

A255NS

lbylwyyfwwyf

NS

Ray 200

MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - James Earl Ray denied Friday that he owned a high-powered rifle of the type which authorities say was used to murder Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ray also denied ownership of a 1966 two-door Mustang which the state charges was used by the killer to make his getaway after the slaying.

Ray is scheduled to go on trial April 7 on a charge of murdering the civil rights leader.

The statements concerning the gun and car were made in a written answer filed to a civil lawsuit pending against Ray in Chancery Court.

The suit was brought by Renfro Hays, a private detective who contends Ray owes him more than \$11,000 for investigative work in the case. Hays was hired by Ray's former attorney, Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, Ala., and seeks to attach the car and gun, then have them sold to satisfy his claim.

Chancellor Charles Near granted injunctions earlier prohibiting Ray from transferring ownership of the disputed items and requiring the sheriff to inform the court when they were no longer needed as evidence at Ray's trial.

Ray denied owing Hays anything. He said he had never met the investigator and never authorized him to work on his defense or asked Hanes to hire him.

Ray fired Hanes last November, on the eve of the scheduled start of his trial, and hired lawyer Percy Foreman of Houston, Tex., instead. The change in lawyers caused postponement of the trial.

AJ513pcd Feb 21 nm