



left to Right.

Shriff Bill
Morris Jr.

JAMES EARL RAY - Ken Bownds
(Middle)

at Shelby Co. Jail
July 19, 1968

Springfield CONNECTION

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Getting To Know...

Kenneth Bounds, former FBI agent, who escorted assassin James Earl Ray to jail.

By [Lindsay Gsell](#)

Thursday, March 26, 2009

When Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968, many Americans handled the tragedy in different ways.

Kenneth Bounds, a resident of Greenspring Retirement Community in Springfield, experienced King's assassination in a way different from most other people. He came face to face with the man arrested for shooting King, James Earl Ray.

As an FBI agent, it was Bounds' physique that got him assigned to the Ray case. In 1968, Bounds was 6 feet, 4 inches tall, and weighed 250 pounds. The director of the FBI at the time, J. Edgar Hoover, called for the biggest agents available, and Bounds was one of them.

He received a call on a Saturday afternoon after the shooting, and within two hours, he was on a plane to London for 11 days to pick up Ray, who using various aliases, had escaped the country. Unfortunately, Bounds said they couldn't get Ray immediately because he has been positively identified robbing a bank in London and was dealing with British authorities.

When Ray was returned to the U.S., Bounds was part of the receiving team. The FBI flew Ray in to a naval airstrip outside of Memphis early one morning. It was Bounds who put the handcuffs on Ray, and by the Sheriff of Memphis' request, helped deliver Ray to prison.

"At the time, I was just doing my job like anybody would do," said Bounds. "I knew it was a big case, but I just wanted to get the job done. Looking back, it was interesting and quite a thrill."

Because of his firsthand knowledge of the case, Bounds has a theory about where Ray found the money to buy the rifle that shot King, and also the funds to get to Memphis.

While he was working on the FBI's bank robbery desk in Washington, D.C. before the assassination, Bounds' unit had a success rate of more than 90 percent, but one case that was never solved stuck out in his mind.

Two men stole \$26,000 from a bank in Alton, Ill., the hometown of Ray. The description of the men was similar to that of Ray and his brother. Bounds believes that it was Ray and his brother who robbed the bank in Illinois and Ray used the money to buy a car to drive to Memphis and the rifle he used to shoot King.

"I can't prove this," said Bounds. "It's just a theory I have."

BESIDES WORKING on the Ray case, Bounds spent time working in different sectors of the FBI. When he first joined the Bureau, he worked in San Diego. He then went to Los Angeles, and after a brief break from the FBI, rejoined and was stationed in Springfield, Ill. He was transferred to the FBI



Donated Photo

Sheriff William N. Morris Jr. and Kenneth Bounds are shown here escorting assassin James Earl Ray into the Shelby County Jail. Morris is on the left, Ray is in the middle and Kenneth Bounds is on the right.



Photo by Robbie Hammer

Kenneth Bounds, a resident of Greenspring in Springfield.

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Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he had variety of jobs within the FBI. He spent time traveling for 13 months as an inspector's aide, taught firearms and spent time on the FBI's civil rights desk. He was on the bank robbery desk when King was assassinated and returned to that position after deliver Ray to Memphis.

After the new FBI building was built in Washington, he spent time teaching physical training and defensive tactics.

"I didn't have to wear a tie anymore, and that was fine with me," he said.

As a physical training teacher, he saw the first group of women come through the academy. According to Bounds, "they've turned out well."

"I always told them 'If you want to be an agent, you can be one,'" said Bounds. "I think they're doing a great job. They've risen to be directors and assistant directors. It was a pleasure instructing them."

After 25 years in the FBI, Bounds left the bureau to become the chief of security at the Greenbrier, a luxury resort in West Virginia. The Greenbrier is a former U.S. Government Relocation Facility and has an elaborate 112,544-square-foot bunker underneath the estate meant to accommodate over 1,100 people. Bounds enjoyed his time there. While he worked security, his wife, who is a painter, could paint the landscape around the resort.

After he retired, Bounds volunteered with an aquatics program in Fairfax County, helping people with disabilities use the pool. In 1991, he was became a top volunteer in the state of Virginia.

"It was really something," he said. "I've had a great career. I enjoyed every bit of it."



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From: George Mahoney <gmahoney21@verizon.net>
To: Sandy Robinette <mscrob@aol.com>
Cc: George Mahoney <gmahoney21@verizon.net>
Subject: FW: [Xgboys] Ex-SA Bounds and James Earl Ray
Date: Sat, 28 Mar 2009 2:11 pm

Saz-----FYI-----G

-----Original Message-----

From: xgboys-bounces@list.xgboy.com
[mailto:xgboys-bounces@list.xgboy.com] On Behalf Of Neal S.
Sent: Saturday, March 28, 2009 2:00 PM
To: xgboys
Subject: [Xgboys] Ex-SA Bounds and James Earl Ray

This is from the Connection newspaper in Springfield, VA.
Neal S.

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