

# Stoner is Hired as Ray Lawyer

**Trial in King Murder Will Be Sought**

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — J.B. Stoner, an attorney long associated with anti-Jewish, anti-Negro causes, has been retained by James Earl Ray in his effort to win a new trial in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Stoner's office announced Friday.

Edward R. Fields, director of the militantly segregationist National States Rights party, said Stoner would help Ray change his plea from guilty to innocent and would ask for another trial.

Stoner is an NSRP attorney whose office is located in the party headquarters here.

Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison after he pleaded guilty in Memphis to last year's sniper-slaying of King.

### TALKS POSSIBLE

Fields said Stoner was en route to Nashville where Ray was lodged to cell No. 4 in the Tennessee State Penitentiary. He said Stoner would confer with Ray Saturday morning.

Warden Lake Russell said he did not yet know whether Stoner would be allowed to see Ray.

"We'll let him see him if he can present the proper credentials," Russell said. "He'll have to show that he (Ray) actually hired him as his lawyer."

In Memphis, court officials said there was nothing on file to indicate that Stoner had been designated attorney of record by Ray.

Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle Jr., who presided in the Ray case, disclosed Wednesday that he had been notified by Ray that he wanted to withdraw his guilty plea, and stand trial for first-degree murder.

### FOREMAN FIRED

The judge said also that Ray wrote him he had fired his attorney, Percy Foreman of Houston, Tex.

Ray had been scheduled for

trial April 7 when he abruptly switched plans and pleaded guilty March 10. The 99-year sentence was prearranged by the state and Foreman.

Ray was reported to have told officers, who accompanied him from Memphis to the Nashville prison that he had changed his mind and wished he had gone on trial and taken his chances of getting a life sentence rather than the electric chair.

Under a life sentence, Ray would be eligible for parole in 13 years. However, the 99-year term prevents him from seeking parole for 30 years.

Stoner would be Ray's third attorney. He had also dismissed former Birmingham, Ala., Mayor Art Hanes.

### KLAN ORGANIZER

Stoner, 44, has been involved in Ku Klux Klan and anti-Jewish activities since boyhood. At 16, he was an organizer and officer of a Chattanooga, Tenn., Klan and once was shown as the Klingle of Tennessee.

In 1945, he formed the "Stoner Anti-Jewish party" and mailed out pamphlets urging removal of the Jews. In 1952, he announced formation of the Christian Anti-Jewish party and urged deportation of Jews and confiscation of their property

for distribution to "Christian Americans."

He authored a book entitled "The Gospel of Jesus Christ Versus the Jews."

Stoner was graduated from an Atlanta law school in 1952 after two years of study, passing a state bar examination while still a student.

In recent years, Stoner had been active in the NSRP and in litigation involving racial conflicts. He was the NSRP vice presidential candidate in 1964.

The party supported former Alabama Gov. George Wallace last year.

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### FUNERAL SEMINAR SET IN VICKSBURG

Funeral directors from Memphis, Tenn., and New Orleans will hold their annual seminar at the Vicksburg, Miss. Convention Center. Members of the National Funeral Directors Association will attend.

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