

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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Man in 1977 Murder of young Norton couple expected to plead guilty; extradition to Ohio pending

(Akron, June 9, 2010) ... Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh announced today that an agreement has been reached with Edward Wayne Edwards to plead guilty to killing a young couple in 1977 at a Norton park.

Prosecutor Walsh said, "Since Edwards' confession to killing Billy Lavaco and Judy Straub we have been working with the District Attorney from Jefferson County, Wisconsin to bring our case, and their case, to justice. We are pleased to have reached an agreement with Edwards and his attorneys that resolve these very sad and long overdue cases."

Edwards, 76, originally of Cuyahoga Falls, confessed to a Norton Police detective and an investigator from the Summit County Prosecutor's Office at a Wisconsin jail in May 2010, to murdering Billy Lavaco, 21, of Doylestown and Judy Straub, 18, of Sterling, in 1977 at Norton's Metropolitan Silver Creek Park. Edwards was being held in Wisconsin on 1980 murder charges of 19-year-old sweethearts Tim Hack and Kelly Drew. Edwards wrote a letter in April to Prosecutor Walsh saying he had information about the Norton crime.

Walsh continued, "We are pleased that Edwards has signed an agreement to plead guilty to murdering these four young people. He signed the agreement at 2:00 p.m. (central time) today in Wisconsin and pled guilty to killing Tim Hack and Kelly Drew. Also today, the Summit County Grand Jury indicted Edwards on two counts of Aggravated Murder. Edwards next will be extradited to Summit County, Ohio, where he agreed to plead guilty on Friday, June 11, at 10:30 a.m. eastern in Judge Teodosio's court, and be sentenced for killing Billy Lavaco and Judy Straub. As part of the agreement, he will then be returned to Jefferson County for sentencing. Also as part of the agreement Edwards will return to an Ohio prison."

On August 8, 1977, the bodies of William (Billy) Lavaco and Judith Straub, were found in the park. Both had been shot point-blank in the neck. There is no statute of limitations for murder charges in Ohio. The death penalty in Ohio in 1977 was ruled unconstitutional. A Life sentence remains as the penalty to be imposed. Edwards has to be sentenced according to the law in 1977.