

Bomb probe takes Baxley to Texas to quiz ex-resident

BY TOM SCARRITT
News staff writer

Alabama Atty. Gen. Bill Baxley flew to Texas Tuesday to interview a former Birmingham resident who might be an important witness in the attorney general's probe of local bombings.

Baxley talked with Bobby Frank Cherry, 47, and Cherry's attorneys in the Grand Prairie, Tex., police station Tuesday afternoon. He left Texas without Cherry, police officials there said.

An attorney for Cherry said his client denied any knowledge or involvement in the Birmingham bombings of the 1960s. "He thought the question of his involvement had long since died," the attorney said.

The attorney said Baxley's trip "was of an investigative nature" and there was no indication Cherry would be indicted.

"They have been trying to arrest me for 15 years," Cherry told a Texas reporter earlier in the day. "I don't know anything about that bombing," he said in apparent reference to the Sixteenth Street Church explosion in which four young black girls were killed.

Baxley's office refused to say Tuesday where the attorney general was or to comment about the questioning of Cherry.

CHERRY, WHO LIVED in Birmingham until about eight years ago, told Texas reporters he is a pipefitter for a Dallas company. He lives with his family in Grand Prairie, near Dallas.

Cherry was questioned more than a year ago about the bombings, according to sources in Texas and Birmingham.

noon, according to Texas sources, and left in the late afternoon.

Cherry's attorney said his client was puzzled by the renewed questioning and he did not know if Tuesday's inter-

view would mark the end of the matter for the Texas man or not.

"We're waiting now to see what the attorney general will do," the lawyer said.



Baxley has blamed the 1963 church bombing on the Ku Klux Klan. Cherry's attorney said he did not know if Cherry ever belonged to the Klan.

Baxley's trip to Texas came the day after a Jefferson County grand jury indicted a 73-year-old North Birmingham man on four counts of first-degree murder in the 1963 bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

Robert Edward Chambliss, of 2505 32nd Ave. North, was arrested at his home Monday night.

Chambliss was one of three men arrested years ago after the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing and charged with illegal possession of dynamite. Chambliss, Charles Cagle and John Hall were convicted on that charge in Birmingham Recorder's Court and fined \$100.

However, all three of the men's convictions were thrown out when the cases were appealed to Circuit Court.

Chambliss is being held without bond in the Jefferson County Jail. A hearing was scheduled by Circuit Judge Wallace Gibson for 1:30 p.m. Oct. 6 to determine if bond should be set.

Sources have said Georgia lawyer J.B. Stoner also was indicted. The exact charges against Stoner were not revealed immediately, but it is believed he will be accused of involvement in the 1958 bombing of Bethel Baptist Church, 3233 29th Ave. North.

Baxley has spearheaded the long investigation of the church bombings. He announced last February he was reviving the case, and it was his assistant who presented evidence to the grand jury.

BAXLEY ARRIVED in Texas for his interview with Cherry shortly before

Prisoners show hate by jeering Chambliss

Robert Chambliss, who has been charged with murder in the 1963 Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing, was transferred "for his own security" Tuesday afternoon at Jefferson County Jail from a cell block of male prisoners to an empty cell block ordinarily reserved for women inmates.

Chief correctional officer Lionel Bragan said there is strong feeling among the black prisoners against Chambliss, 73, of 2505 32nd Ave. North, who was arrested Monday night after being charged with four counts of first degree murder in connection with the church bombing.

The feeling, Bragan said, was demonstrated Tuesday when Chambliss had an interview with his defense lawyers. The interview was conducted in a small room adjoining the jail's basketball court. Prisoners stopped their game to jeer Chambliss when they realized he was in the adjoining room.

Although there are usually four prisoners to a cell, Chambliss had occupied a cell by himself in the male cell block on the seventh floor just after his arrest.

Since Tuesday afternoon, however, Chambliss has been the only prisoner in a block of five cells on the eighth floor, located in the women's section.

CHAMBLISS HAS already been issued his jail uniform of blue jeans and blue shirt, with the words Jefferson County Jail across the shirt.

Deputies will take Chambliss to a shower area in his empty block at 4:30 a.m. each day so he can shower and shave. The 453 other prisoners in the county jail will be doing the same thing, at the same time, but in different parts of the jail.

Afterwards, the other prisoners will go to the dayrooms on their blocks to eat breakfast. Chambliss, meanwhile, will return to his cell, where all his meals will be brought to him on a food tray.

After breakfast, the other prisoners return to their cells while a prison clean-up detail sweeps floors and mops floors. Afterwards, the prisoners are allowed in the dayrooms to watch television, play checkers, or just sit and

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talk until lunch at 11:30 a.m.

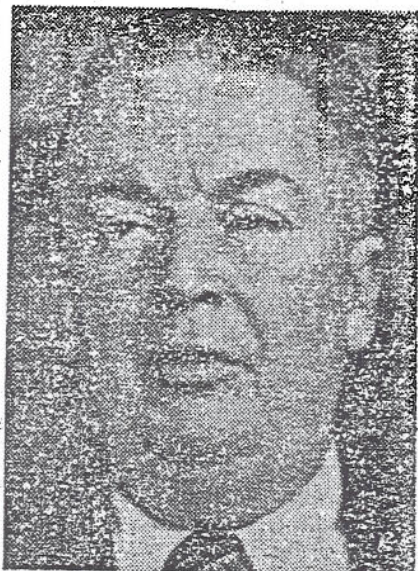
There are more cleanups after lunch and dinner, and on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, a chance at more television for the other prisoners.

Chambliss will have to remain, except for exercise, in his cell block corridor.

WHENEVER CHAMBLISS has to meet his attorney, a deputy will accompany him from his cell to an isolated room on the 7th floor, across from the warden's office.

Chambliss, who recently claimed he has stomach cancer, will receive any medications he needs from a doctor who visits the jail each day or from two county medical technicians on duty at the jail.

deputies say chambliss' routine will continue in exactly the same fashion each day he is at the jail, unvaried except for the view from his cell window, which looks out over the downtown public library.



J.B. STONER
'Racist and proud of it'

Stoner says FBI, Jews are enemies

BY RON CASEY
News staff writer

"The FBI, the Jews and the niggers have been after me all my life. I guess that's why I got indicted."

That was the terse explanation offered by J. B. Stoner, a 52-year-old Marietta, Ga. lawyer indicted Monday, sources say, in connection with the 1958 bombing of Birmingham's all-black Bethel Baptist Church.

Stoner, whose past is firmly anchored in racist causes, says he knows he has been indicted and is waiting to be arrested. He also says he is innocent.

"I am a racist and proud of it. I have been a racist all my life," Stoner says flatly. He advocates the return of blacks to Africa as a political solution. Then quickly adds, "But, I don't believe in violence. I've always been opposed to it."

But, if the soft-featured Stoner has

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preached non-violence, it has not been with the same fiery voice he raised to flail the Jew and the black man starting, he says, almost from the time he was born on a small farm in Tennessee.

HE ASSERTS THAT he has not liked

blacks since he was a small boy. "When I was growing up, everybody was that way...I could see like anybody else that they were causing a breakdown in law and order," he says.

According to old news wire reports, Stoner first became involved in racist causes before he was old enough to drive.

In a Chattanooga, Tenn. high school, he was described as strongly anti-semitic and by the time he reached 16 had become an organizer and officer in a Chattanooga Ku Klux Klan, earning the nickname "The Young Kleeogle of Tennessee."

By 1952, he had been heavily involved in the formation of three racist political organizations, the America First Party (1941), the Stoner Anti-Jewish Party (1945), and the Christian Anti-Jewish Party (1952).

The last organization urged the deportation of all Jews and the confiscation of all their property for "Christian Americans."

It was also in 1952 that Stoner received his credentials as a lawyer, graduating from the Atlanta School of Law ("the best in the world," he says).

He took and passed a stiff state bar examination after two years of study but before his graduation.

BY THE MID-1950's, when the Bethel Baptist Church bombing took place, Stoner had become the attorney for the National States Rights Party, a post he still holds.

The group, formed with many former Klansmen, claimed members in 37 states and was molded from the remnants of the United White Party of Knoxville, Tenn.

Through the vehicle of his post, Stoner became involved in the defense of many persons charged in racial crimes, not the least of which was his brief representation of James Earl Ray, convicted slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King during a 1969 attempt to gain Ray a new trial.

When a group of men were arrested for their part in the violence that surrounded the 1959's entry of the "Freedom Riders," into Montgomery, Stoner was their attorney.

In 1963, he defended an 18-year-old Toronto, Canada man charged with hurling a brick at a Birmingham Police officer who was trying to maintain order during a school desegregation.

And, in 1965-66 he acted as attorney for two Anniston men, Hubert Damon Strange and John DeFries, charged with the murder of a black foundry worker.

DUING THOSE YEARS, however,

Stoner himself did not escape the eye of law enforcement officers.

In 1963, only a few days after four young, black girls were killed in the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Stoner was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for allegedly interfering with court-ordered desegregation in Birmingham.

"I believe desegregation should be stopped in order to save civilization," Stoner said in an interview Tuesday.

The six-count earlier indictment charged that Stoner, along with Edward R. Fields, president of the National States Rights Party, and five other men conspired to interfere with the carrying out of the court order.

Stoner, said the indictment, made numerous public speeches in which he advocated violent resistance to desegregation. He was also accused of leading crowds to break through police lines at three schools which were being integrated.

CHARGES, HOWEVER, were later dropped after Stoner filed a motion claiming they were "vague and groundless."

by the early 1970's Stoner had come out of the courtroom and into the political arena.

in 1970, he received a little better than 2 per cent of the vote in a race for governor of Georgia. He boasts that a 1972 race for the U.S. Senate caused

the Jewish anti-defamation league to try and censor his ads.

And, according to Stoner, he reached his political apex by capturing 10 per cent of the vote in a 1974 race for governor which he described as "overtly racist."

"I hope (State Atty. Gen.) Bill Baxley goes down to defeat since he's so unscrupulous as to fight white people to get himself elected governor," said Stoner Tuesday. "that's all this indictment really is about."

"I am innocent of the charge but I will fight extradition to Alabama because I fear for my life. I fully expect that the FBI or the Birmingham police would have me killed before I reached the state line.

"The reason is because I know too much about what went on. shortly before the (Sixteenth Street Baptist) church was bombed, an FBI agent offered me \$2,000 to get it done.

"And, an agent once offered me \$25,000 to have Martin Luther King killed."

L.R. Kirkpatrick, special agent in charge of the Birmingham FBI office, said today he wouldn't comment on Stoner's remarks about the FBI.

He did say the FBI would be "delighted" if the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing case could be successfully prosecuted.

The FBI, he said, has been assisting Baxley with files.

"It makes no difference who solves the case," Kirkpatrick said.