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King Slaying

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) -- A former Memphis restaurant worker has implicated a man other than James Earl Ray in the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

An affidavit filed Friday by Ray's attorneys implicates Loyd Jowers, who already has told a national television audience that Ray wasn't the assassin.

Betty Spates' March 8 affidavit was filed in Memphis at Shelby County Criminal Court, The Tennessean newspaper reported Sunday. Spates used to work at Jowers' Memphis restaurant, Jim's Grill.

Ray pleaded guilty in 1969 to shooting King from a bathroom on the second floor of the building that housed the restaurant. He recanted a few days later and has insisted he was unwitting patsy in a plot to kill King.

"Based on everything I know, James Earl Ray was not the person who shot Dr. King," Spates said in the affidavit. "Other persons have tried to get me to change my story, saying that if I did so I would benefit financially. I have refused to do so, and will continue to refuse."

It quotes Spates as saying that Jowers "came running through the back door" of the restaurant carrying a rifle moments after King's shooting.

"He was white as a ghost and very excited. He looked like a wild man," Spates said.

Ray's attorneys are trying to get him a new trial.

Shelby County District Attorney John Pierotti has repeatedly labeled efforts to reopen the case as a hoax. Pierotti has an unlisted home number and could not be reached for comment Sunday.

Judge Joseph Brown set an April 6 date to hear Ray's request to present new evidence in the case. Ray comes up for parole on May 25.

Jowers appeared on ABC News' "Prime Time Live" in December and said he was asked to arrange King's assassination. He refused to provide more specific information unless granted immunity from prosecution. Shelby County prosecutors refused the request.

Jowers has refused interview requests and his telephone has been disconnected.