

Ray Goes to Court Today in Bid to Win a New Trial for Murder of Dr. King

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MEMPHIS, Oct. 21—James Earl Ray, who pleaded guilty to the murder in 1968 of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., will go into court tomorrow to try to win a new trial.

Mr. Ray has contended since the day after his guilty plea that he was "duped," and that he did not shoot the civil rights leader. He said he pleaded guilty only because he was subjected to pressure from his attorney, Percy Foreman, who wanted the guilty plea to spur sales of a book, "He Slew the Dreamer," by William Bradford Huie, the Alabama author.

Mr. Ray, who had an interest in the book, had agreed to pay Mr. Foreman \$165,000 from his share of the royalties.

A letter from Mr. Ray asking for a new trial was found on the desk of State Judge W. Preston Battle, who died of a heart attack 10 days after accepting Mr. Ray's guilty plea.

There have been four years of legal wrangling over whether the letter constituted a request for a new trial. The United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit at Cincinnati ordered tomorrow's hearing to determine once and for all whether Mr. Ray should be allowed to withdraw his guilty plea.

Judge Robert M. McRae Jr. of Federal District Court said he did not intend to allow the hearing to become a murder trial. But Mr. Ray's new attorneys said it may be necessary to show that Mr. Ray did not kill Dr. King to establish that Mr. Ray was entitled to a new trial.

Dr. King was shot to death as he stood on the balcony of a Memphis Motel late in the afternoon of April 4, 1968. He was in Memphis to lend support to a garbage workers' strike. The authorities said that a sniper shot Dr. King from the bathroom of a flophouse across

the alley from the motel. A rifle that Mr. Ray had bought in Birmingham, Ala., a week before the shooting was found on the street in front of the flophouse.

Mr. Ray now says he bought the rifle and brought it to Memphis to join what he thought was to be a gun-running adventure. He said he delivered the weapon to a "blond Latin" named Raoul on the afternoon of the slaying.

Mr. Ray was linked to the assassination by fingerprints found in the flophouse and on the rifle. However, the authorities have been unable to prove that the rifle found on the street was the one used in the slaying.