

(Mount Clipping in Space Below)

Witness Says He Hoped To Collect King Reward

By JAMES COLE

Charles Quitman Stephens, a material witness in the 1968 slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., testified in Chancery Court yesterday that he gave information to investigators in hopes of collecting a reward.

"I got to thinking the next day (after the April 4, 1968, assassination) that if there was a reward, I wanted it," Stephens testified before Chancellor Charles A. Rond.

Stephens, 52, who is claiming \$185,000 in rewards, said he was repairing a radio in his room at a boarding house near the Lorraine Motel when he heard shots ring out from a next-door bathroom.

Stephens testified he heard the shots about 4 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. King was shot at 6:01 p.m.

"I opened my door, glanced in the bathroom and then glanced down the hall. This guy was just turning the corner," he said.

Stephens said the man, whom he later identified from police photographs as James Earl Ray, was wearing a dark suit, a light-colored shirt and a blue or blue-striped tie. He said the man was carrying a bundle three-to four-feet long wrapped in dingy colored material.

That night Stephens said he gave a partial description of the man to local police but added that he was "pretty well shook up." He said he was able to give FBI agents a better description and by that time had read about rewards being offered in Memphis newspapers.

Stephens' attorneys, Harvey L. Gipson and Robert A. Tucker, are claiming their client's description was "the prime factor" in the arrest and conviction of Ray.

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

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COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MEMPHIS, TENN.

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Ray pleaded guilty in Criminal Court to first-degree murder and was sentenced to 99 years in the state penitentiary. He is appealing the conviction in the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Defendants in the suit are individual members of the 1968 Memphis City Council, the Memphis Publishing Co., the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce, Future Memphis, Inc., Downtown Association of Memphis and the National Alliance of Post Office Employees.

The local defendants are contending that fingerprints found on the rifle identified as the murder weapon were the key factor in solving the case and that Stephens provided investigators with his description before he was aware of any rewards.

Edward Welch, a St. Louis attorney representing the postal employes, denies that the organization made a bona fide reward offer.

Ashby Smith, the organization's former president who is now deceased, announced a \$10,000 reward but was not authorized to do so, Welch said yesterday.

Frank C. Holloman, who was Memphis police director at the time of the slaying and now the executive director of Future Memphis, testified that Stephens was placed in protective custody as a material witness in the Shelby County jail during the early stages of the investigation.

Asked why Stephens was jailed, Holloman said, "Because he had been consistently drunk. We had a responsibility to see he didn't harm himself and that others didn't harm him."

Stephens testified he went to jail voluntarily. But he was released several days later after his attorneys filed a writ of habeas corpus in Circuit Court.



Charles Q. Stephens
—Staff Photo