

Ray lawyer bases trial request on judge's-death clause in law

By The Associated Press

MEMPHIS — James Earl Ray's lawyer said Monday he would ask the Criminal Court at Memphis to grant his client a full trial on the Martin Luther King Jr. murder charges within the next two weeks.

Lawyer-author Mark Lane said in a speech to Memphis State University law students that he would rely on a section of the Tennessee Code that requires a new trial if the trial judge dies or becomes insane before he disposes of the case.

Judge W. Preston Battle, who accepted the guilty plea, died shortly after Ray was sent to prison.

"Once we get a new trial, it becomes a burden on

Tennessee

the state to prove guilt," said Duncan Ragsdale, a Lane associate who also appeared at the Law School forum.

Charles Galbreath, another lawyer for Ray and former state Court of Criminal Appeals judge, said state courts, excluding the Supreme Court, denied Ray a full trial on the section Lane cited because they ruled Ray's guilty plea had been made voluntarily.

The code, he said, would give a person a new trial if the courts determined that a guilty plea had been made involuntarily.

"That's what Ray was trying to do — that his was coerced," Galbreath said. "He was entitled to a new trial. But the Supreme Court never addressed that issue. We want to use this as the basis."

The issue, he said, will be taken up in a civil suit that will be filed shortly.

Lane and Ragsdale said the state of Tennessee has little real evidence linking Ray with the King slaying in 1968.

Ragsdale, a Republican candidate for the 8th Congressional District seat now held by Democrat Harold Ford, was supposed to be the prime speaker at the forum where his opponent spoke a week ago.

But Ragsdale has made Ford's actions as a member of the House Select Committee on Assassinations an issue in the campaign, and he brought Lane along to add ammunition to his attack.

Lane, who recently moved to Memphis to carry out his campaign for a full trial for Ray, attacked the FBI, Memphis police, members of the Memphis bar and judges who he said have covered up the facts in the case.

Lane, who wrote the book "Code Name Zorro," about the King assassination, says he has evidence that someone other than Ray killed the civil rights leader.

"Mr. Ray was a dupe... He was moved around the country by the FBI, assigned to this job or that job... He thought he was in Memphis to show some guns to some people to be smuggled to South America," Lane said.

Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison after pleading guilty to the killing in 1969. He later recanted his guilty plea and asked for a full trial.

Lane refused to be specific about his motion for a trial, but he told the law students there were grounds to grant the motion in Section 17-117 of the Tennessee Code.

That section states that when a vacancy in the office of trial judge occurs "after verdict but prior to the hearing of the motion for new trial, a new trial shall be granted the losing party..."

Mrs. Ray reception by Blanton 'a hoax'

By The Associated Press

NASHVILLE — Official-appearing invitations have been sent for a bridal reception at Gov. Ray Blanton's mansion Tuesday night for James Earl Ray's new bride. If you received one, forget it.

Jim Gilchrist, press secretary for the Democratic governor, said Monday the whole thing is a Republican hoax. He didn't think it was particularly funny.

The invitations, printed on stationery bearing the state seal, printed obviously at great expense, read: "The governor and Mrs. Ray Blanton request the pleasure of your company at a bridal shower for Anna Sandhu Ray Tuesday, the seventh of November at eight o'clock. Curtiswood Lane."

The Rays were married Oct. 13 at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, Petros, Tenn., where Ray is serving a 99-year sentence for the April 4, 1968, slaying in Memphis of civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

Mrs. Ray, from Knoxville, has worked as a free-lance courtroom artist for television stations.

In a telephone interview, Gilchrist said, "Whoever sent the invitations was trying to get a laugh at the governor's expense on the day before the elections, knowing that the media would fall all over themselves to report it," Gilchrist said in a telephone interview. "I have no idea how many of the invitations were sent, but they apparently were directed at a pretty diverse group of people."

The matter is being investigated, Gilchrist said.