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Stoner Lead A303AX

SAVANNAH, Ga. AP - J. B. Stoner, James Earl Ray's new attorney, says his Ku Klux Klan background will be an asset if Ray's case is heard before a jury in Memphis, Tenn., where he says people "detested Martin Luther King." But in Memphis city officials disputed Stoner's theory.

"My past KKK etc Stoner A303AX

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insert Stoner, a303ax, after 4th graf: a criminal."

Memphis city officials expressed shock at Stoner's comments.

"I'll not dignify irresponsible talk of that type," said Shelby County Sheriff William N. Morris Jr. "I especially have nothing to say to any statement J. B. Stoner would make."

There were similar reactions, in some cases more outspoken, from Mayor Henry Loeb, Police and Fire Director Frank Holloman and other officials.

The city's council chairman, Robert B. James, was irate over Stoner's implications. "He's just making a lot of trouble that we don't need," said James. "He's certainly not welcome around here when he talks like that."

James said any Ku Klux Klan connections Stoner may have will not be of any help to him in Memphis. "It the KKK never was strong here, at least not in the last generation. They've got a record that is horrible—they stand for violence of the worst kind—the worst kind of racial attitudes."

James pointed out that many white residents of Memphis were serving on a bi-racial committee working on the Memphis memorial to King.

The discussion on such a memorial has included construction of an arch on the Mississippi River, re-naming of the airport in King's honor, dedication of a new Mississippi River bridge to King, naming of a school for him and a city street.

Stoner said 5th graf, A303AX (not in file)

CH1150pcd March 23 nm