

Ray Trial Judge Dies In Memphis

Memphis, Tenn.

Judge W. Preston Battle, who had presided over the James Earl Ray case since last summer, died of an apparent heart attack in his chambers yesterday.

Shelby County Criminal Court Judge Battle, 60, was found slumped over his desk. He was pronounced dead on arrival at a Memphis hospital.

Battle accepted Ray's March 10 plea of guilty to the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and sentenced Ray to 99 years in the Tennessee state penitentiary in Nashville.

While Ray entered a guilty plea to the King slaying, he later said he was pressured into doing so and would seek a review of his case.

Under Tennessee law, it would have been Battle, as the judge who passed sentence, who would grant such over his desk in chambers by

Assistant District Attorney General James Beasley, who was one of the prosecutors in the Ray case.

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