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Ray Case Witness

MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - Charles Quitman Stephens has an air-conditioned private room, three meals a day, a television, radio and telephone and plenty of newspapers, books and magazines to read.

But the 57-year-old World War II veteran says he is unhappy. So unhappy, in fact, that he has fired his public defender and hired two private lawyers in an attempt to gain his release from the Shelby County penal farm.

Stephens was not sent to the penal farm because he committed a crime. He is being held in lieu of \$10,000 bond as a material witness in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Harvey L. Gibson and Jay Fred Friedman, Stephens' new attorneys, consider themselves bound to silence under a court order issued by Judge Preston Battle, the judge who will preside in the trial of James Earl Ray. Ray is charged with murder in King's slaying.

But a source close to Stephens said Stephens is determined to get, if not complete freedom, "at least some of the amenities other free American citizens are guaranteed by the Constitution."

The district attorney general's office said Stephens was placed in protective custody to insure his safety and to assure his presence when needed to testify.

Stephens was a resident of the rooming house where police say the sniper fired the bullet that killed King April 4. He has told officers he saw a man fleeing the scene.

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