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# Stoner Visits With Ray, Says Plea Was Pressured

James Earl Ray's third attorney emerged from a two-hour visit in Ray's maximum security cell in Nashville yesterday saying the convicted killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was pressured into pleading guilty.

J. B. Stoner, once the vice presidential candidate of the National States Rights Party and a Savannah, Ga., lawyer long associated with the Ku Klux Klan, visited Ray at the Tennessee State Prison. He said he had new information in the Ray case.

Stoner would not discuss his new information. He refused comment when asked if he would help Ray in his bid for a new trial, though he had said earlier that he would.

The attorney added that "the National States Rights Party didn't like Martin Lucifer (sic) King and I didn't like Martin Lucifer (sic) King, and I've never shed any tears about what happened to him." He said he didn't think his association with the Klan or his party would hurt Ray's case.

Stoner said, at the moment, he is only representing Ray in his bid that Ray intends to file against several national magazines for "false and defamatory" charges against

him. "He (Ray) is not guilty," Stoner said. "I think Mr. Ray is the victim of a conspiracy."

Ray has written Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle asking for a post-conviction hearing — to which he is entitled under Tennessee law — but a hearing cannot be held until the judge returns from a vacation later this week.

Ray has not said Stoner would be employed in an appeal for a new trial, but he wrote a letter to his former attorney, Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, asking for assistance.

Hanes said he "might sometime go up and talk with James Earl Ray, but I've never had any intentions of getting back in the case."

Ray dropped Hanes Nov. 10, the night before he was first scheduled to come to trial, and hired Houston attorney Percy Foreman, who was representing him March 10, when Ray pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 99 years in prison.

In Memphis yesterday, Russell X. Thompson, local attorney who helped Hanes investigate the murder, said he had turned over his file on the King assassination to the F.B.I. He said his investigation indicated the possibility of a conspiracy, but declined to elaborate.

Stoner's visit was followed almost immediately by a visit from Ray's brother, Percy, from St. Louis, Mo. Stoner said on leaving that he "seemed to be in a hurry for a man in his particular hotel."

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