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News

Possibility of parole

Murderer's potential release opposed by those he testified against, their supporters

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By Betsy Scott

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A Portage County man whose testimony helped convict two others in the 1988 Connie Nardi murder is up for parole next week.

Friends and family of Bob Gondor and Randy Resh are working hard to keep behind bars Troy Busta, 41, the first person convicted in the strangling death and attempted rape of the 31-year-old mother from Randolph Township.

"My concerns are that Troy Busta has not paid his debt to society," said Patty Vechery of Munson Township, who tirelessly worked to help free childhood friends Resh and Gondor and married the latter in August.

"In the 20 years since this poor woman was killed, it is evident by his actions of the last year that he still isn't sorry for anything," Vechery said.

She was referring to Busta's continued allegations against Resh in Resh's April 2007 retrial in Portage County Court. Resh's conviction was overturned, and charges were subsequently dropped against Gondor. Both were released after more than 16 years in prison, insisting all along that they had no part in the crime.

The Ohio Supreme Court in 2006 had ordered Resh and Gondor new trials, overturning a decision by the 11th District Court of Appeals.

In August 2007, Resh and Gondor, formerly of Mantua, filed a civil complaint in Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court seeking a jury verdict declaring their innocence. Such a verdict would allow them to pursue monetary damages in the Ohio Court of Claims. The lawsuit remains in legal limbo, Vechery said.

The case against Gondor and Resh, both 44, rested largely on the testimony of Busta, the last person with whom Nardi was seen alive. Her body was found in a Geauga County pond.

Busta pleaded guilty to murder in Geauga County Court and remains incarcerated in Chillicothe Correctional Institution.

Vechery is concerned that the parole hearing — Busta's third — could signal his potential release because it is the first for which a clinical risk assessment has been ordered. Busta's hearing before the full Parole Board was rescheduled in order to get the clinical evaluation done, said Andrea Carson, spokeswoman for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. However, she said it is not an unusual step in the parole assessment process.

"It's the mental health portion," she said. "Nothing out of the ordinary."

The Parole Board will be at Chillicothe Correctional three days next week, but Carson wasn't sure which days.

A barrage of letters, phone calls and e-mails have been sent to the board in opposition to Busta's release, Vechery said.

If he is released, Gondor said it would be sending the message "that an individual can kill someone, commit perjury to put two innocent men in prison and then serve only the same amount of time as the individuals who had nothing to do with the crime."

Attempts to reach Busta's parents by phone Thursday were unsuccessful.

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