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Ray back in DeBerry infirmary

Brother says his release from hospital is too soon

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James Earl Ray, the convicted killer of Martin Luther King Jr., was in no shape to be released from the hospital as he was yesterday, his brother said last night.

Ray, who is in the final stages of cirrhosis of the liver, was returned to DeBerry Special Needs Facility yesterday after being admitted to Columbia Nashville Memorial Hospital Dec. 22.

Ray, 68, had been taken to the hospital in critical condition with liver disease. He lapsed into coma and appeared to be near death last week, but has rallied.

"DeBerry Special Needs Facility can provide the level of medical care required to meet his ongoing needs" his physician, Dr. Babu Rao, said in a hospital statement.

Jerry Ray, who visited his brother Sunday, said the patient was unable to speak above a whisper.

"I don't see how they could have released him because he's hooked up to all this stuff there."

Ray was only recently elevated in his hospital bed, he said.

Ray had been serving his time at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution before being transferred to DeBerry in September.

DeBerry houses about 100 inmates in the infirmary, geriatric, mental health and sex offender units, said Jim Rose, assistant state correction commissioner.

Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison for the 1968 slaying of the civil rights leader in Memphis.

He has a Feb. 20 hearing in Memphis that will focus on whether new evidence should be admitted.

Ray admitted to shooting King, but days later denied the act, saying he had only made the admission on the advice of his attorney.

Ray also has filed suit against the prison system, claiming it has failed to care for him properly. ■



JAMES EARL RAY