

Past Klan Ties

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MEMPHIS (AP) —

Stoner, James Earl Ray's attorney, says his ex-Klan back ground will be an asset if Ray's case is heard before a jury in Memphis where he says people would understand Martin Luther King's death.

"My past KKK connections would help the case," Stoner told The Associated Press in an interview yesterday. "They show I'm a loyal white man and that some people in Shelby County (Memphis) are the white man's best friend."

STONER, WHO HAS BEEN named to the Savannah, Ga., after a weekend meeting with Ray in Knoxville, said he was a member of the Memphis White Citizens' Council, which he said was shot and killed last April 4, "detested Martin Luther King."

"He (King) brought about his death with his activities in the country," the attorney declared. "He was a troublemaker. He got in Memphis for the purpose of disrupting the normal court functions of this area as a criminal."

Stoner said he believed Ray "deserved" to be shot and said Ray told him over the weekend that he had been "pressured" into entering a plea of "guilty" to the charges.

Stoner, 41, said he has been hired to represent Ray only in that action which he said is the state's only one in the state of Mississippi against several national magazines.

RAY'S NEW attorney added yesterday the civil action "likely will include" suits for more than libel but he said he could not elaborate.

He said he could not say who would represent Ray in a criminal action but added "there is a natural overlap between the civil and criminal functions."

Stoner said he is vice chairman of the executive committee of the National States Rights Party.

He described the party yesterday as "larger than any other white segregationist organization in the country" and "more extreme than the Klan" to which Stoner said he previously belonged.