

Lawyer Reflects On 'Being Piece Of History'

By STEVE SELLERS

As Manuel M. Levin stood vigil along with about 75 others in front of the Lorraine Motel last night, his thoughts wandered.

The short, balding, 32-year-old lawyer from Philadelphia, Pa., thought of the day exactly 10 years ago — April 4, 1968 — when he was arrested a block from the motel for questioning in connection with the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Although he was released without being charged 5½ hours later, he says it was "like being a piece of history."

While others standing near the second-floor balcony where King was shot sang and prayed silently, Levin, dressed in a light blue business suit, looked slowly from the balcony to the mourners and remembered.

Ten years ago as a law student at the University of Mississippi, Levin drove from Oxford, Miss., to Memphis to see

King and to support the striking sanitation workers here.

"There were no rooms available here, so we stayed at the Linden Hotel, which is just a couple of blocks from here. There were a few of us who were members of the Law Students Civil Rights Coordinating Committee.

"We were eating at a place on Main called The Electric Waffle. About 5:45 p.m. we heard sirens all over the place and walked over to see what was happening."

But the curious law students could get no closer to the Lorraine than a block away, because police had cordoned off the area. Police at the roadblocks wouldn't say what happened, Levin said, but "there was talk everywhere that Dr. King had been shot.

"Two of us — me and a man who was a law school student at Duke University — thought we would walk to the Linden Ho-

tel" where they were staying and turn on the television to see what was happening.

It was while they were approaching the Linden that they were stopped by police.

"Lo and behold, we were handcuffed, put in a police car and taken to the jail over on Adams. I heard later that Walter Cronkite said on the evening news that two well-dressed white men had been arrested by police in the area. A friend of mine heard it, but had no idea he was talking about us.

"They treated us real well, actually, considering what was going on. They kept us in cells separate from each other."

Police records confirm Levin's story.

As he watched the crowd at the motel last night, Levin said he "just had to be here.

"It's just amazing to think about. I'm just sort of surprised that there aren't more people here. I guess there are other activities going on in town."