

Our 140th Year

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Journal/BILL NATION

Mrs. James Earl Ray, the former Anna Sandhu of Knoxville, proudly holds her wedding bouquet and license immediately following the 4 p.m. ceremony. To her left is the Rev. James Lawson, who performed the service, and to her right is Mark Lane, Ray's attorney. Related photo, Page 4.

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'At least I'll know where my husband is at night . . .'

By CAROL BYRD

Journal State Reporter

PETROS

Shortly after 4 p.m. Friday, James Earl Ray and Anna Christine Sandhu kneeled on two prison chairs and bowed their heads.

Rev. James Lawson placed his hands on their shoulders and prayed for "a new beginning" in their marriage.

Vows were repeated — he trembling slightly and she speaking with a nervous stutter. They exchanged rings with only slight difficulty — his was a half-size too small.

They kissed a few times, hugged, and cut a cake baked by Ray's cellmate.

The marriage, announced two weeks ago in a copyright article by The Knoxville Journal, was finally official. A Knoxville free-lance artist had become the bride of the convicted assassin of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

But Mark Lane, Ray's attorney, says his client's situation will change drastically within the year.

"We expect them to celebrate their first wedding anniversary at home," Lane told a throng of national and local media representatives outside the gates of Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary. "We have discovered evidence that is conclusive in showing a group was involved in the murder of Dr. King.

"This is our wedding present to James and Anna."

He said a 44-page affidavit will be presented to a court within the month, in effort to get Ray a trial.

The new Mrs. Ray walked into the improvised press room with a black jacket draped on her shoulders to shield her from the continual rain. Ray had worn the coat a short time earlier during their 40-minute wedding ceremony.

"I don't think I've ever had a day as good as this in my life," she said, and

added later: "The beautiful ceremony made up for the lack of everything else."

The "lack" was a camera. Warden Stonney Lane, under orders from State Corrections Commissioner C. Murray Henderson, refused to allow any pictures be made of the ceremony.

"I'm getting a taste of what James has put up with for 10 years, and I haven't even committed a crime, Mrs. Ray said, while driving from Petros to a celebration dinner at a Knoxville restaurant. "I even asked the warden if Roger Humphreys could take the pictures. Since he's a double murderer, I thought he'd fit right in at the prison."

She was visibly relaxed, "now that it's all over," and even joked about her situation.

"Maybe our marriage isn't under the best of circumstances," she smiled. "But at least I'll know where my husband is at night."

Her own wedding night will be spent with friends in Knoxville — among them will be Mrs. Barbara Murrell, who served as her matron of honor.

"I've known Anna since Christmas, when she moved into the neighborhood," Mrs. Murrell said earlier. "She's just like a daughter to me, and I'd do anything for her."

She had helped Anna select her wedding dress — an off-white pleated skirt with crocheted blouse. A bride's bouquet of blue and white silk roses was donated by a local florist, as was the blue boutonniere worn by Ray.

The wedding ceremony — a religious, rather than civil ceremony — was requested by Ray and was performed by the Rev. James Lawson, a former King associate who invited the civil rights leader to Memphis where he was slain 10 years ago.

"I'm more convinced than ever that

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Ray

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one day, James Earl Ray will walk out of this prison a free man," said Lawson, who flew back to Los Angeles Friday, where he is pastor of the Holman United Methodist Church.

Anna said she was "extremely moved" by the service; her brother, Ethan Sallings, said he thought "it would never end," in a little brother-sister kidding jab.

Attending the ceremony, besides Lawson, Lane and Mrs. Murrell, was April Ferguson, Lane's legal assistant.

Mrs. Ray told reporters she hoped to devote her time now to "visiting with James, and painting, since I'm behind in my work."

She'll also be juggling interview requests in the next few weeks. A National Enquirer team followed her from the backwoods state prison, as they had been tailing her since news of the engagement broke.

"I've turned down \$15,000 from them. They're notorious for saying the wrong things," she said. "I'm poor, but damn I want to be honest for James' sake."



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About 30 media representatives met Anna Sandhu Ray as she walked out the Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary gates. She wears a jacket worn earlier by Ray in their wedding ceremony.