

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

# Ray Begins Working Outside His Cell

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — (AP) — State prison officials have James Earl Ray working on odd jobs outside his maximum security cell in the state prison in Nashville pending federal court approval of a plan for greater freedom in the institution for the admitted slayer of Martin Luther King Jr.

Warden W. S. Neil said Ray began the work outside his cell Thursday. He had been held in the maximum security unit since he pleaded guilty to the Memphis sniper-slaying of King last March 10.

Ray recently petitioned for greater freedom in the prison saying his health was damaged by the tight confinement in his cell and it was "cruel and unusual punishment" forbidden by the U.S. Constitution.

U.S. Dist. Court Judge William E. Miller refused to order Ray released into the general population of the prison, but did direct prison officials to come up with a plan for work and exercise for him.

Neil said the program was submitted to Miller Thursday and Ray was allowed

to start working with Miller's approval "because if the judge does not approve we can always try something else."

The warden said Ray's work will include painting jobs, cleanup and serving meals to fellow prisoners in the maximum security unit.

State officials had contended that Ray's life would be in danger if he were out in the general prison population because of the notoriety of his case.

Ray is serving a 99-year sentence for the slaying of King, and lost an appeal bid before the Tennessee Supreme Court Thursday.

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