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**RAY CASE WITNESS  
IS FREED BY COURT**

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MEMPHIS, Aug. 21 (UPI)—Charles Q. Stephens, who has been held under bond since July 22 as a key witness in the trial of James Earl Ray in the slaying of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., won a court order restoring his freedom Wednesday.

The state had wanted him in custody to insure that he would be available to testify when the case is brought to trial.

Circuit Judge William O'Hearn ruled that the "court cannot deprive a man of his rights on mere conjecture he may act in defiance of the court [by fleeing beyond its jurisdiction]."

Judge O'Hearn said he was accepting the word of Mr. Stephens, a former heavy equipment operator, that he would remain in Shelby County except in case of an emergency and would voluntarily accept police protection.

Mr. Stephens, dressed in gray slacks and a plaid shirt and carrying an overnight bag, walked out of the jail with his lawyers about 10 minutes later.

He has said he saw a man fleeing the room from which, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a sniper shot Dr. King.

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