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Managing Editor Repudiates Testimony by Former U.S. Highway Official

Ed Ray, managing editor of The Press-Scimitar, repudiated in Federal Court testimony given by Lowell K. Bridwell, former Federal highway administrator, concerning a story on the Overton Park controversy published in the newspaper.

In a sworn deposition yesterday before U.S. Chief District Judge Bailey Brown, who is hearing the Overton Park case on remand order of the U.S. Supreme Court, Bridwell couldn't recall giving an interview to Ray and making certain statements to him about the routing of the east-west expressway, Interstate-40, through the park.

Bridwell denied any memory of a March 26, 1968 full-page story written by Ray, and termed as "inaccurate" some of the statements attributed to him in the story.

The story emphasized that City Council "must act" with a positive resolution if final approval of the Federal government for the park expressway route were to be forthcoming and Bridwell was the source of the information.

Taking the witness stand yesterday afternoon, Ray said he was the author of the article and that he had "re-examined my notes and information given to me in Washington at the time and they are correct."

Ray traced the history of the article by stating that he went to Washington on March 19 at the invitation of President Lyndon B. Johnson to attend a dinner at the White House March 20.

"Before leaving for Washington we had learned that Congressman Dan Kuykendall was reopening the Overton Park case and it was decided that I would try to determine what position the

highway was then in," Ray said.

Charles F. Newman, Memphis attorney for the objectors to the park routing, asked Ray if the quotation was correct in his article with Bridwell stating "I am not going to make another move until the City Council acts positively. If they do not get a positive resolution we will use funds available, now scarcer, for other projects. Failure of the Council to act will postpone the expressway to some unforeseeable date."

"That's correct," Ray said. "That's what he said."

Bridwell, in his deposition under oath, denied making the statement, saying: "The determination or scheduling of the use of Federal Aid Highway funds within a state is made by the State High-

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way Department. No, I would not have made such a statement."

Bridwell also denied stating to The Press-Scimitar that "We can defend the Overton Park route in court with support of the City Council representing the people of Memphis. Our position would be endangered without it."

Ray said that Bridwell also made that statement during a personal interview with him that lasted from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on March 20. Ray said the interview was set up between him and Bridwell by Marvin Watson, the assistant to President Johnson, and that Bridwell gave him government documents that were used to illustrate the article.

Ray said upon returning to

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Memphis that he wrote the article, telephoned Bridwell and "read it to him and he said it was all correct." Ray said he also wrote Bridwell the day the article was published thanking him for the interview and enclosing a copy of the article.

Bridwell said that he could not recall meeting Ray, talking with him or anything about the articles.

Ray testified that the news and quotations in the article came from Bridwell himself.

Dale Woodall, attorney for the intervening City of Memphis, Future Memphis Inc., Downtown Association and Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce, read into the record an editorial which appeared in The Press-Scimitar on the same day as

Ray's article urging that the Council approve the park route and move ahead with

the construction of the highway. He asked Ray if that editorial correctly summar-

ized the newspaper's position and Ray said it did, "100 per cent."

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