

Tests Ordered in King Case

A Memphis judge has ordered James Earl Ray's lawyers to notify him by Aug. 1 as to who would conduct a proposed new round of tests to determine whether Ray's rifle killed the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Criminal Court Judge Joe Brown also served notice that he will press for new examination of test bullets fired from the rifle by the FBI in 1968. Ballistics evidence from the FBI tests, subpoenaed as evidence in congressional assassination hearings in 1978, was placed under a 50-year seal by Congress after the hearings. Brown, however, has directed defense and prosecution lawyers to seek their release.

Ballistics experts who tested Ray's rifle in May under an order from Brown reported earlier this month that their results were inconclusive.

Prosecutor Lee Coffee expressed skepticism about the defense lawyers' intentions. "I get the impression that we can be back here in the year 2005 and we'll still be dealing with James Earl Ray," Coffee said.

— Michael Dorman