GEROLD FRANK
230 West 79th Street
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Dear Sheriff Morris:

Charlie Holmes tells me that you'd like a note as to the matters I'd like to talk with you about when I come to Memphis on my next trip --I expect to be there on the 26th of June.

In essence, they flow from the job I'm doing which is to reconstruct, as far as humanly possible, the entire story of the assassination of Dr. King: a history, as detailed and authentic as it can be made. Clay Blair's book, Bill Huie's book, George McMillan's book --they will deal with one phase or another. I like to think they're writing about the battles: I'm writing about the war.

In a quick review, I'm dealing with the victim, how and why he came to Memphis, his murderer, how and why he came to Memphis, what went on at the Lorraine Motel during King's stay there, the assassination, the manhunt on all its levels (local, national and foreign), the capture, the extradition, the role played by the Attorney General's office in Memphis, the bringing of Ray here, and then, with much detail because I find it fascinating, the Sheriff's handling of everything that happened thereafter, an overwhelming task because it had to be carried out in the face of the enormous mystery of conspiracy, so that you found yourself dealing with matters far beyond the usual province of a law enforcement officer. I will also cover the various hearings, the legal maneuverings, the various lawyers, the roles of Huie, Avery, writers & assorted extras, the wild, bizarre stories,etc. In short, my job is the entire unfolding story -sight, sound, human elements and absurdities, emotions, characterizations, and all the rest, so that in years to come if someone wants to know what happened in the last two years of the 7th decade in Memphis --as well as how the city & its citizens, high and low, coped with this catastrophe that befell it through no fault of its own --this book will put them on the scene as vividly and authentically as possible.

As is clear, the role of your office is of major

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importance. My book is the only one that will go into this operation in detail, and I want the reader to see James Earl Ray during the historic months you were responsible for him --to see Ray day-by-day, the man in his cell, to know his moods, concerns, how he lived, what he talked about, how he was treated -- so far as we can learn about a man who is a loner and sociopath. You had custody of him for the longest period of time and under the most forbidding circumstances: the knowledge that there could be a conspiracy of unimaginable magnitude --perhaps international --possessing infinite resources, and you without knowledge of the identity of the conspirators --some of whom might even be rubbing shoulders with you! I think no other law enforcement officer in history has faced quite such a dilemma, and I think the chess game you had to play with an invisible opponent, whose existance had to be assumed until proved otherwise, is fascinating stuff. So I want to talk more with you, of course, and also with your men who were involved in tending James Earl Ray.

Suppose, at the time of Lincoln's assassination, there had been someone who had the time, the energy and the will to talk to all the principals; to talk to members of the audience, the ushers at Ford's Theatre, the stagehand who pulled down the curtain, the charwoman who cleaned up, the hackman outside with his carriage, and later, with Booth's jailer, the men who guarded him and all the rest . . . What a contribution to history that would have made! I'm not comparing the two assassinations, but these are the things I must learn and absorb in my very bloodstream if I am going to reconstruct the full story --and do it while memories and impressions are still fairly fresh and vivid.

I didn't mean to go on at this length. You've been absolutely decent in our relationship, and I suppose I put this all down not only to review what I'm doing and see where I stand eleven months after taking this on, but also to suggest that I'm involved in a hell of a big project. It staggers me to contemplate it. I only hope I can do justice to it.

With every best wish,

Cordially,

Gerold Frank

Sheriff William N. Morris, Jr.,
Shelby County Courthouse,
Memphis, Tennessee