

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,) Docket No. 15 CR 315
)
Plaintiff,) Chicago, Illinois
) April 27, 2016
v.) 10:09 a.m.
)
JOHN DENNIS HASTERT,)
)
Defendant.)

EXCERPT TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS - Sentencing
STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES AND DEFENDANT
BEFORE THE HONORABLE THOMAS M. DURKIN

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1 (Proceedings had not herein transcribed.)

2 (In open court; defendant present.)

3 THE COURT: Please call your first witness.

4 MR. BLOCK: Thank you, your Honor.

5 And we would -- the witnesses will be reading
6 statements, not providing testimony through the form of
7 questions, so I'd ask they be able to address the Court from
8 the podium.

9 THE COURT: They may, but they're going to be sworn
10 in.

11 MR. BLOCK: Yes, your Honor.

12 THE COURT: All right. Please call your first
13 witness.

14 MR. BLOCK: Jolene Burdge, please step up.

15 THE COURT: And if the defense decides they want to
16 ask questions of any of these witnesses, you're free to do so,
17 but the witness will take the stand rather than you asking
18 questions next to them.

19 MR. GREEN: Understand, your Honor.

20 THE COURT: All right.

21 THE CLERK: Raise your right hand, please.

22 (Witness duly sworn.)

23 MS. BURDGE: I do.

24 THE COURT: You may proceed.

25 MS. BURDGE: My name is Jolene Burdge, and I am the

1 sister of Stephen Reinboldt.

2 "Dear Mom: It rained this morning, but now the sun is
3 out and the air is crisp and clean. I've been on a shopping
4 spree these past couple of days, so now I have to kick back to
5 the first of the month.

6 "I got a new pair of sneakers and replaced my lawn
7 chair rocker, both on sale, and got the new Bruce Springsteen
8 and Annie Lennox albums, so I'm happy but broke.

9 "Usually I'm in the backyard trying to get some sun,
10 rocking in the rocking chair. On Friday I go to the oncology
11 department so they can check out my KS sores, but I don't think
12 there is a lot they can do for me.

13 "The taxi comes to pick me up and takes me back home,
14 so I don't have to worry about driving. Other than that, it's
15 steady as she goes."

16 Steve died five months after writing this letter. He
17 was 42 years old. His last years were spent alone in a
18 one-room apartment, barely able to support himself, waiting to
19 die.

20 The sight in his right eye was gone. Neuropathy made
21 it hard to walk, and the people shunned him when they saw his
22 KS lesions. He had long given up trusting people and found
23 solace in his music and movies.

24 He spent most of his life jumping from job to job or
25 having no job at all.

1 His letters were full of false hope that next week or
2 next month or next year would be better. If Mom could just
3 send him a little money to get him through the month, he knew
4 his break was coming.

5 He used to send me VHS tapes full of his favorite
6 movies, along with commentary notes explaining the special
7 effects, history of the director, new techniques in lighting
8 and sound, letters full of passion for the arts and film he
9 dearly loved, dreams and goals he would never fulfill.

10 I held Steve's hand the night he died. Fear of the
11 AIDS epidemic was at its height in 1995 Los Angeles. There was
12 only one funeral home that would pick up his body from the
13 hospice, and it was in the cover of night.

14 After six years of helping him bear yet another
15 secret, his burdens were finally lifted. Mine got heavier, and
16 that's when it all changed: No more secrets. No more guilt or
17 shame for the choices we had to make in order to survive.

18 If ever given the chance, I would confront you face to
19 face and make you accountable for sexually molesting my
20 brother. 20 years ago you treated me like an insignificant
21 annoyance, but I knew your secret and you couldn't bribe or
22 intimidate your way out.

23 Now I stand here 20 years later with the truth on my
24 side. I hope I have been your worst nightmare.

25 Like many, Steve thought you were a wonderful teacher,

1 committed to upholding the educators' code of ethics to help
2 each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and
3 effective member of society, to protect the students from
4 conditions harmful to learning or to their health and safety, a
5 generous man who wanted to be a friend and mentor, helping kids
6 get through their teenage years.

7 And our family had very tough years. Emotional and
8 physical abuse, neglect, alcoholism, and mental illness leave a
9 kid looking for refuge. That's exactly what you gave him. You
10 showed interest in his life and encouraged him to participate
11 in activities; someone really cared. But your words and
12 actions were soon used as weapons to get what you wanted all
13 along.

14 You took Steve's right to discover and develop his
15 sexual identity in a normal, healthy way. His diminishing
16 self-worth left him vulnerable to your ongoing manipulation.
17 His social worker once commented that you made it impossible
18 for Steve to see the situation clearly.

19 Telling Steve's story without the sexual abuse is like
20 telling the story of the Titanic without the ship. You think
21 you can deny your abuse of Steve because he can no longer speak
22 for himself. That's why I'm here.

23 You claim to be deeply sorry and remorseful for what
24 you did years ago. You claim to understand the gravity of your
25 misconduct and are prepared to accept responsibility for your

1 actions.

2 How can that be when you refuse to acknowledge the
3 true reason behind the money structuring and lying to the FBI?
4 Don't be a coward, Mr. Hastert. Tell the truth. What you did
5 wasn't misconduct; it was sexual abuse of a minor. Call it
6 what it is. Show us that honesty, integrity, and decency that
7 you and all your supporters claim you live by.

8 I don't remember the last Christmas or birthday I
9 spent with Steve. While you were enjoying holidays and time
10 with your family, we were wondering where Steve was or if he
11 was even alive. If he had died, how would we ever find him?

12 I miss him so much. No one ever made me brag louder
13 or laugh harder no matter how awful things were at home. After
14 he died, it was hard to breathe.

15 Your family members have expressed concern about how
16 much time they might have left with you based on your current
17 health conditions.

18 From Steve's high school graduation in 1971 until his
19 death 24 years later in 1995, I estimate I had one year with
20 Steve. The rest of those years he spent running from the pain
21 and turmoil of lifelong trauma and the knowledge that no one
22 would believe you were his abuser. He felt betrayed, ashamed,
23 and embarrassed.

24 When a man is sexually assaulted, it means they
25 weren't strong enough to fight back: It must have been his

1 fault. He wasn't strong enough. You were supposed to keep him
2 safe, not violate him. Obviously, he couldn't trust his own
3 judgment of a person's character.

4 You are pleading for people to remember all the
5 wonderful things you have done for individuals and the
6 Yorkville community. Family and supporters praise you as a
7 father and friend. One even suggests we should minimize your
8 slight flaw of being a child molester.

9 That is impossible and morally wrong, just as it was
10 impossible for Steve to minimize the extent of your mental and
11 emotional abuse. You took his life, Mr. Hastert, not because
12 he died of AIDS, but because you took his innocence and turned
13 it against him. He was too young and vulnerable to understand
14 that. It led him down a path of high-risk, reckless behavior,
15 which ultimately cost him his life.

16 I'm fairly certain your supporters would feel
17 differently if this had been their brother, sister, son, or
18 daughter.

19 I will always wonder if you are truly sorry for what
20 you did or just sorry you got caught.

21 "Dear Mrs. Reinboldt: I don't think I have ever met
22 you, but I did have the pleasure of knowing Steve. I worked
23 with Steve one summer at the Yorkville Tastee-Freez. My
24 parents thought it would be great for me to work there and stay
25 with my grandma who lived close by. It wasn't so easy for me,

1 though, because I was a nobody from another town, not popular
2 or a cheerleader like most of the other girls.

3 "Steve's friendliness, kindness, and sense of humor
4 kept me coming back to work each day and enjoying it. He was
5 very special. He probably has no idea what his kindness meant
6 to me. I am truly sorry for your loss."

7 This was Steve's character. His care and love for
8 people was real and unsolicited.

9 Today is a tribute to Steve for all he endured and all
10 he held inside his entire life. I know he stands here with me
11 today, free and at peace. I will accept and respect whatever
12 decision this Court makes today. Our victory is knowing that
13 this man is finally being brought to justice and will live in
14 his own prison for the rest of his life.

15 Thank you.

16 THE COURT: Thank you, Ms. Burdge.

17 Government may call its next witness.

18 MR. BLOCK: Thank you, your Honor.

19 THE COURT: Mr. Green, did you have questions, by the
20 way, of Ms. Burdge?

21 MR. GREEN: No, sir.

22 THE COURT: All right. Thank you.

23 THE CLERK: If you could raise your right hand,
24 please.

25 (Witness duly sworn.)

1 MR. CROSS: I do.

2 Good morning. Thank you very much, Judge Durkin, for
3 this opportunity to speak to you today and to discuss how
4 Mr. Hastert has affected my life.

5 My name is Scott Cross. I'm 53 years old. I live in
6 the Chicago area with my wife and my two children. I've worked
7 in the financial services community for over 30 years, since
8 graduating from college in 1984.

9 In 1972, when I was ten years old, my family moved
10 from the south side of Chicago to Yorkville, Illinois. My
11 father was a Methodist minister, and we moved often. But we
12 spent the next nine years in Yorkville, and I consider
13 Yorkville to be my childhood home.

14 A few years after we moved to Yorkville, when I was
15 about 13 years old, Coach Hastert's high school wrestling team
16 won the Illinois State championship. For a small town like
17 Yorkville, this was a very significant event. Coach Hastert
18 was revered in Yorkville, and after the state championship,
19 there was even a parade throughout the town, celebrating him
20 and the team.

21 As a young boy, I wanted to be part of what Coach
22 Hastert had created. I was a small guy with a lot of ambition,
23 and wrestling seemed to be the perfect sport for me. I jumped
24 in with both feet, and wrestling became very important to me.
25 My perception of myself as a wrestler dominated my high school

1 experience.

2 I was selected by Coach Hastert to join him at
3 wrestling camps in Virginia and Colorado, including wrestling
4 camps that were held even before I entered high school. As a
5 freshman, I was chosen to wrestle at the varsity level in one
6 match. This was one of my proudest moments in high school.

7 As a senior, I was named captain of the wrestling
8 team. I was good enough and lucky enough to wrestle in high
9 school state championship tournaments as a junior and a senior.

10 As a high school wrestler, I looked up to Coach
11 Hastert. He was a key figure in my life as a coach and a
12 teacher. In a small town where the high school and high school
13 athletics were extremely important, I respected and trusted
14 Coach Hastert.

15 Forgive me.

16 THE COURT: Take your time.

17 MR. CROSS: Coach Hastert sexually abused me my senior
18 year of high school.

19 In fall 1979, my senior year, I stayed late after
20 practice. Our school had built a separate wrestling room with
21 a separate locker room for wrestlers. I was alone with Coach
22 Hastert in that locker room. I was concerned about making
23 weight for a match scheduled to occur the following day.

24 Coach Hastert told me he could help me lose weight by
25 giving me a massage. Because I trusted him, I believed what he

1 was saying and took him at his word. He told me to get down on
2 the training table in the wrestlers' locker room and lay
3 facedown with my shirt off. He began giving me a massage.

4 After a few minutes, Coach Hastert told me to roll
5 over onto my back. He pulled down my shorts, grasped my penis,
6 and began to rub me. I was stunned by what he was doing. I
7 jumped up, pulled up my shorts, and ran out of the locker room.

8 I did not say anything to anyone. I did not talk
9 about it, what Coach Hastert had done to me, with my parents,
10 my brothers, other coaches, or school officials. Coach Hastert
11 and I never spoke of it.

12 As a 17-year-old boy, I was devastated. I tried to
13 figure out why Coach Hastert had singled me out. I felt very
14 alone and tremendously embarrassed. I felt intense pain,
15 shame, and guilt. Today I understand that I did nothing to
16 bring this on, but at age 17, I could not understand what
17 happened or why.

18 As I reflected on this after leaving high school, I
19 realized there was other troubling behavior from Coach Hastert
20 that I did not appreciate at the time. Coach Hastert kept a
21 recliner positioned in the wrestlers' locker room where he
22 would sit and watch the wrestlers in the shower. I had
23 accepted this because I trusted him, and my teammates appeared
24 to as well.

25 I've always felt that what Coach Hastert had done to

1 me was my darkest secret, particularly as Coach Hastert became
2 more famous as a politician and Illinois state legislator and
3 then in Congress and finally as Speaker of the House.

4 After this prosecution became public, I told my older
5 brother and my wife for the first time what had happened. I
6 shared this with my parents for the first time last year when I
7 realized that I needed their support as this prosecution
8 proceeded in the public spotlight.

9 I sought professional help to get me through the pain
10 and the trauma that has suffered -- surfaced since the
11 prosecution began. I've had trouble sleeping and working.
12 This entire experience has been enormously painful for me and
13 my family.

14 Given these challenges, you might be asking me why I
15 came forward today. This decision to appear before you in this
16 very public setting has been a huge personal struggle. In
17 fact, until I actually got up to this podium, I was not even
18 sure I would be able to bring myself to speak to you in this
19 courtroom.

20 I'm only able to do this now because I wanted you to
21 know and understand how Mr. Hastert violated the trust I placed
22 in him as a high school student. Judge Durkin, I wanted you to
23 know the pain and suffering he caused me then and still causes
24 me today.

25 As importantly, I want my children and anyone else who

1 was ever treated the way I was to know that there's an
2 alternative to staying silent. As deeply painful as it has
3 been to discuss this with my family and with you, staying
4 silent for years was worse. It is important to tell the truth
5 finally about what this -- what happened to me. I could no
6 longer remain silent.

7 Thank you for listening to me.

8 THE COURT: Thank you, Mr. Cross.

9 Are there any questions, Mr. Green?

10 MR. GREEN: No, sir.

11 THE COURT: All right. Thank you, sir.

12 MR. CROSS: Thank you.

13 (Proceedings had not herein transcribed.)

14 THE COURT: Mr. Hastert, you have an opportunity to
15 make a statement to the Court if you wish. If you choose not
16 to do so, I won't hold it against you, but this is your
17 opportunity to talk to me if you wish to.

18 If you want to do it from your chair, you're free to
19 do so as long as the microphone is in front of you. If you
20 want to get up, you can come up here and do it at the podium.
21 But I'm fine either way.

22 THE DEFENDANT: Thank you, your Honor.

23 I would ask your leave that I -- I've written down a
24 statement, and I would like to read it.

25 THE COURT: Of course.

1 THE DEFENDANT: And I don't --

2 THE COURT: You may.

3 THE DEFENDANT: -- want to miss anything. So ...

4 THE COURT: Please do.

5 THE DEFENDANT: I'm deeply ashamed to be standing here
6 before you today. I am the one solely responsible for being
7 here. I know I am here because I mistreated some of my
8 athletes that I coached and because I structured withdrawals
9 from the bank in the hope of keeping mistreatment hidden, and
10 also I misled the FBI in 2015 about what happened in the past.

11 For 11 months, I have been struggling to come to terms
12 with events that occurred almost four decades ago. I have more
13 work to do in that regard. But I also committed to doing it
14 and doing it with the help of professionals. I am now working
15 to regain my health back.

16 The thing I want to do today is say I'm sorry to those
17 I have hurt and misled. First I wanted to apologize for the
18 boys I mistreated when I was their coach. What I did was
19 wrong, and I regret it. They looked to me, and I took
20 advantage of them. Today I accept what Ms. Burdge and
21 Mr. Cross have said, and I apologize to them and to their
22 families.

23 I also want to apologize to the government for
24 misleading them in my interviews in December 2014 and February
25 of 2015. Federal agencies I deeply respect were misled by me.

1 This alone is a source of great shame for me.

2 I apologize to my constituents and my supporters, who
3 I tried to serve honorably for so many years, and also my
4 colleagues who I served with.

5 I apologize to my family and friends for my being here
6 and for subjecting them to everything that has happened in the
7 past 11 months. They lost their privacy, and my family members
8 lost positive association with the family name.

9 I'm so very thankful for everything that my wife Jean
10 and my sons Ethan and Josh have done to support me and to take
11 care of me during this illness.

12 I apologize to the Court and to the people of the
13 United States and stand here ready to accept the sentence that
14 you are about to impose on me.

15 Thank you, Judge Durkin, for listening to these
16 statements.

17 THE COURT: Mr. Green, your client doesn't have to
18 answer the question, but I have a question --

19 MR. GREEN: Yes, sir.

20 THE COURT: -- of Mr. Hastert. And he's free to
21 answer it, but he can talk to you first.

22 You said you mistreated athletes. Did you sexually
23 abuse Mr. Cross?

24 THE DEFENDANT: I -- I don't remember doing that, but
25 I accept the statement.

1 THE COURT: Did you sexually abuse Victim B?

2 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

3 THE COURT: All right.

4 All right. And how about Mr. Reinboldt? Did you
5 sexually abuse him?

6 THE DEFENDANT: It was a different situation, sir.

7 THE COURT: If you want to elaborate, this is the time
8 to do it.

9 (Counsel and defendant conferring.)

10 THE DEFENDANT: I -- I would accept Ms. Burdge's
11 statement.

12 THE COURT: So you did sexually abuse him.

13 THE DEFENDANT: Yes.

14 THE COURT: All right. Okay.

15 You can have a seat, unless there's anything else you
16 want to add.

17 MR. GREEN: No, sir.

18 (Excerpt concluded at 11:00 a.m.)

19 (Proceedings had not herein transcribed.)

20 C E R T I F I C A T E

21 I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript of the
22 excerpt of proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

23

24 /s/ LAURA R. RENKE
25 LAURA R. RENKE, CSR, RDR, CRR
Official Court Reporter

April 27, 2016