



Rapist Attempts To Have Life Sentences Thrown Out

N. Palm Beach Victim Recalls Night Of Terror.

January 6, 2006 | By Missy Stoddard Staff Writer

New Year's Eve marked the ninth year of hell on earth for Goldie Fentress.

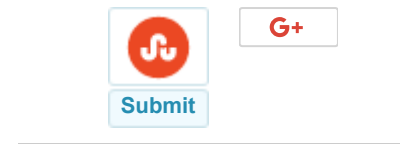
"[Frank Geldreich] raped me repeatedly all night and he beat me and choked me," said Fentress, 58, of North Palm Beach.

Recuperating from two heart attacks she suffered on the same day last year, Fentress was distressed to learn Geldreich, 44, was in a Palm Beach County courtroom Thursday seeking to have his life sentences for raping and kidnapping her thrown out for ineffective assistance by his former defense attorney, Louis Townsend Jr.

"Nobody knows what I went through that night," Fentress said, her voice quivering. "It's still very hard to go back there."

At his 1997 trial, Geldreich, a former waiter at the trendy Palm Beach eatery Taboo, claimed that he and Fentress, the mother of an acquaintance, hooked up at nearby Chuck & Harold's on Royal Poinciana Way and went back to his place for consensual sex.

But a jury didn't buy that argument and convicted Geldreich. Then-Circuit Judge Marvin Mounts gave Geldreich five consecutive 50-year sentences plus another 30 years for kidnapping -- all but assuring that Geldreich would die behind bars.



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Geldreich and his new attorney, John Garcia, told Circuit Judge Lucy Chernow Brown that Townsend never informed Geldreich about including lesser offenses on a jury verdict form, allowing the possibility that jurors might have convicted him of crimes that carried lesser penalties.

Townsend, a former assistant public defender now in private practice, testified Thursday that not offering lesser offenses was a carefully crafted trial strategy that Geldreich helped mount.

"My trial strategy ... is all or nothing," Townsend said. . "It's hard to ride two horses. Mr. Geldreich agreed we're not going to go with lessers, that it was all or nothing."

Geldreich's version of events was much more credible than Fentress', Townsend said, and was the impetus for why the defense opted not to include lesser offenses on the verdict form.

The couple partied all night, had sex at Geldreich's place and the next morning Geldreich fetched breakfast for her, the lawyer testified.

"There aren't too many rapists who go and get orange juice and muffins," Townsend said.

Wearing a blue jail uniform and a yarmulke, Geldreich claimed he had no knowledge of Townsend's decision to forego the lesser offenses. Townsend met with Geldreich just twice before trial, according to the defendant, and never told him that lesser offenses were an option.

He also maintained that Townsend failed to tell him that the crimes with which he was charged -- sexual battery with force and kidnapping -- carried potential life sentences.

Brown will issue her decision at a later date.

Between December 1996 and January 1997, Geldreich found himself charged with raping or trying to rape three women. In addition to Fentress' case, Geldreich was acquitted in one of the cases and

convicted in the other, an attempted rape, though that case was later overturned on appeal. The State Attorney's Office ultimately opted not to re-prosecute that case.

A self-described partying jetsetter, Geldreich testified Thursday to heavy drinking and drug use in the 1990s. Playing hard was part of the industry in which he worked, he testified. He characterized himself as an alcoholic at the time of the rape charges.

After nine years in prison, Geldreich said he now has an intimate knowledge of the justice system, often writing to the court and conducting his research. It's a far cry, he said, from his rap sheet before the sexual battery charges, which consisted of writing five bad checks in California. Had he known at trial what he knows now, Geldreich said he certainly would have requested that the lesser offenses be included on the verdict form.

Since her heart attacks, Fentress has often pondered why she survived. Now she knows.

"If he gets a new trial, I will be there and I'll be a witness for the state again if I have to," she said. "Maybe the reason I'm here is to keep him behind bars."

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