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Ray-Stoner Bjt NL 440, 2 takes total 600
By JOHN VAN MOL
Associated Press Writer

- 1 WASHVILLE, Tenn. AP - James Earl Ray's new lawyer said Saturday Ray has reversed the position he took in open court and now says he was innocent and was "pressured into a guilty plea" in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- 2 When Ray pleaded guilty in Memphis March 10, Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle asked him specifically if he had been pressured in any way into pleading guilty. Ray replied then, "No."
- 3 but the lawyer who visited Ray Saturday, J. B. Stoner of Savannah, Ga., reported he now has changed his story.

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Ray-Stoner Bjt NL Insert
NASHVILLE Ray-Stoner A234 insert after third graf: story.
Asked to elaborate on what sort of pressure Ray contends was put on him, Stoner declined any further comment.
Stoner 4th graf
Pd 536-es March 22

A292 NS
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Ray-Stoner sub
NASHVILLE, Tenn., Ray-Stoner NL A234, insert A282, sub for A282 insert: Foreman said.

Ray's brother Jerry visited him almost immediately after Stoner, and the Nashville Tennessean quoted Jerry Ray as saying that Percy Foreman's Ray's previous attorney, "pressured" him into pleading guilty.
The brother said he delivered "evidence" to support this claim consisting of contracts between Foreman and Ray, the Tennessean reported in a copyrighted story. Foreman said in Houston that Ray had sent him a letter officially requesting the guilty plea.
"I have a letter and I showed it to the judge and to the prosecuting attorney," Foreman said. "I wouldn't leave myself open on that count."

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NASHVILLE-Ray-Stoner Bjt, A234, insert after 7th graph, which was 3rd graph, A292 sub: count."
Foreman said he would take \$150,000 if my brother pleaded guilty, but he wanted everything he Ray would ever earn if he didn't plead guilty," the Tennessee quoted Jerry Ray.
Foreman said Ray fixed the \$150,000 fee after the guilty plea had been agreed upon.
Foreman said that when he entered the case he took over a contract held by Ray's former attorney, Arthur Hanes, under which Hanes would have received 60 per cent of the income from picture, book and magazine rights. Foreman estimated this at \$400,000 from all sales.
"When it appeared the guilty plea was going through, in view of the fact that I would be relieved of the responsibility of appeal, I thought there should be an adjustment of the fee in his Ray's favor," Foreman said.
"I intend to assign all the money over \$150,000 to some bank in

would be electrocuted if he didn't." Ray "thought he'd be electrocuted, too," Foreman said.

The Tennessean also quoted Ray's brother as saying a petition seeking a new trial, in which Ray would plead innocent to King's murder, would be filed in Memphis, "possibly this week."

Stoner said 4th graf A234

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4 Stoner said he would represent Ray in filing libel suits against "Life magazine and others" who Stoner said interfered with Ray getting a fair trial.

Stoner's two-hour and 20-minute visit with Ray, in the Tennessee State Penitentiary maximum security section, was followed almost immediately by a visit from Ray's brother, Jerry, from East St. Louis, Ill.

Stoner had no comment when asked if he would help Ray in a postconviction hearing in Memphis. He refused to discuss any criminal aspects of the case, saying he would represent Ray in "civil suits and libel suits only."

Stoner's office earlier said he had been retained to help Ray win review of his guilty plea and 99-year sentence for first-degree murder in the death of King, slain in Memphis last April 4.

Judge Battle had asked Ray in Memphis: "Has any pressure been put on you to enter a plea of guilty?" Ray replied, "No."

Battle also asked Ray: "Is this plea of guilty on your part a free act of your own free will, made with your full knowledge and understanding of its meaning and consequences?"

"Yes, sir," Ray replied.

Stoner was the first person to visit Ray since he was confined here-and, as nearly as can be learned, the third since he was returned to Tennessee from London last July. He previously had been sited in his Shelby County Jail cell by attorney Arthur Hanes, former mayor of Birmingham, Ala., whom Ray fired Nov. 10, and Percy Foreman, whom Ray hired to replace Hanes.

Asked who in addition to Life magazine would be involved in libel actions, Stoner replied, "So many have libeled him Ray it would be impossible to include them all." But, he said, "Life magazine and others could 'count on it.'"

His past associations with Ku Klux Klan members should not harm his case, Stoner said, adding: "I have represented Klansmen and other white men in the past. I don't think it will hurt."

Ray, he said, "appeared in good spirits for a man in a hotel like this." Ray, he said, gave him permission to make the statement about Ray's being pressured into a guilty plea. But he did not elaborate.

Thus, Stoner left unanswered when and how Ray will carry through his announced intention of seeking a review of the case.

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NASHVILLE take 2 Ray-Stoner Bjt NL A234: 160

In Memphis, Capt. R. A. Cochran of the Memphis Police Department, who played a major role in the investigation of King's slaying, said he is "amazed that so many people still insist" that King's death was the result of a conspiracy.

Ray, he said, "made so many major blunders, things he would never have done had there been any sort of mastermind behind the plot." Police Chief Henry Lux said his office is not saying there was no conspiracy, just that there is now no evidence of it.

Blunders enumerated by Cochran as evidence that the slaying was a one-man job included his buying a rifle and having a telescope sight mounted personally, openly registering in a Memphis motel under the name of Capt. R. A. Cochran.