

TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor
Repeat Violent Offenders newsletter

A trilogy of child sex offenders could be released on Trumbull County streets (or elsewhere) late this year.

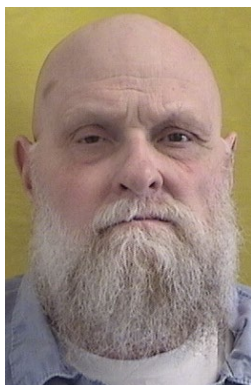


In my career I have never seen a worse group of vicious sexual predators come up for parole release at the same time. They are: (1.) Willis Reitz, above left, (2.) William Fisher, above center, and (3.) David Lockney, above right. See letters opposing their release on the Trumbull County Prosecutor's website.

The good news is the Ohio Parole Board over the years have repeatedly turned them down. So the Reitz, Fisher and Lockney trio have been incarcerated a total of 93 years. Unfortunately both Reitz and Fisher had been imprisoned and released on parole in the past and after release, they raped the same children and others again!

Still victims, police, prosecutors and citizens must be vigilant and stand firm that Public Safety comes first – when there is the potential of extreme violence being involved. Every day this Nation sees violent offenders being released from prison on parole or probation and re-offend.

More to come this fall in Trumbull County – murderers Gary Allen Betz and Sheldon Jackson, both serving life sentences, are up again for parole release. This will be Betz's fourth opportunity to be released on parole with his hearing in October 2023. Inmate Betz was convicted in Trumbull County Common Pleas Court for the cold-blooded shotgun murder of Lake Milton tavern owner Ron Gouche in 1976. At the time of the murder, Betz had been sent to prison twice and



paroled. Also after spending 30 years in prison, he was paroled again in 2007 after a full parole hearing despite strong opposition to his release by the victim's family and the Trumbull County Prosecutor's Office.

After his release for the third time on parole, Betz, photo at left, violated his parole on DUI charges in Minerva and Carrollton in 2008 and 2010 and was returned to prison. Here we go again! There is more to this story, and it will be covered in September 2023 with the prosecutor's response. See the prior letters of Prosecutor Watkins opposing Betz's release which appears on the Trumbull County Prosecutor's website.

As to inmate Sheldon Jackson, photo at right, he is getting a full board hearing from the parole board in October. Jackson was sentenced for a 20-year to life prisons sentence for the 1994 murder of an elderly man in his neighborhood. On April 20, 23, the Prosecutor's Office wrote its letter of opposition See the letter on the Prosecutor's Office website.



Jackson plunged a screwdriver into the neck of 78-year-old Theodore Emerson and then unmercifully beat and kicked the victim to death. Jackson pleaded guilty before a three-judge panel to all charges to avoid the death penalty. Some witnesses were unavailable for trial as was another victim which justified the life sentences.

Jackson and his two co-defendants had forced their way into the Jefferson Street SW home in Warren, knocked Emerson into the basement, where Jackson and another man followed Theodore into the basement and severely beat him. A third man went upstairs and beat and stabbed 74-year-old Kathryn Emerson. Some personal items and \$46 in cash were stolen during the home invasion. Mrs. Emerson was hospitalized for months with permanent injuries and died not long afterward.

Inmates Betz and Jackson are hoping that the parole board may find something good for them so they could be soon released on parole – however, this is really becoming ridiculous, and Betz and Jackson are way too vicious, bad and dangerous

to be allowed to roam the streets of any community. In our opinion, they merit continued incarceration. Therefore the office will join the victims' families and strongly urge the board to continue their justly given life sentences in prison where we ensure the public safety.

Additionally we believe that these suggested changes in the law in Ohio would be helpful:

1. Marsy's Law Should be amended to give more rights to victims in parole board hearings, including extending the amount of time between parole hearings when murderer and sex offenders serving life sentences are denied parole and repeatedly come up again and again for release. We believe special or unique circumstances in these violent acts justify longer extensions. Victims are now being re-victimized by having too many parole board hearings involving dangerous offenders.
2. Public Records Law should be changed to allow victims, police, prosecutors, courts, and the public access to inmate information which is being used or promoted by these inmates as reasons for release on parole when such inmates are serving life sentences for murder or raping victims aged 12 or younger.