



BCPO News



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January 11, 2023

Man Sentenced to Prison for 1997 Mt. Laurel Sexual Assault

Decades later, a traffic stop led to a DNA profile connecting the suspect to the crime

Burlington County Prosecutor LaChia L. Bradshaw announced that a Pennsauken man whose DNA connected him to a Mount Laurel home invasion and sexual assault 25 years ago has been sentenced to eight years in New Jersey state prison.

The sentence was handed down in Superior Court in Mount Holly to Rodolfo Vasquez by the Hon. Christopher J. Garrenger, J.S.C., on December 9. Vasquez, 63, must serve 85 percent of the term before becoming eligible for parole. Under an agreement with the Prosecutor's Office, he pled guilty in June 2022 to Aggravated Sexual Assault (First Degree).

He told the court when entering the plea that he went into a Camber Lane home in June 1997 without authorization and sexually assaulted a woman who was there by herself. The victim, whose name is being withheld by the Prosecutor's Office, attempted to defend herself and was struck by Vasquez multiple times, resulting in permanent vision damage in one eye.

The original investigation began in June 1997, when officers from the Mount Laurel Police Department met with the victim, who indicated the assault occurred after she heard a noise and got out of bed to check on it. A male subject confronted her in the bedroom doorway, she told police.

The intruder grabbed her and began striking her in the head, she said. He sexually assaulted her and told her not to call the police, then fled the residence. The assault occurred in the dark, and the victim was unable to provide a detailed description of the attacker.

The responding officers discovered that a rear sliding glass door had been forced open. They recovered evidence at the scene, and the victim agreed to have a sexual assault examination performed at a hospital.

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The biological evidence was submitted to the New Jersey State Police crime laboratory, which generated a DNA profile, but failed to identify a suspect when entered into a national DNA database.

In August 2020, the Mount Laurel Police Department was notified that the DNA profile from the 1997 case had been matched to Vasquez through the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), which is overseen by the FBI.

Vasquez had been required to submit a DNA sample after pleading guilty to Contempt of a Judicial Order stemming from his arrest for driving without a license in 2019 in Cinnaminson.

A search warrant was secured and another DNA sample was collected from Vasquez which matched the one collected during the investigation in 1997.

“This case strongly demonstrates the value of the CODIS database as a law enforcement tool,” Prosecutor Bradshaw said. “I commend all of the investigators and law enforcement personnel whose thorough, diligent work held the defendant accountable after all of this time and brought justice for the victim.”

The original investigation was conducted by Mount Laurel Detective James Letchford, who retired in 2001. Mount Laurel Detective Sergeant Sean Bristow was the lead investigator when the case was reopened following the DNA match.

Vasquez was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Stephen Eife, supervisor of the BCPO Special Victims Unit.

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2023-04