

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

# Ray Is Denied New Trial

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — (UPI) — James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has failed again in his bid for a new trial.

A three-judge panel of the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals voted unanimously Thursday to deny a petition for a new hearing.

The appellate court ruling upheld a refusal by Shelby County Criminal Court Judge William H. Williams to grant Ray a new trial.

The civil rights leader was slain in Memphis April 4, 1968. A single bullet from a sniper's gun slew King as he stood on the balcony of

his room at the Lorraine Hotel.

Ray, linked to fingerprints found on a hunting rifle, was apprehended in London and pleaded guilty to the crime.

The late Judge W. Preston Battle accepted the guilty plea and imposed a 99-year prison sentence. Under Tennessee law, a guilty plea waives the right to appeal except under certain unusual circumstances.

Ray's petition for a new trial claimed that famed defense attorney Percy Foreman of Houston coerced him into pleading guilty. Also, the petition says, the public has a right to know all the

events surrounding the death of the civil rights leader.

The petition was denied on the grounds that Ray's contentions were all unacceptable—either that they did not raise constitutional questions, had already been ruled on or were waived by the defendant's guilty plea.

Earlier, Ray had petitioned the state Supreme Court for a new trial. That petition was denied also.

Ray is presently serving his prison sentence at Tennessee's maximum-security Brushy Mountain state prison at Petros. Since he has been confined there officials say he has tried to escape twice — both times without success.

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