

Illinois Democrat accused of luring teen into sex

CHICAGO — A prosecutor accused Rep. Mel Reynolds on Monday of luring a 16-year-old campaign volunteer into a sexual relationship "like a hunter stalks his prey."

"He used everything he had, his position ... his office, to get her to have sex with him," Assistant State's Attorney Colleen Hyland told the jury during closing arguments at the 43-year-old congressman's sex-abuse trial.

The jury began deliberations around 4:30 p.m.

After four weeks of trial, both sides focused final arguments on just two witnesses - Reynolds and Beverly Heard, the former campaign worker who says she had sex with the congressman when she was an underage 16 and 17.

The Illinois Democrat has denied having had sex with Heard, now 19, saying they engaged only in fantasy sex talk on the phone.

Defense attorney Ed Genson said Reynolds was targeted by a lying,

"bizarre" teen-ager who tried to use telephone sexual fantasies to extort money from the two-term lawmaker.

His voice rising, Genson shook his fists and shouted to the jury that Heard "lied in this courtroom in front of your very eyes!"

"A whole life is being taken down by this girl, a girl who cannot be believed, who they cannot believe!" Genson shouted.

Genson earlier noted that Heard had at one time recanted her story of having sex with Reynolds. She agreed to testify after being jailed for 11 days.

Genson also urged jurors not to accept at face value tape recordings of phone calls between Reynolds and Heard. The recordings were made with police help after Heard went to authorities.

"When is she telling the truth? When is she telling you the same malarkey she told Mel Reynolds on those tapes?" Genson said. "How are

you to believe one word that woman says beyond a reasonable doubt?"

He told jurors he wasn't there to defend Reynolds' sins, ethics, hormones or "middle-age crazies."

Reynolds is charged with sexual abuse, sexual assault, child pornography and obstruction, for allegedly trying to get the girl to recant.

Conviction on the most serious charge, sexual assault, carries a mandatory sentence of at least four years in prison.

"Much like a hunter stalks his prey, Mel Reynolds was driving his Cadillac down the street" when he met Heard, Hyland told the jury.

The prosecutor reminded jurors that in one of the conversations, Reynolds spoke with Heard about how he "used to" have sexual relations with her.

"He can't escape his own words," Hyland said. "They may be stupid and immoral, but under our law they are criminal."

Woman beaten, stripped, then falls to her death

DETROIT — As dozens of onlookers cheered, three men pulled a woman from her car, ripping off her clothes, then chased her until she either jumped or was forced off a bridge to her death.

None of the 40 or so passersby tried to help Deletha Word during the confrontation that began with two minor traffic accidents early Saturday on the Belle Isle bridge, said police Sgt. John Morel.

A man who arrived late tried to rescue her from the Detroit River but couldn't reach her. The 33-year-old woman's body, missing a leg, was found several miles downstream later that morning.

"My baby was down there all by herself. I know she was scared to death," the woman's mother, Dortha Word, said as she cried Monday. "How could they be so cruel?"

Trouble started around 3 a.m., Morel said, when Word was involved in two minor traffic accidents on Belle Island. One car with three men inside chased her onto the bridge connecting the island to the city and rammed her car, forcing her to stop.

One of the men smashed her car with a crowbar and pulled her from the car, ripping off some of her clothes, Cmdr. Gerald Stewart said. The man pushed her against the car and beat her, he said.

One of the men weighed nearly 300 pounds, according to a police source quoted in The Detroit News. Word, who was 4-foot-11, weighed 115 pounds, her mother said.

When Word tried to run away, police said the man with the crowbar chased her. What happened after that is unclear.

Police are not saying whether Word jumped or was forced off the bridge, but Mrs. Word said she is sure her daughter was forced into the Detroit River.

"They ... made her leap over that bridge and beat her hands. She was holding onto the bridge, and beat her hands away from that banister," she said, citing an account she said police gave her.

Word's cousin Carol Neely said Word would have never jumped because she did not know how to swim.

Lawrence Walker, 21, was in the bumper-to-bumper traffic that had formed on the bridge when he noticed a crowd running to the edge. He got out of his car and followed, jumping into the river after her.

"I wasn't trying to be Superman or anything," he said. "I just saw something and jumped in without thinking about it."

But Word moved away from him and a friend in the water and he quickly lost sight of her. He worried afterward that perhaps she thought he was one of the people after her.

"I think my trying to help her maybe made her swim a little further out than she could," he said.

Walker said about 50 people were gathered when he ran up, many of them laughing about the men beating Word. He said one person had a cellular phone but would not call police.

"It seemed like people didn't care," he said.

By Sunday afternoon, police had arrested three men, two age 20 and one age 19. It was not clear what charges they faced.

Plane crashes in Georgia; 2 confirmed dead, 27 injured

CARROLLTON, Ga. — A commuter plane flying from Georgia to Mississippi crashed in a hay field and cracked open Monday, killing two people and injuring 27, many of whom fled the wreckage with their clothes on fire.

The Atlantic Southeast Airlines turboprop went down around midday about five miles from Carrollton, breaking into three large pieces as it plowed across the green field.

The pilot had radioed that he was having engine problems and may have been trying to land at West Georgia Regional Airport, six to eight miles from the crash site, said Christy Williams, a Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman.

Polona Jeter, who lives nearby, said she saw the front of the plane "rolling and tumbling and on fire" as the aircraft came apart.

"I could see about 10 people getting out," she said. "Some were burning. They were running. People were trying to get them down and get it out."

One injured man arrived on her front porch and used the phone to leave a message for his wife in Maine. "His clothes were burned

off. His undershorts were all that was left," she said. "The skin just rolled off his body."

Twenty-six of the injured were hospitalized, at least one in critical condition.

The two-engine Brazilian-made Embraer 120 was about 15 minutes and 50 miles into a flight from Atlanta to Gulfport, Miss., 362 miles away. It had 26 passengers and three crew members. The weather was cloudy and rainy.

The cause of the crash was under investigation. In Washington, the National Transportation Safety Board assembled a team to investigate.

It was the fourth fatal commuter plane crash in 10 months.

Paul Butler, who lives about 75 yards from the crash site, said he rushed out of his house when he heard two loud booms and saw the plane skidding to a stop.

"People were already out, some on fire, going in every direction," Butler said.

He watched as others emerged through a gaping hole in the aircraft. Everyone he saw was burned, Butler said, some had no clothes on.

The pilot or copilot was trapped in the cockpit, and Butler said firefighters used axes from his barn to rescue him.

"One of the firemen chopped the glass out of the cockpit and they turned the firehose on him and chopped the glass till they could get him out," Butler said.

One passenger also helped pull a hose off the first fire truck to arrive, said Carroll County Fire Chief Steve Chadwick.

On Oct. 31, an American Eagle commuter plane crashed in Indiana while waiting to land at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, killing all 68 aboard.

On Dec. 13, another American Eagle commuter plane crashed in fog and drizzle as it approached Raleigh-Durham International Airport in North Carolina. Fifteen of the 20 people aboard were killed.

On Jan. 7, a United Express commuter plane crashed on approach to Port Columbus International Airport in Ohio. Five people were killed.

Rapist sentenced to 100 to 200 years

OMAHA — A man convicted of raping eight people in Omaha during the spring and summer of 1993 has been sentenced to 100 to 200 years in prison.

Thomas Freeman was sentenced to 10 to 20 years on each of eight counts of rape and five to 10 years on each of four counts of using a knife to commit

a crime. Douglas County District Judge James Murphy ordered the sentences be served consecutively.

The prison time will be added to the time Freeman already is serving for two counts of attempted rape and one count of using a knife.

Five of the rape victims were in the courtroom Monday. They wept dur-

ing the proceedings and as they left. One victim spoke before Freeman was sentenced. "I hope you rot in hell, Thomas Freeman," she said.

The victims said they were threatened with a knife and ordered to be quiet or be killed. They said they were blindfolded so they could not see their assailant.

News... in a Minute

Mantle remembered

GREENSBORO, Ga. — Friends and fans of baseball Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle recalled the former New York Yankees slugger as a fun-loving neighbor and compassionate friend during a memorial service in the small Georgia town he sometimes called home.

About 300 people, including Gov. Zell Miller and home run king Hank Aaron, gathered Sunday at the First United Methodist Church where Mantle sometimes attended services. Those on hand heard tales of his fondness for practical jokes.

"That humor - hilarious. And sometimes a little raunchy," said Miller, who became friends with Mantle in recent years and has called him one of his heroes.

Mantle died Aug. 13 of liver cancer, shortly after he received a liver transplant.

Mantle came to Greensboro in 1994 after being released from the Betty Ford Clinic, where he was treated for alcohol abuse.

There, he embraced Christianity and the First United Methodist Church in late 1993 at the behest of his friend and agent Greer Johnson, who fed him communion by hand when Mantle's ailing knees didn't allow him to walk to the altar. She wept as she sat next to Aaron at Sunday's service.

The church's pastor, the Rev. Edward R. Nelson, said Mantle sat on the back row the first time he came to the church with Johnson, but later "became one of our best parishioners." Nelson said support from the community gave Mantle the strength to overcome his alcoholism.

Mantle was also remembered for his generosity, from raising money for Georgia's 1994 flood victims to providing Christmas gifts and dinners for Greene County's poor children.

Danza shows who's the boss

MALIBU, Calif. — Television celebrity Tony Danza smashed a car window and grabbed a video camera from two men who had taped the actor and his kids on the beach, authorities said Monday.

Chris Williams, 25, and Alan Zasi, 34, told deputies Danza pursued them Sunday and got them to pull over by bumping their car with his Cadillac.

Danza kicked and broke the window and made off with the camera after a struggle in which Williams received several scratches, the sheriff's report said.

Danza wasn't arrested, but the case will be forwarded to prosecutors for possible robbery and battery charges, Deputy Fidel Gonzales said. Calls to Danza's publicist Kate Chester were not immediately returned.

The former star of "Who's the Boss?" and "Taxi" will star this fall in the new ABC series "Hudson Street," in which he plays a divorced New Jersey detective sharing custody of his son with his ex-wife.

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Editor J. Christopher Hain 472-1766
Managing Editor Rainbow Rowell
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Publications Board Chairman Tim Hedegaard, 472-2588
Professional Adviser Don Walton, 473-7301

FAX NUMBER 472-1761

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