

Ray Hires Lawyer To Seek Trial

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.

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.

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.

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.