

Knoxville Woman Says She And Ray Will Wed

KNOXVILLE (AP) — A free-lance artist from Knoxville says she will marry James Earl Ray within two weeks at the prison where Ray is serving a 99-year sentence for killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., The Knoxville Journal said Tuesday in a copyright story.

Anna Sandhu, 32, told the newspaper she plans to marry Ray because she loves him. "This marriage is something I'm taking very seriously and so is he," she told the newspaper.

Ray was unavailable for comment on

the story. Mark Lane, Ray's lawyer from California, also was unavailable for comment by telephone Monday night.

The woman said she met Ray while working as a courtroom artist for a Knoxville television station while Ray was facing charges in connection with his June, 1977, escape from Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary at Petros, Tenn.

Ray pleaded guilty in 1969 to the April 4, 1968, murder of King in Memphis, but has since tried to recant and has demanded a new trial in the case.

Ms. Sandhu told The Journal she talked with Ray for the first time in the fall of 1977 when she accompanied another reporter who interviewed Ray. She said she bought him books for Christmas for which Ray wrote a thank-you note.

Ms. Sandhu said the friendship grew from there and that she requested a private meeting with Ray.

"We talked a pretty long while and I came to realize that he wasn't the big monster everybody made him seem to be," she said.

"Sure, it bothers me that he is in there, especially because it is for something he didn't do but I love him and I want people to know that. He's a lovable man and not an antisocial maniac," she said.

Stoney Lane, warden at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, said Monday night that Ray has not contacted the warden about any pending plans for marriage.

"I've heard rumors but I've heard nothing from Mr. Ray," Lane said in a telephone interview.

"I've had about five calls from reporters wanting to know if he's getting married, and I'm not his agent," Lane said.

Last year, Ray's brother, Jerry Ray, and James Earl Ray's lawyer, Mark Lane, said the inmate had received several marriage proposals in the mail after Ray's picture appeared in a news magazine.

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The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, Tuesday, October 3, 1978