

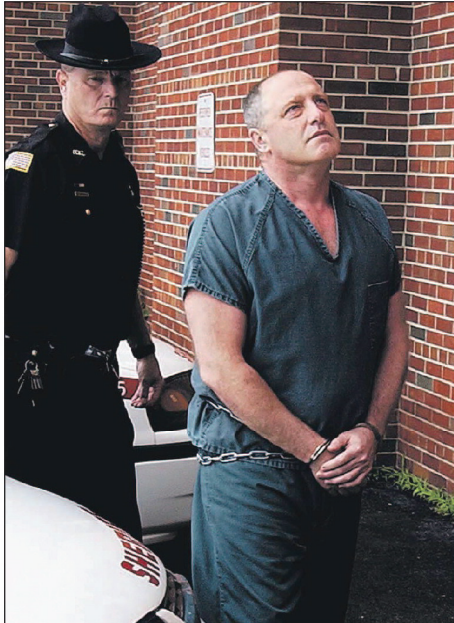
WHAT HAPPENED

- **Sept. 11, 1993:** A masked man, armed with a gun, rapes Donna Palomba, Waterbury businesswoman and mother, while her children are asleep down the hall.
- **January 2003:** A jury finds Waterbury Police Department guilty of negligence in the Palomba case and awards Palomba \$190,000 in damages. Her attacker has not yet been caught.
- **August 2004:** John Regan attacks a 21-year-old co-worker at his parents' home in the Overlook section of Waterbury. Victim breaks free and runs, alerting police.
- **September 2004:** Waterbury police arrest Regan and charge him with unlawful restraint. Chief Neil M. O'Leary asks Regan for a DNA sample. Regan's DNA was collected in Connecticut.
- **Oct. 22, 2004:** Waterbury Police Chief Neil M. O'Leary informs Palomba that police obtained a DNA match to her rapist revealing that former family friend John Regan was her attacker. Regan's DNA had been collected at the time he was charged with unlawful restraint of his co-worker in 2004. However, because the statute of limitations for rape was five years, Regan could not be charged with Palomba's 1993 rape. Connecticut instead charges Regan with kidnapping in Palomba's case, and unlawful restraint and stalking in the case of Regan's co-worker.
- **Oct. 31, 2005:** While out on \$350,000 bond for the Connecticut charges, Regan attempts to abduct a teenager after a track meet. Police arrest Regan and later find rope, a noose, sedatives, syringe, \$2,500 in cash and photos of Palomba, his co-worker and other women.
- **May 19, 2006:** Regan pleads guilty to felony charge of second-degree attempted kidnapping, admitting that he tried to abduct Saratoga Springs High School athlete Lindsay Ferguson, 17, as she was about to get into her car after track practice.
- **July 13, 2006:** John Regan pleaded guilty for attempted kidnapping in New York and was sentenced to 12 years in state prison.
- **Oct. 26, 2006:** Regan pleaded guilty to kidnapping in the first degree in the Palomba case and stalking for the attack on his 21-year-old co-worker. Because kidnapping is a Class A felony, there was no statute of limitations on the charge. Regan was sentenced to 15 years in prison for all the Connecticut cases. The sentence will be served concurrently with his New York sentence.
- **July 27, 2010:** Gov. M. Jodi Rell signs law eliminating statute of limitations on sexual assaults that can be prosecuted with the use of DNA evidence. Under the law, signed at Waterbury Police Department headquarters, such crimes may be prosecuted at any time, if the alleged perpetrator is identified through DNA evidence and the crime was reported within five years of the attack.
- **Aug. 21, 2017:** Due to Connecticut's "statutory good time" law, John Regan knocks more than four years off his Connecticut sentence, meaning he would not serve the remaining three years owed to the state in prison. He is scheduled to be released from prison in Danmora, N.Y., in October.
- **Oct. 27, 2017:** New York State Supreme Court orders New York Department of Correction to keep him Regan confined in Clinton Correctional Facility.
- **Jan. 26, 2022:** Hearing scheduled in New York in which a judge will decide whether Regan be placed in a secure treatment facility or be confined in a psychiatric facility run by the New York Office of Mental Health.
 — Tracy O'Shaughnessy

"What I hope happens in this case is that the Connecticut legislature takes a look at the New York civil management confinement laws and see if it is something that may be of interest here because I think there's merit to it." — Waterbury Mayor Neil M. O'Leary

'Jane Doe' pain lingers

Judge to decide fate of notorious Waterbury rapist



Saratoga County Sheriff Deputy Bill Marshall, left, escorts Waterbury native and convicted rapist John Regan into the Saratoga County Court building in Ballston Spa, N.Y., in 2006. A New York judge will hold a hearing Jan. 26 to decide Regan's fate after a jury trial in November found him at risk to reoffend.

BY TRACY O'SHAUGHNESSY
 REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

John Regan, who raped Waterbury native Donna Palomba in 1993 and was later convicted of the attempted abduction of a New York high school student, is likely to spend the next years of his life under restrictive intensive supervision or be confined to a secure treatment facility and forced to undergo mental health treatment.

The decision is expected after a jury trial last November found the Waterbury native had a "mental abnormality" and was at risk to reoffend. A New York judge will hold a hearing Jan. 26 to decide between the two options. New York is one of 20 states that offers such a disposition. But had Regan been transferred to Connecticut, law enforcement officials say, he would have been released by now.



Palomba O'Leary

"I definitely think that he is dangerous," said Palomba, founder of Jane Doe No More. "He has never admitted guilt to my knowledge. He is a very sick man. He was living a double life and he had everyone fooled."

"Dateline NBC," which first reported the now-notorious case in 2007, will update the situation Friday. For the first time, Palomba's two adult children will speak on television about the attack.

See REGAN, Page 6A

REGAN: Intense supervision, confinement only options

Continued from Page One

The decision may draw the curtain on a violent, sordid story of a father of three from a prominent local family found to have brutally raped a family friend with apparent impunity until DNA evidence linked him to the crime.

In the ensuing years, Palomba successfully sued two Waterbury Police Department police officers for mishandling the case, started her own nonprofit to change how law enforcement treats rape victims and successfully pushed for an end to statute of limitation cases on rapes that have DNA evidence.

MAYOR NEIL M. O'LEARY, who has long supported Palomba's efforts, said he would welcome a civil management law in Connecticut. "I would support it. I really would," said O'Leary, former Waterbury chief of police. "So many times, whether it would be a statute of limitations issue or something else, sometimes people just don't get well. Prison supposedly offers rehabilitation opportunities for sexual predators and it's up to the individuals whether they want to embrace the rehabilitation program or not. In this case, Mr. Regan did not."

Palomba said she testified at Regan's trial last November and was required to speak in detail about the attack, including elements she has never revealed.

"It was unerving, and it was very difficult," Palomba said. "I don't talk about what he did to me in graphic detail, but under cross examination with the attorneys they asked me to go into detail as to what he did."

Palomba said she understood that attorneys needed explicit details of the attack — which included thrusting a gun into her mouth, temple and back — to underscore the perversity of the crime, which could help establish Regan's "mental abnormality."

During the rape, Palomba said "He said, 'If you call the pigs, I will come back and get you,'" she said, adding that he also threatened her family.

O'Leary said he did not know how long Regan, 65, would remain in a New York facility. Under the New York Law, a sex offender placed in an Office of Mental Health secure treatment facility is entitled to an annual review of the order of confinement.

If that office determines that the individual is no longer a dangerous sex offender requiring confinement, it can petition the court for a discharge or release to strict and intensive



Donna Palomba, founder and president of Jane Doe No More, in March 2017, with other activists at a candlelight vigil for the Jane Doe No More Green in daylight.

REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN ARCHIVES

supervision and treatment. Regan can also file a petition with the court at any time to be released from the facility.

New York has two secure treatment facilities: Central New York Psychiatric Center in Marcy, N.Y., and St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center in Ogdensburg, N.Y.

Regan had been set to be released to Connecticut after his sentence was complete on Aug. 21, 2017.

"At that point, we tried to bring him back to Connecticut to serve the remainder of his sentence," said Waterbury Chief State's Attorney Maureen T. Platt. However, under Connecticut's "statutory good time" law, since rescinded, Regan had accrued almost four years of good time, meaning he had "maxed out on his Connecticut conviction," Platt said.

BECAUSE CONNECTICUT AND NEW YORK agreed that Regan would serve his time concurrently, John Regan never served prison time in Connecticut.

However, on Oct. 26, just before his release, New York State Supreme Court ordered corrections officials to keep Regan in prison. Subsequently, the New York Attorney General, working on a recommendation from the state's mental health office, petitioned for civil management.

Officials from the New York State's Attorney General's office did not return requests for comment.

Last November, Palomba, the New York victim and individuals Palomba described were "other victims" testified at a jury trial. O'Leary confirmed more than Palomba and the former high school track athlete testified at the trial. He would not say how many other victims, other than "more than those two."

Law enforcement officials in New York and Connecticut have long suspected Re-

gan committed other crimes before his incarceration. During the November jury trial, Regan — who at first tried to represent himself, meaning he could cross examine his victims — was present.

"I tried not to look at him," Palomba said of Regan. "Before I went into testify, I wanted to know where he was positioned so I tried not to look at that area." Because of COVID-19, jurors and other participants were spread over the room, she said.

"Under cross examination, I had no choice but had to look in his direction," she said. "We did not connect. I did see him. It was surreal and unerving. But I was really determined to do everything I could to ensure he could not get out and harm another person."

PALOMBA SAID SHE WAS GRATEFUL Regan finished his sentence in New York "because that allowed him to be held under the Civil Management Law, which we don't have in Connecticut."

O'Leary, who also testified at the November trial, said such a law would give the attorney general discretion to file for a civil confinement hearing if the individual is deemed a threat to society.

"What I hope happens in this case is that the Connecticut legislature takes a look at the New York civil management confinement laws and see if it is something that may be of interest here because I think there's merit to it," O'Leary said.

He said the process of determining a sex offender has a "mental abnormality" that includes a compulsion to reoffend "is a very onerous level to reach so that needs to be explained to legislators. It's usually sexual predators who just can't control their impulses."

Palomba said she is considering asking her nonprofit, Jane Doe No More, to lobby legislators to bring a similar law to Connecticut.