

Killer of Roxana Cheerleader Charged With Driving Under The Influence

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BETHALTO - A man who served just over 37 years in prison for killing a popular Roxana High School cheerleader is facing a charge of driving under the influence. Prante has proclaimed his innocence since he was convicted. She was 22 years old at the time of her death.



“I haven’t been this high or drunk in 37 1/2 years,” John Prante, 72, of the 100 block of Lakeside Drive, said, according to a court document. He was charged with driving under the influence after a traffic stop and an officer’s claim that he appeared to be impaired.

Prante’s murder case made news nationwide in 1978 after authorities exhumed Karla Brown’s body and found bite marks on her neck that were consistent with Prante’s teeth. The case lay dormant between 1978 and 1983.

Prante was sentenced to 72 years in prison in 1983, but the Truth in Sentencing law was not in force, so he was allowed a day off his sentence for every “good” day he served.

Brown's body was found in the basement of her Wood River home on June 21, 1978. She had been beaten, cut, and choked, and her head was bent over into a large container of water. Her body was nude from the waist down.

The case went to trial after the body was exhumed. The evidence at trial was inconclusive as to the bite marks, but a judge wrote in a post-conviction ruling that there was plenty of evidence other than the bite marks and that the jury may have ignored the bite mark evidence.

The exhumation and trial touched off national media attention, and prosecutor Don Weber and reporter Charles Bosworth wrote a book about the case.

Even though the case is over and Prante is out of prison, a group of crusaders has been trying to get the bite mark evidence tossed, claiming it is unreliable.

In the most recent incident, Prante was stopped on Jan. 4 by a Madison County deputy who claims Prante failed a field sobriety test. Prante's blood-alcohol level was placed at 0.093 percent, compared with a level of 0.07 percent of a legal presumption of intoxication. He has a court date of March 2.