

Ray-Sandhu Wedding Is To Be a Limited Affair

KNOXVILLE 10/12/78

By STAN DELOZIER
News-Sentinel Staff Writer

Deep within the bleak, stone walls of Brushy Mountain State Prison at 4 p.m. tomorrow, Knoxville free-lance artist Anna Sandhu is to become Mrs. James Earl Ray.

The surroundings will be rather somber for what is normally a joyous occasion.

The wedding party will be frisked by guards, led past a guard tower, into the prison and to the second floor. Two steel doors will clang shut and be locked, then the group will go down a corridor and behind another set of bars and into the visitors' gallery where the vows are to be said.

"They will be permitted an hour," said Warden Stonney Lane. "During that time they will get married and have a little reception with the ones cleared to attend.

"I've approved for them to have a few flowers, a cake and some family member can take a picture or two."

However, Warden Lane is aware that a picture of the wedding would be a valuable news item (reporters and photographers are barred from the ceremony). He says he will take precautions to prevent shots from being disseminated for profit.

"Whoever takes the picture better not look too professional," he said. "I'll let them use a Polaroid camera and that's all. Nobody's gonna come in and set up tripods or anything."

Warden Lane said he has already been contacted by all three major television networks and 15 to 20 out-of-state newspapers.

"The National Enquirer came in here the other day and said they were going to cover the wedding," he said. "They said they had made arrangements with Anna, but they didn't make arrangements with me."

He said National Enquirer reporters will be kept outside the main gate "just

like everybody else." Warden Lane said press facilities will be set up in the training center for prison guards just outside the main entrance.

He said five persons have been approved to attend the ceremony: Mark Lane, Ray's lawyer; April Ferguson, Mr. Lane's legal assistant; Ethan Salling, Maryville, brother of the bride; and Barbara Murrell, 4813 Chambliss Drive, Knoxville, a friend of Miss Sandhu.

Warden Lane said the marriage will be performed by Rev. James Lawson, Los Angeles, a Methodist minister who was a friend of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the man Ray is serving a 99-year term for killing. He said Rev. Lawson may bring one other person to the wedding. That person will be cleared just before the wedding.

Warden Lane said four prison guards will be assigned to the visitors' gallery during the wedding and reception.

"I'm not expecting any trouble," he said when reminded that Ray had escaped from the prison in June 1977. "But I'm not taking any chances. You never can tell."

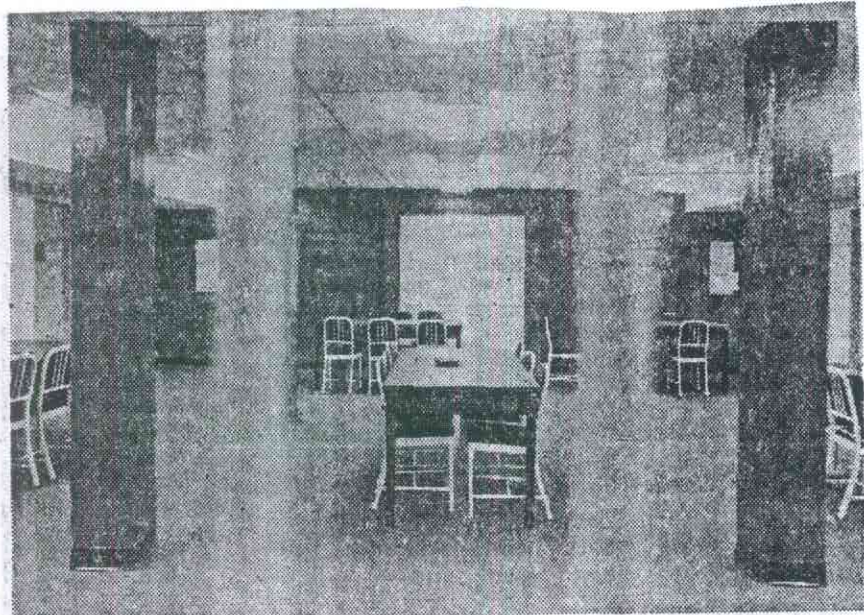
He said two other prison guards will be posted at the main gate, "but that's to handle traffic. I expect there will be a crowd."

Warden Lane said there have been about 20 marriages behind the prison walls in the past three years, but none that attracted the attention of the Ray-Sandhu wedding.

After the ceremony, Ray will be returned to his cell block to change from his wedding attire back into prison garb. He will be returned to his cell.

Tennessee has no provision for conjugal rights.

Morgan County Court Clerk Stevon Crouch said Miss Sandhu told him by telephone that she would be there today to apply for a marriage license. Mr. Crouch said he is to take the application book to the prison at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow for Ray to sign.



Wedding Site

This is the visitors' gallery at Brushy Mountain State Prison where Knoxville artist Anna Sandhu, 31, and convicted murderer James Earl Ray, 50, will be married tomorrow. Five persons have been cleared by prison officials to attend the wedding, which has gained worldwide publicity.