



By Nikki Boertman

**Stacey Young (left) and Erika Walker, staffers at the National Civil Rights Museum, take the wraps off of case materials related to the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Local authorities have transferred custody of the materials to the museum.**

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## Ray case effects on display



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Stacey Young (left) and Erika Walker, staffers at the National Civil Rights Museum, take the wraps off of case materials related to the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Local authorities have transferred custody of the materials to the museum.

Civil Rights Museum is new home

By Deborah M. Clubb  
*The Commercial Appeal*

James Earl Ray's voice is in the National Civil Rights Museum.

It's preserved on a stack of flat red "45's" recorded by a special machine when Ray pleaded guilty to fatally shooting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Those recordings, along with Ray's rifle, binoculars, passports, British suit, Portuguese hotel receipt and African airline brochure, were shown publicly Tuesday for the first time outside a courtroom. The event signaled the formal transfer of the items from local government and court officials to museum leaders.

Dist. Atty. Gen. Bill Gibbons and Shelby County Clerk Bill Key

officially relinquished care of 39 boxes of materials that had been in the care of previous clerks and attorneys general for three decades.

"Rather than simply stored at the Criminal Justice Center, Mr. Key and I felt it was much better to have them at the Civil Rights Museum in order to help the public's understanding of the historic and tragic event some 32 years ago," Gibbons said. "Now they are in the right place and where they need to be."

Some objects and replications of paper items will be displayed when the museum expands into two nearby buildings, including the former boarding house from which Ray fired upon King. Those buildings are located across Mulberry from the Lorraine Motel where King was staying, now the site of the museum. That expansion could open in about a year.

The entire archive will be made available to researchers sometime in 2002, said the museum's curatorial services manager, Barbara Andrews. It is complete with FBI and Memphis Police investigation reports, an index of every witness interviewed and the transcript of Ray's hearing leading to his guilty plea.

"This is a significant asset, not only to this museum but to the city of Memphis and to the world," Andrews said.

A future fund-raising campaign will finance adequate permanent storage and archiving of the materials, Andrews said. The only climate-controlled space in the museum is a small library because the facility was not originally envisioned as a research archive, she said.

The museum already has had international calls from researchers, said museum executive director Beverly Robertson.

Key, who spent hours in a storage vault with Andrews to inventory, box and label the materials, said he was most impressed with a map Ray used to track the places he went to stalk King in the weeks before the shooting.

"I must say, I'm kind of glad to get this with you," Key said.

The only pieces from the file retained by the attorney general's office were morgue photographs of King. The civil rights leader's clothing and jewelry were returned to his family.

Asst. Dist. Atty. Gen. John Campbell is eager for the public to see the evidence and other materials in the context of the 1960s, when then-Dist. Atty. Gen. Phil Canale received dozens of letters from people supporting Ray and condemning his prosecution.

"It's obviously connected so totally to this facility ... to this building and the buildings surrounding it," Campbell said.

"People ought to be able to come in and see it and look at it and draw their own conclusions."

Dr. Benjamin Hooks, museum board chairman, recalled the precautions that were taken when Ray was returned from London to Memphis as the investigation of the assassination continued.

"We here at the Civil Rights Museum will be just as careful."

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