

# Klandestine: How a Klan Lawyer and a Checkbook Journalist Helped James Earl Ray Cover Up His Crime

Pate McMichael



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At 6:01 pm on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, while standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, Martin Luther King Jr. was killed by a single bullet fired from an elevated and concealed position. Unanswered questions surround the circumstances of his demise, and many still wonder whether justice was served. After all, only one man, an escaped convict from Missouri named James Earl Ray, was punished for the crime.

On the surface, Ray did not fit the caricature of a hangdog racist thirsty for blood. Media coverage has often portrayed him as hapless and apolitical, someone who must have been paid by clandestine forces. It's a narrative that Ray himself put in motion upon his June 1968 arrest in London, then continued from jail until his death in 1998. In 1999, Dr. King's own family declared Ray an innocent man.

After his arrest, Ray forged a publishing partnership with two very strange bedfellows: a slick Klan lawyer named Arthur J. Hanes, the de facto "Klonsel" for the United Klans of America, and checkbook journalist William Bradford Huie, the darling of *Look* magazine and a longtime menace of the KKK. Despite polar opposite views on race, Hanes and Huie found common cause in the world of conspiracy. Together, they thought they could make Memphis the new Dallas.

Relying on novel primary source discoveries gathered over an eight-year period, including a trove of newly released documents and dusty files, *Klandestine* takes readers deep inside Ray's Memphis jail cell and Alabama's violent Klaverns. Told through Hanes and Huie's key perspectives, it shows how a legacy of unpunished racial killings provided the perfect exigency to sell a lucrative conspiracy to a suspicious and outraged nation.

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