

(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 Perry 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 WABC-TV'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

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

5000 Pages Of State Evidence Convinced Ray To Plead Guilty

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

MEMPHIS TEL PATRICK

The guilty, proven act of evidence responsible for convincing James Earl Ray to plead guilty was gleaned from a staggering mound of investigative reports which began to pile up at the prosecution office shortly after the crime.

Ray, who pleaded guilty to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was held in the Shelby County Jail.

The state's attorney, James E. Beasley, said the evidence was so overwhelming that Ray had no choice but to plead guilty.

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James Earl Ray

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

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ENCLOSURE

44-38861

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 in Los 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.

He also had a lot, including a new book called "The Long Revolution" about a political system which wiped the boundaries between laborer, farmer and the spread around the world. It was shot down by a plane in the Chesapeake Bay and was downed in the air.

[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. Be... believe that... have convinced... killed Du... big man"... in a bar, or may... 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 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."

Two of them quickly answered the query.

The mystery was apparently solved by a news story at Chicago which was found mentioned though Mr. Ketchum had no recollection of it. It must be the report on the ship which literally taken it apart was a flag of all the boats found — trash on the Potomac river, the discarded, an old wine, made in the Chicago was broken. Ketchum in the river had then written the two newspapers tracked the boat to the Midwest. They

Los Angeles when they were there, although both denied having been there.

The other witness question was answered by a "yes" definitely in Los Angeles when someone called the state office in Montgomery, Ala., and asked that the license be mailed to the person coming from the south. He said they at that time were preparing to leave California. He already had filled out change of address cards for the Post Office, giving a new address in Central Delivery, Atlanta. But Mr. Beasley said Ray could have made the call himself by long distance.

He said he did not know where Ray's original trial date of Nov. 19 was scheduled, the state started checking out some of the potential witnesses. Mr. Beasley, Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Foreman, chief of 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 coerced.

He said that Mr. Stanton, who was in Houston, called Mr. Foreman 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.

He said that from the standpoint of a prosecutor seeking a compromise plea and punishment is the custom. He said the custom was to offer a 99-year sentence, which is a life sentence in that manner.

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 at the time although both parties officially denied it). Mr. Stanton was convinced that as 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 possibility 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. 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.

He said that after they were in the courtroom, they would discuss the plea on the way out. He said that Judge Battle said that on Feb. 19, 1969, he had said something in February. "He asked me that, and

malice for a trial. I was asking a guilty plea. He asked whether a guilty plea could be settled with a 99-year sentence. I 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 have to take place in open court at which time Ray would have to make clear that he understood what the plea meant."

There was a 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 carried 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 Willard and that that name Brewer could identify him. That Ray selected a newspaper, erecting the defense team, which Dr. King was shooting. That the defense team was

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

From Los Angeles, the station said, the state could call a laundry owner to identify marks on underwear dropped at the murder scene, a dance studio owner to find a bartender who worked at Thomas Reynolds' club, and a doctor at Eric S. Saltzman, a plastic surgeon, at Rush Medical Center, to tell what could be surgery scars on the disfigured, pointed

Incident
Name
Title

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 it. The stipulation, the approval of Ray's brothers, John and Jerry, was obtained too.

Up to the last minute, Ray declined to waiver and Mr. Foreman went over the documents again with him last Sunday before the special hearing and the plea was entered.

Mr. Beasley 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 this so 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 Agromarine 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-

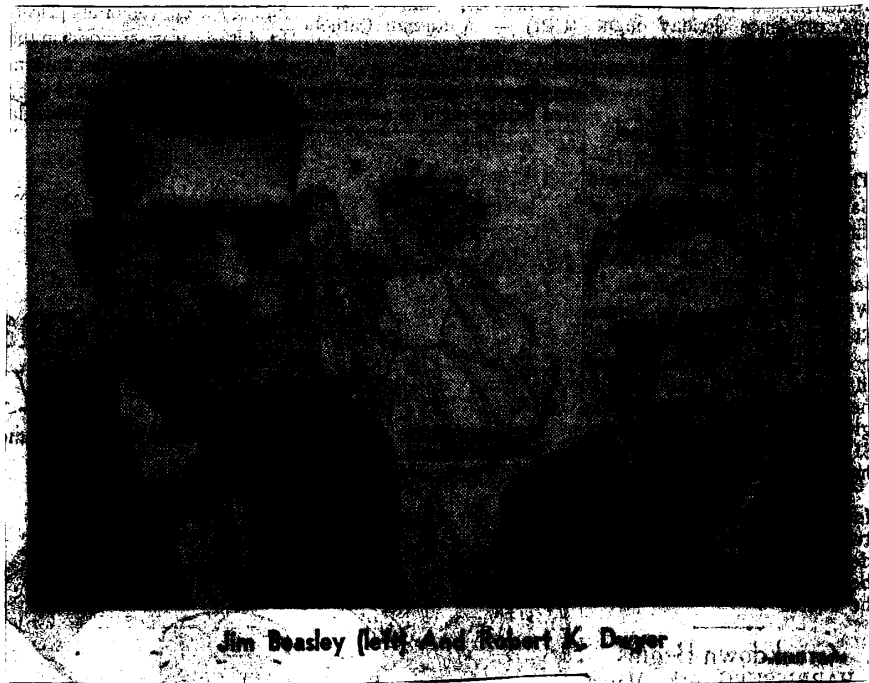
tally is the subject of a later article.)

which is a story of the agents' search for the store where Ray bought the flay in the bolt action, closing in a search for the rifle could not have been made.

"It was not until Ray said his brother told him to get a rifle, that we have found this rifle, like 'he's a rifle' rifle, wouldn't you say? I didn't want to say it, but not such a big deal. The store in the city didn't figure out what was the matter? Mr. Beasley, however, knew."

But it was the first time with what the store in the tented to be a rifle.

A search of the store in the tented to be a rifle, FBI agents who were in the store in the tented to be a rifle, parson shop in the tented to be a rifle.



2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

(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 found 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 Alabama Gun Shop in Montgomery on March 1, 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