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# THE TIMES



## Scotch Plains - Fanwood

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### ASSISTANT PROSECUTOR FEELS JUSTICE WAS SERVED

## Man Found Guilty on All Charges In 1993 Rape-Murder of Elderly Scotch Plains Widow in Her Home

New Brunswick resident Kevin Conley was found guilty Monday morning in Superior Court in Elizabeth of the rape and murder of an elderly Scotch Plains woman in her home more than three years ago, after jurors rejected arguments by his attorney that his client had been framed by a friend of the victim.

The jury found Conley, 33, guilty of all charges against him, including murder, aggravated sexual assault, burglary and unlawful weapons possession in the death of Mrs. Doris Koues, an 88-year-old invalid widow, whose battered and partially-clothed body was discovered in the bedroom of her single-family home on Skytop Drive on July 10, 1993.

An autopsy revealed that the victim, who had lived alone since the death of her son in 1983, was struck in the face with the base of a telephone, stabbed in the forehead and behind the ear, and manually strangled. Dr. Joan Obe of the Union County Medical Examiner's Office testified during the trial that the victim also had injuries indicating that she had been sexually assaulted.

"All we asked for was justice and we got it," Union County Assistant Prosecutor William Kolano, who represented the state during the three-week trial, said after the verdict was reached. He described the rape-murder as "the most heinous crime that I've been involved with in all my time as an Assistant Prosecutor."

Closing arguments by the prosecution and the defense were presented on Friday, after which jurors received their instructions in the law from Judge John Triarsi. The jury deliberated for an hour last Friday and for two more hours Monday morning before reaching its decision at approximately 11 a.m.

Conley, who had been staying at his parents' home directly behind Mrs. Koues' residence at the time the murder occurred, was charged with the crime after investigators determined that fingerprints which he had supplied to authorities at their request matched fingerprints found on a bottle of baby oil on a nightstand in the victim's bedroom.

He took the stand in his own defense last Friday, testifying that he had spent the evening of July 9, 1993 drinking beer with a friend, who supported Conley's story that he returned home between 12:30 and 1 a.m. Authorities determined that the killer had entered Mrs. Koues' home sometime between 11:30 p.m. on July 9 and the early morning hours of July 10.

In the course of cross-examination, however, Mr. Kolano reminded the defendant that his brother, Brian Conley, with whom he had been sharing the family home in Scotch Plains, gave a statement to authorities in which he said that Conley did not return home until 3 a.m. on July 10.

During the second week of the trial, defense attorney Robert Lord Armstrong of Mountainside accused Mrs. Alice Schiller, 71, a friend of the

victim and her sole beneficiary, of having either arranged or participated in the crime in order to inherit Mrs. Koues' estate. He alleged that Mrs. Schiller had his client's fingerprints planted on the baby oil bottle to implicate him.

Mrs. Schiller, who took care of the shopping, doctor's appointments and important household decisions for the victim, vehemently denied Mr. Lord's allegations from the witness stand. An FBI expert testified for the state that there was no evidence that fingerprints had been unlawfully planted at the scene.

Last week, the prosecution scored points when Dr. Dominick DiMaio, a former New York City medical examiner testifying for the defense, contradicted a theory which had been put forth several years ago in a forensic pathology textbook which he co-authored with his son, Vincent.

He disputed a statement read by Mr. Kolano that victims of rape-murder are typically killed either by being bludgeoned, strangled or stabbed. The Assistant Prosecutor, armed with a copy of Dr. DiMaio's book, subsequently revealed that the forensic pathologist and his son had made this same conclusion in their textbook.

The former medical examiner also contended that it was inconclusive whether or not Mrs. Koues had been sexually assaulted based on a tear in her vagina, since semen had not been found inside the victim's body. However, Mr. Kolano countered that DiMaio and his son used a photograph in the textbook to illustrate how this type of abrasion was a clas-

sic example of a rape injury.

Dr. DiMaio also disagreed with the Union County Medical Examiner's assessment that injuries to Mrs. Koues' body had been caused by the assailant striking her with the telephone, and said they also could have been caused by the killer's fists.

Last week, Mr. Lord also called as defense witnesses two people who had worked with his client at a Springfield car rental agency, who testified that Conley did not have cuts or bruises on his hands and was not acting peculiarly at work the day after the murder.

The Assistant Prosecutor said after the verdict was reached that he believed the fingerprints on the baby oil bottle were the strongest evidence against Conley, who had no prior criminal record. In the first week of the trial, an FBI fingerprint expert testified that Conley's prints matched those on the bottle. According to another FBI forensic expert, an analysis of semen found at the scene did not prove to be a perfect match to Conley, but did not rule him out as a suspect either.

Mr. Kolano said that when Conley is sentenced on all the charges in about six months, the state will ask that he be sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder itself, plus 20 additional years tacked on for the sexual assault. Before being sentenced, however, the Assistant Prosecutor said Conley will be evaluated by the Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center in Avenel to determine whether or not he represents a compulsive, repetitive sex offender.



PLAYING THE PART...Members of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School's DECA group, played the part of the Scotch Plains Township Council at Tuesday night's meeting. This is the 25th year the group has participated in the event. Pictured, left to right, are: Councilman, Dr. Martin Marks, Marc Jacobs, Councilman William F. McClintock, Jr., and Adam Koster. Please see story on Page 12.

## Mrs. Larkin, Mr. Ruggiero to Seek New Terms on Board of Education

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

Two Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education members, Theresa Larkin and August Ruggiero, said last Thursday that they will each run for another three-year term on the board in the Tuesday, April 15, annual school election. It is expected that long-time member and board Vice President Lillian M. Dettmar also will run.

According to the board's election calendar, a candidate's petition to run

must be submitted by Monday, February 24. A petition requires 10 signatures, officials said.

Mrs. Larkin will be looking to snag a second term in this election. Mr. Ruggiero, a community college mathematics teacher, was first voted onto the board in the 1970s. Mrs. Dettmar is a former business teacher who has served on the board 16 years. At this time, it is not known whether any candidates will attempt to unseat the three incumbents from Scotch Plains. No seats from Fanwood are up this year.

Candidates will draw for the order of names on the election ballot, on Wednesday, March 5, at 4 p.m., according to the board. At its regular January meeting last Thursday, the board decided to oppose a resolution by the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) to expand the football team playoff program and begin fall practice sessions one week earlier. Officials said the move could cost each school another \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Superintendent of the Schools, Dr. Carol B. Choye questioned whether the NJSIAA should be allowed to dictate a move like this when each local school board must scramble to provide the additional funding. Officials indicated that the Principal of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Dr. Terry K. Riegel, also objected to the proposal.

Mrs. Larkin indicated she did not oppose the one week added to the beginning of the season. She abstained from the vote to oppose the resolution. Board member Morris H. "Butch" Gillet abstained, saying he was a member of the NJSIAA.

Retiring Head Custodian of the Howard B. Brunner School was recognized for his 26 years of service by the board. Giovanni DiBenedetto, who is affectionately known as "Mr. John" to students, will leave Tuesday, April 1. Former Brunner Principal Dr. Albert DeSousa, described him as "a gentleman." Crediting Mr. DiBenedetto with years of dedicated service, Dr. DeSousa said, "A principal looks good based on a good secretary and a good custodian. So I looked good. While I was Principal, he (Mr. DiBenedetto) was also my teacher."

Current Brunner Principal Evelyn Shepherd said, "We will miss John very much." Mr. DiBenedetto was

present at the meeting.

The board also recognized and thanked high school custodian Michael Pisani, who will retire Thursday, May 1, after 11 years.

In the spirit of the moment, board member Edward J. Saridaki, Jr. noted that one should not underestimate the importance of good custodial service in the schools and its impact on students. He said he still remembers the names of each custodian from his childhood schools.

On a different matter, the board said that it will take a final vote on the 1997-1998 school budget after a public hearing on Tuesday, March 25. The board will begin working on the budget in early February, according to the board's calendar.

The board also will require the annual progress report from Dr. Choye by Monday, March 10. The board must return a written evaluation to Dr. Choye by the April regular school board public meeting, although neither report is made available to the public, according to Board President, Dr. Donald E. Sheldon.

Mr. Ruggiero encouraged the board to strictly follow policy in its evaluation of the Superintendent. According to Mr. Ruggiero, each board member must first supply a written narrative to the Board President. After that, the group meets and following discussion, completes a performance rating portion of the evaluation.

In the past, Mr. Ruggiero indicated that both parts of the evaluation had been finished by members prior to group discussion. Mr. Gillet admitted that the policy had not been followed for the past three years. Board member Jessica D. Simpson indicated that either method probably yields the same results.

On a separate matter, the board voted to make public the minutes of 48 private executive session meetings dating from January 1994 through October of last year, at the suggestion of Board Secretary, Richard J. Marshall. A Fanwood resident asked if there was a deadline for the release of minutes from non-public meetings. Dr. Sheldon said the minutes are not released until the matters within them are resolved.

Officials indicated that Interim Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Dr. Fred DeFeo, will be finishing up by April, when the position will be permanently filled.

## World War II Committee to Seal Mementos in 100-Year Capsule

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

The year is 2045. It is the 100th anniversary of V-J Day when the Japanese surrendered to the Allies and thus ended World War II.

The year 2045 is also when the time capsule sealed this Saturday, February 1, by the Scotch Plains World War II Commemorative Committee, will be opened. The sealing and dedication of the time capsule at an 11 a.m. ceremony in the Municipal Building will bring to a close more than four years of work by the group of World War II veterans.

Chairman of the Committee and World War II veteran Thomas L. Perrucci said the contents of the time capsule will include descriptions of the commemorative activities of the committee, a letter from the United States Department of Defense, certifying the committee's participation in the World War II 50th anniversary program and a 1943 telegram notifying the Stocker family of their son's death, which sadly, was the first township casualty of World War II. There was a total of 14 township World War II casualties and 12 Borough of Fanwood residents who died in World War II, Mr. Perrucci added.

A signed copy of a book about the township's history titled "Images of America Scotch Plains and Fanwood," written by the President of the Historical Society, Richard Bousquet and his wife, Suzanne, also will be included in the time capsule.

Representatives of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars also will donate items to be sealed in the marble time capsule, according to the ceremony agenda. The time capsule will reside in a display case in the Municipal Building hall.

Last week, Mr. Bousquet showed the committee recently restored documents and medals from a 1920 time capsule of sorts, that was discovered in the "Liberty Island" monument at Front Street and Park Avenue during the repair of the war monument by the committee. The waterlogged papers, stored in a six-inch by 12-inch copper box, revealed the ceremony surrounding the presentation of a captured World War I German cannon to the township by the United States Assistant Secretary Treasurer after the township raised \$700,000 for war bonds. (That's in 1920 dollars).

Also found in the copper box were medals from the township's fire department, the Freemasons, the Jewish Chapter and township ceremonial ribbons and medals. The committee said it hopes to display the artifacts and will not put them in the new time capsule.

Mr. Bousquet said volunteer chemists have spent nearly 1,000 hours restoring the 77-year-old items with a system of "spraying and peeling."

The Township Council has provided a cap of \$2,000 for the meticulous work. Mr. Bousquet said he hopes it will be possible to bring each item

to a stable point of restoration and preservation.

Additionally, members of the committee said they would like to form a permanent veterans committee in the township. Mayor Irene T. Schmidt encouraged the action, saying, "It's important to keep some patriotism alive."

## Mayor Schmidt Names Downtown Committee

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

A Business District Master Plan Committee or "Downtown Committee" was appointed by Scotch Plains Township Mayor Irene T. Schmidt last Tuesday. The 14-member committee, chaired by Arthur Grisi, includes former Democratic candidate for Township Council Kenneth N. Lipstein.

Councilman Dr. Martin Marks will be Council Liaison to the committee. Construction Official Robert LaCosta and Maureen LaCosta will serve on the committee as will Planning Board members Maria Sartor and Joseph Doyle.

Other members are Ray Pardon, Kenneth Anderson, Violet Brown, Joseph Donatelli, Seymour Stein, James Faucett and Dennis Harrington.

Mayor Schmidt said the group will look at how recommendations from the board's Master Plan review can be carried out, including creating an

"image" or "identity" for the township that includes a logo and theme. They will also look at ways to improve parking, signs, lighting, building facades, paving and plantings.

With the help of eight Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA marketing students, the council unanimously adopted two ordinances during its regular meeting Tuesday. One, a zoning code amendment, intends to lay to rest a dispute over height and setbacks of detached secondary structures such as garages in residential areas. Residents of Arrowwood Drive in the township objected last year when the council voted to eliminate setbacks on certain structures after a combination two-story garage and apartment was reportedly built nearby on a property line in the neighborhood. The action limits height for secondary structures and spells out building setbacks from property lines in each zone.

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## Fanwood Planning Board Grants Variance For Pet Sitting Business on Farley Avenue

By ALEXANDRA JELKES  
Specially Written for The Times

Janice Mitchell of Farley Avenue was granted a conditional use variance by the Planning Board on January 22 for a pet sitting business in her home. After listening to an intense debate from opposing sides on the issue, the board voted in favor of granting Ms. Mitchell's variance.

Laurence Barisonok, Ms. Mitchell's attorney, asked the board to approve the applicant's variance for home occupation, based on evidence that his client had met all of the five criteria for home occupation.

Ms. Mitchell testified that she has been a dog-sitter for almost four years and was not aware that she needed municipal approval to conduct this service. Once zoning officials made

her aware of the need for this variance, she said she immediately took a survey of her neighbors' sentiments regarding the business. Presently, she is a dog-sitter for about seven to eight dogs at a time.

Ms. Mitchell said she does not advertise her business, but acquires clients by word of mouth or through her veterinarian. The dogs are kept in a small room next to the kitchen and in a second bedroom. Finally, Ms. Mitchell said she believes that her business poses no residential problems for her neighborhood.

"Excessive traffic in my driveway is not an issue," she stated. "The most you'll ever see is two cars."

Other concerns from homeowners also were allayed.

"There is also no problem with

burking or keeping the dogs on leashes when I take them for a walk," Ms. Mitchell explained.

When the board finished hearing from Ms. Mitchell, they opened the meeting up to her neighbors.

"Her dogs are always on leashes, she picks up waste and does not have many cars in her driveway," said resident Linda Miller Bellone.

Patricia Winn, who is Ms. Mitchell's next door neighbor, expressed her support and told the board that the dogs do not bother anyone.

"They don't make noise and they behave," she told the board.

Jean Poquette, who uses the applicant's services, spoke of the "invaluable" service Ms. Mitchell offers.

"The care she shows the dogs is

higher than any other facility I would place them when I am out of town," she told the board.

Edna Hirschenbaum said she passes Ms. Mitchell's home every day when she walks her dog and has never heard any noises.

Edward Ryan, a neighbor, accused the petitioner of lying on her application to the board. He stated to the board that Ms. Mitchell never asked for his support regarding this application.

According to Mr. Ryan, "this contradicts her statement in Item 10 of her application, which asks: Have you spoken to all your neighbors and have their support?"

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### Deadlines Told For Submittals To The Times

Those persons preparing press releases for submission to The Times are reminded that copy should be E-mailed or faxed by 4 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. The Times' E-mail address is goldader@aol.com. The fax number is 232-0473.

Releases, pictures, and letters to the editor can also be dropped off at our office located at 50 Elm Street or through our mail slot. To ensure that submittals reach our office prior to deadline we encourage E-mail or faxed material.

Sports stories which occur prior to the weekend should be in by the Friday deadline. Weekend sports events must be submitted by noon on the Monday prior to the publication date. Obituaries will be accepted up to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays.

All copy must be typed, double-spaced, not more than 500 words in length, and include a daytime telephone number where the submitter can be reached.

For events which are planned months in advance, we encourage submission of stories as early as possible prior to the event.

Please note that in addition to making our deadline, the publication of submittals may be delayed due to space considerations. All submittals are subject to being cut due to length, edited for style and clarification at the discretion of the editor.