

MESSAGE FROM PROSECUTOR SHERRI BEVAN WALSH

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**Billy Lavaco and Judith Straub's families finally have their day in court;  
33 year old cold case closed.**

(Akron, Ohio, June 11, 2010) ... The families of a young couple who were brutally killed in 1977 in a Norton park finally had the chance to face their murderer, Edward Wayne Edwards, in court today as Edwards pled guilty to two counts of Aggravated Murder.

Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh said, "I am glad that Edwards admitted his guilt today for murdering Billy and Judy 33 years ago. Judge Teodosio imposed the maximum sentence available for a 1977 murder, Life in prison with parole eligibility after 10 years, to run consecutive. Assuming the parole board would release him in 20 years, Edwards would be 96. Even then, he would have to serve his time in Wisconsin. Bottom line, he isn't ever leaving prison.

"Have no illusion, however, that Edwards had some epiphany and decided to give these grieving families a break by stepping forward. Edwards was only caught because of detectives in Wisconsin that connected DNA to Edwards from a cold case involving the death of another young couple. He was facing life in prison in Wisconsin and wanted to come back to Ohio to serve his time. Therefore, he confessed about Billy and Judy's murder."

Walsh concluded, "So while I am pleased that their families know who killed them, it is bittersweet because Billy's mother died not knowing who killed her son; and Judy's father died not knowing who killed his daughter. How many other families are out there who do not know if Edwards may have killed their loved ones? If he is responsible for other murders, I hope he will give those victims some peace, too."

On Wednesday, June 9, it was announced that a plea agreement had been reached with Edwards in the murders of Billy Lavaco, 21, of Doylestown, Judith Straub, 18, of Sterling, Ohio, Tim Hack, 19, and Kelly Drew, 19, both of Jefferson, Wisconsin. Edwards entered a guilty plea in a courtroom in Wisconsin on Wednesday, and entered his guilty plea today before Judge Thomas Teodosio, in Ohio.

Edwards, 76, who grew up in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, wrote a letter to Prosecutor Walsh in April 2010 saying he had information about the Norton murders. A Norton police detective and an investigator from the Summit County Prosecutor's Office went to a Wisconsin jail in May 2010, where Edwards confessed to murdering Billy and Judy in 1977 at Norton's Metropolitan Silver Creek Park. Since the confession, Edwards has written several letters to Prosecutor Walsh and Norton Police expressing his desire to be returned to Ohio.

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.

The bodies of Kelly Drew and Tim Hack, both 19, were discovered in a Jefferson, Wisconsin corn field on August 8, 1980. The two had attended a wedding reception before their disappearance. Edwards was a handyman at a building adjacent to the hall. Kelly Drew was raped and strangled and Tim Hack was stabbed. Edwards was arrested in Louisville, Kentucky, on the case after his DNA matched semen found on the young woman's underwear.