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Man Claims He's Entitled To Rewards in King Slaying

By TOM JONES

Press-Scimitar Staff Writer

Charles Quitman Stephens today was the first witness in a Chancery Court trial on his claim to \$185,000 in rewards offered after the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Stephens testified that he gave descriptions of a man who fired a shot from the bathroom window of a rooming house at 422½ S. Main on April 4.

Stephens, who lived in a room adjoining the bathroom, said he gave police a partial description on the day of the shooting of Dr. King as the civil rights leader stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, 406 Mulberry.

Stephens added that he later gave a fuller description of the assassin and identified a photograph of James Earl Ray, who pleaded guilty to the slaying.

Stephens, who now lives at the Madison YMCA, said he saw Ray talking with the apartment manager about renting Room 5 earlier on April 4.

"At approximately 4 or 4:30, there was a shot from the bathroom," he said. "The bathroom was

just a wall between my kitchen. Just a thin wall. I got up and there was hollering at the Lorraine Motel and I tried to get in the bathroom several times before and I couldn't.

"This time I went to the bathroom, opened the door, glanced in and then down the hall. This guy was just turning the corner down the hall."

Stephens said the man appeared to be Ray and was carrying a bundle "in some dingy colored material" under his right arm. Police said that Ray wrapped the rifle used in the slaying in a bundle, but later dropped it by a nearby store as he fled.

Harvey Gipson, attorney for Stephens, said in his opening statement that Stephens was the most important of 380 witnesses in the case. "Stephens was the only one placed on material witness bond and put in jail," he said.

Gipson said Stephens was entitled to \$50,000 reward offered by Memphis Publishing Co., \$100,000 reward posted by the City Council, \$25,000 reward offered by the Downtown Association, Chamber of Commerce and Future Memphis, \$10,000 re-

ward of National Alliance of Postal Employees, and a \$1,000 reward offered by Mrs. Awsumb.

Gipson said the rewards were placed in special accounts in 1968, but the accounts now have a balance of \$85.

Gipson argued that Ray was arrested in London, England, from photographs which had been identified by Stephens.

He added that Stephens was the only witness placed under guard following Ray's plea of guilty.

(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

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