problems, but Ray worked in the Diningroom for almost four years when he wasn't in "E-Hall" (Solitary Confinement), and he worked there because he was a nobody, and a nobody behind prison walls is about the lowest type of convict that exist.

While Ray claims that on his only successful escape that he went-over-the-wall, this is not true, and not true because it would have been virtually impossible to go over the wall at the point he states he went over it at, at the Tunnel Gate. It is my personal belief that Ray went through the wall in a tunnel, and not over it as he says. The point where he says he "propagated" from has two gun towers, twenty-five feet high on both sides of the yard. But before you can reach those two gun towers, you have to be in the open yard surrounding the back kitchen docks for

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approximately two hundred feet in all directions, and there is a corner gun tower that has to see anyone walking in any direction before he could get to the tunnel towers. There is also another gun tower located at the front side of the docks that has a clear view of any one moving in any direction up to a hundred square feet. The prison guards use the whistle system while stationed at the towers. Each fifteen minutes the guard on the tower must blow a whistle, and wave a white flag to the following gun tower guard, who in return duplicates the other guards actions. By the time the first gun tower guard has finished giving the all-clear sign, and returns inside the four by four foot tower, the other guard is just commencing to blow his whistle, and when he is finished the first guard has already re-seated himself, and has clear view of the surroundings. Even if both of the two wall gun towers guards fell into a coma, Ray could not have escaped over the wall because of the other two tunnel gun tower guards unless they all four were sound asleep at the same time, and it is very doubtful that this could have happened.

While Ray states that he went over the wall, I don't know. Maybe it sounds more exciting to him to say, I went over the wall and not through it, but at any event, going through the wall was quiet a feat, and took a lot of luck, as the trucks are shaken down three times before they are allowed through the tunnel gate.

When Ray says he was planning his escape that he sold his commissary books to other inmates for cash money in order to accumulate three hundred dollars in cash, it would have taken him two full years if he drew fifteen dollars a month, (which is all the money the prisoners are allowed to spend each month) to get one hundred eighty dollars in cash, as the commissary books sell for two dollars in books for one dollar in cash. Ray has also stated that he was never playing poker, and that he used a portion of this in order to accumulate a bankroll. Ray did play

poker, but he played in the penny ante games on the prison recreation yard, and then never in the big games. Inside the corrupt penitentiary in 1959, gambling tables were countless on the yard, and any convict who possessed the funds either hidden somewhere inside his cell, or on the prison books in the main office could gamble all night long, seven nights a week for six dollars a night. The six dollars went to the "Screw" who happened to be on duty at the cell block on that certain night, but Ray was never invited to these games because he was considered small time, and not able to afford the three to five hundred dollar lost's per month that some of the "Cons" often lost. The majority of inmates who participated in these games were men who worked leather, sold narcotic's, and sold job and cell changes, not those like Ray who labored for thirty five cents per week in the poorest diningroom.

Ray also claims that he spent the majority of his idle time reading about how to "Evaporate" from the "Iron Cage", and the different ways and means to obtain identification cards, and documents to use after he made his escape good. The truth of the matter is Ray spent most of his time inside "E"-Hall (Solitary-Confinement) and spent it there because of feeble attempts to escape, and for acts of homosexuality. Ray, the man who many believe possessed enormous connections in order to avoid apprehension while he was the most hunted man in the world, didn't even possess the connections inside "Jeff City" to gather the false identification that is so essential for a fugitive to possess before he escapes. If he would have not been considered a "Hoozier" by the "Cons" in the know behind the walls, he could have gotten any type of identification that he wanted, as back in those days driver's licenses were sold for five dollars apiece, social security cards sold for five dollars apiece, birth cards sold for ten dollars each, and even black checks could be purchased for a dollar each that the convicts printed up inside the prison print shop. In 1960 convicts at the print shop printed up so many ten dollar counterfeit bills that the F.B.I. had to start a investigation inside

the penitentiary as the prison "hacks" were accepting bribes of phony money from the "Cons" and passing the bills in the Banks of Jefferson City, so if Ray would not have been such a loser and small time thief, plus the fact he was an untrusted homosexual, he could have gotten all the I.D. that he would have ever needed, but Ray was just not in on the know while he was incarcerated.

Such a small time criminal as James Earl Ray could never have been involved in any conspiracy to slay Martin Luther King. It is without question that Ray was a thief but he was never a leader, and the so-called leaders whom he associated with inside the prison walls were like Ray himself, small time thieves and homosexuals who took the first step up the ladder of crime, but never made it above the second step, thus their only connections within the underworld were connections amongst themselves, and not worth anything. Ray, in the first place could never have been trusted to complete such a contract as he was a failure all his life, and possessed a reputation for being a failure. He was a homosexual and homosexuals within the underworld are not considered mute individuals, and thus wouldn't have been trusted to keep his mouth shut after the slaying. If Ray would have been involved in a conspiracy to murder Mr. King, immediately after the murder occurred, Ray would have been given a large amount of money, and transported out of the country, but instead he was traveling around with just a small amount of money, no clothing, and no friends to turn to in need, not even one who could get him a forged passport, and some I.D.

It is not for me to say that Ray didn't assassinate Martin Luther King, as he could have done it. He was capable of it, as he was not, but he didn't conspire with others to do it, and was not hired to do it. There are too many contract men within the underworld who could have taken care of such a job for anyone to consider hiring a small time thief such as Ray to do it. A man who failed at everything he ever attempted doing.

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If Ray did assassinate King, he did it on his own, and for reasons of his own, not for money, not for hire, not because of a conspiracy, but what ever reasons that he did it, if he did it, he after nineteen years of attempting to climb up the ladder, finally reached the top, but he reached the top of the ladder of fools, and he could never have made it one step higher than he did by being anything other than a fool, and the unethical do not hire fools to assassinate.



The End

By

Robert Earl Barnes ✓

*Robert Earl Barnes*



2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

12/18/68

AIRTEL

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI (44-38861)  
FROM: SAC, WFO (44-703) (RUC)

MURKIN

Enclosed for the Bureau and Memphis is one Xerox copy each of a document entitled "A Punk Without The Connections," by ROBERT EARL BARNES.

The enclosure was made available to WFO by AUSA HAROLD J. SULLIVAN on 12/16/68, who received it from BARNES, who is currently confined to the Maryland State Penitentiary for fifteen years for burglary.

For information of Memphis, BARNES is a notorious St. Louis-Washington, D.C. (WDC), area burglar whose testimony in both jurisdictions resulted in convictions of civilians and police officers in connection with his widespread burglary activities. He served time in the Missouri State Penitentiary, allegedly during part of time JAMES EARL RAY was there. He has furnished both reliable and unreliable information to the FBI in past.

BARNES is still of interest to news media, WDC area and in view of this enclosure being submitted for information.

3 - Bureau (Enc. 1)  
2 - Memphis (Enc. 1) *llh*  
2 - WFO  
(1-137-3677)

RTM:gbk  
(7)

*Interested  
to possible*

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