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Ray Chooses New Lawyer; Delay Likely

MEMPHIS (AP)—A surprise switch in lawyers just two days before James Earl Ray was to stand trial on charges of murdering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. raised doubt as to whether the trial will be held this year.

Ray yesterday dropped Arthur J. Hanes, a former Birmingham, Ala., mayor, as his lawyer and retained famed defense attorney Percy Foreman of Texas.

Foreman, whose clients have included Jack Ruby and heiress Candace Mossler, said he would go before Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow—the time Ray's trial is scheduled to begin—and request a continuance.

When told of rumors of the impending switch, Battle said he would grant a delay "if Ray retains Foreman and if he asks for a postponement.

It was believed that Foreman would ask for at least 30 days to give him time to become familiar with the case. Hanes, who said the change came as a surprise to him, said he would not object to the motion.

Since the trial is expected to last at least four weeks, a postponement of 30 days would push its start close to the Christmas holidays, with the likely result that Battle would reset it for early next year.

