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Family credits investigators for never giving up

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The family of Cindy Zarzycki says that after a long time of waiting, Arthur Ream was finally brought to justice thanks to the combined efforts of Eastpointe police, Macomb prosecutors and private interviewers.

Detectives Derek McLaughlin, Kelly Shock and former detective Danielle Davis of Eastpointe police reignited the case, and Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith and his Cold Case Unit kept the flame burning.

Circuit Judge Mary Chrzanowski called McLaughlin's work in the case "phenomenal," and assistant Macomb prosecutor Steven Kaplan, head of the cold case squad, in court thanked Eastpointe police for "doggedly pursuing this case."

Ream, 59, was sentenced to life in prison without a chance for parole Thursday by Chrzanowski of Macomb County Circuit Court for the 1986 slaying of 13-year-old Cindy Zarzycki of Eastpointe. He was convicted of first-degree murder by a jury in June.

The Zarzycki family and police also praised the efforts of Jennifer L. Leibow, a professional interrogator from the management security services firm of Wicklander-Zulawski & Associates from Downers Grove, Ill.

McLaughlin said Leibow helped keep Ream off the streets, otherwise he would still be preying on young girls, as Ream had been scheduled to be released from prison late last year for a sexual assault conviction.

In addition to prior convictions, since his arrest in January police have spoken to several other women who said Ream raped them when they were young, police said.

Some family members said although they are forever grateful Detective Davis brought the case back to life, they believe detectives at the time of her disappearance dropped the ball.

Norma Roemelen of Warren, Cindy's aunt, planned to address the court Thursday but changed her mind on the request of Cindy's mother, Alice Zarzycki. Roemelen said outside court she planned to say police bungled the case during the first week by failing to question three of Cindy's best friends.

Roemelen said the girls would have told investigators that Cindy was planning on meeting Ream the morning she was last seen at a Dairy Queen near her house.

Police didn't find out until years later from Cindy's friends that Ream told Cindy he was having a surprise birthday party for his son, Scott, in Pontiac and agreed to meet Cindy at the Dairy Queen to give her a ride to the party. There never was a party.

Scott later died in a car crash.

Police initially thought Cindy went to live at her mother's house. Cindy, her brother, sister, and dad lived on Rosalind Street while her mother lived on Rein Street, within walking distance in Eastpointe.

Cindy's brother, Ed Zarzycki Jr., said outside the courtroom Cindy's disappearance was treated as a typical runaway, but police should have known that the father of Scott had been convicted in the 1970s of a sexual assault against a young girl. They then would have questioned him, he said.

But years later, Detective Davis and then Detective McLaughlin took the initiative to keep on trying to solve the case. McLaughlin, the lead investigator, said he was fortunate to have the help and blessings of his bosses, Detective Lt. Leo Borowsky and Inspector John Calabrese. They told "Mac" to get all the help he needed and not to leave any stone unturned. That's exactly what he did, according to Calabrese, the former commander of the Eastpointe Detective Bureau.

Leibow said Ream is not delusional nor is he mentally ill. She said he is manipulative.

"It's incredible, though, that he will never, ever admit to killing Cindy," she said. "He thinks he's a good guy, really. He said he couldn't talk about Cindy's death but he certainly talked about himself (during interviews) and his life's experience."

Leibow further said that Ream told police he never raped anyone and his sex with 12- and 13-year-old girls was consensual.

"He will be upset now because people don't believe him," Leibow said. "He needed to face the music and hear from the judge what a bad person he is."