

Judge charges Fields in Stoner burglary

By Michael Szymanski
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A Cobb County magistrate judge issued a burglary warrant late Saturday against avowed white supremacist Edward R. Fields, charging Fields with breaking into suspected church bomber J.B. Stoner's former home, which also served as headquarters of the National States Rights Party.

Fields, an ousted leader of the party who formed his own group under the same name, surrendered at the Cobb County Jail at 5:55 p.m. Saturday and was charged with felony burglary, according to Cobb Sheriff Bill Hutson. Fields was released on \$5,000 bond. Hutson said.

Marietta police said they found worth of addressing equipment, a .38-caliber pistol, 6,000 pre-addressed envelopes and some confidential files of the National States Rights Party were taken Saturday morning from the chained-up, two-story building watched by large guard dogs in Marietta.

The building, 1111 Cherokee St. N.W., once served as the right-wing party's headquarters and as home for 12 years to Stoner, who is serving a 10-year prison term in Alabama for the 1958 bombing of a black Birmingham church. No one was hurt in the bombing.

Jerry Ray, who is serving as caretaker of the property pending Stoner's release from prison, said he was gone for little more than a half-hour Saturday morning and returned to find the building ransacked, windows broken and chains on the gate cut open.

Cobb County Magistrate Court Judge T.O. Sturdivant issued the warrant late Saturday for Fields, who lives in Marietta. Sturdivant said two witnesses saw two men break into the house and drive away in a light blue car.

Contacted late Saturday afternoon, Fields said he had no word about the warrant and knew nothing of the break-in. He did say, "That's my building and my property in there."

Marietta police Detective Keith Reibly said he tried to take fingerprints in the area but found none. Reibly said the intruders were "probably familiar with the area, because the dogs were undisturbed."

Ray, who asked for the arrest warrant, said, "It must have been

someone who has been here before because the dogs would have torn a stranger apart."

The break-in came a day after Christian Rights Inc. — a group that oversees the land, building and offices of the National States Rights Party and claims it owns the property — filed for \$700,000 in counterclaims against Stoner and Fields.

The 14 briefs were in response to a lawsuit filed by Stoner two weeks ago. The suit filed by Fields and Stoner seeks to prevent members of Christian Rights Inc. from selling the headquarters.

"It's so unfair," Fields said recently. "They're trying to get me home right out while he's in jail."

However, W. Eugene Wilson, Jacksonville, Fla., who is on the Christian Rights Inc. board, said the board has "no interest in selling the building."

"J.B. Stoner is a long-time friend of mine, and I don't quite understand why this suit was filed (by Stoner and Fields)," Wilson said. "There is no way one person or the whole board could possibly own this building, because it belongs to the whole party and whole board."

Christian Rights' counterclaims were filed Friday afternoon in the form of briefs in Cobb County Superior Court.

One brief claims that Fields assaulted former Christian Rights board member the Rev. R.B. Montgomery on May 17, 1965, and that "Fields suddenly and without provocation held a pistol in his hand" and "threatened to quote 'blow the brains out of the defendant (Montgomery).'"

An attorney for Montgomery said he knew of no criminal charges that have been filed in connection with the alleged incident.

Montgomery, a Pentecostal minister from Forest Park, is asking for \$400,000 for physical harm, emotional disruption and lost money. Montgomery is a former member of Christian Rights Inc.

The counterclaims filed in the Cobb Superior Court were by Wilson, who asks for \$100,000 in damages; Montgomery; Christian Rights secretary Dorothy Hickley, who is asking for \$200,000 in damages; and Christian Rights board member Amy Willmont, of Jacksonville, Fla., who responded but had no monetary request attached.