

Limits Set in Hearings for King's Killer

Memphis

A federal judge told attorneys for James Earl Ray and the state yesterday that he will not "try the guilt or innocence" of Ray at a forthcoming hearing for the confessed assassin of Martin Luther King Jr.

U.S. District Judge Robert M. McRae Jr. promised an order next week setting a tentative hearing date and outlining the issues to be discussed at the hearing on Ray's claim that he was coerced into pleading guilty.

The hearing, which McRae said might be in October, could lead to a new trial in state court for Ray.

Ray is serving 99 years in the Tennessee State Prison for the 1968 slaying.

Ray claims he was pressured into pleading guilty in the King shooting by his original attorneys, Percy Foreman and Arthur Haynes Sr., because of their alleged tieups with William Bradford Huie, author of a book on Dr. King's death.

McRae indicated he would admit some "relevant" evidence at the hearing in trying to determine:

- Whether Ray's guilty plea was made "intelligently or voluntarily."
- Whether Ray had the "effective assistance of counsel."

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