

October 13, 2007

In Connecticut, the Release of a Serial Rapist Is Met With a Wave of Fear and Anger

By THOMAS KAPLAN

Correction Appended

SOUTHBURY, Conn., Oct. 12 — Sitting in a family room here filled with her daughters' toys, Edy McClure glanced at the evening news on Monday night. She heard the name of her town — a normally quiet suburb that is known for its good schools. Then she heard her street — Fox Run Drive, where basketball hoops and bicycles dot the driveways and broad lawns.

A serial rapist, in prison for 24 years, would be moving into the neighborhood after his release on Friday. Mrs. McClure thought of her daughters, ages 4 and 8. "I just freaked out," she said.

So did many of her neighbors. But despite their concerns, and the efforts of the governor and the attorney general of [Connecticut](#) to keep him confined, the convicted rapist, David Pollitt, 54, moved here on Friday amid a sea of television cameras and a crowd of disgruntled neighbors, several of them in tears.

It was only on Monday that most of them learned that Mr. Pollitt, who had been imprisoned for the rapes of at least five women in five towns in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was to move in with his sister, Janice Rosengren, and her family after other relatives spurned him. Neighbors said they immediately began asking one another: Can this be stopped?

Some called Gov. [M. Jodi Rell](#), who asked the attorney general, [Richard Blumenthal](#), to try to temporarily delay Mr. Pollitt's release. But Judge Susan B. Handy of Superior Court dismissed the request Thursday, saying that Mr. Pollitt had completed his sentence and was "entitled to be released."

Still, residents here said his time served did nothing to ease their anxiety. On Friday afternoon, about two dozen of them gathered outside Ms. Rosengren's home, holding signs and pleading their case to reporters as they awaited Mr. Pollitt's arrival. Some suggested lawmakers examine whether Connecticut should adopt a civil commitment law, like those in nearly 20 other states, including New York and New Jersey, which allows judges to confine sex offenders for longer than their sentence provides.

Mary Ann Dewan, who has lived on Fox Run Drive for 30 years, cares for her 13-year-old granddaughter and 9-year-old grandson here every day. They ride their bikes and play basketball in the neighborhood's cul-de-sac, she said — right in front of where Mr. Pollitt will live.

"It's kind of scary," Ms. Dewan said. "It's making me think I should change the locks on my door, get an alarm system. I don't know what to do."

She was not alone. On the eve of Mr. Pollitt's release, an estimated 300 residents crowded a local high school to pepper the authorities with questions: Should they buy Mace? Or a Taser? Or what about walking with a friend when going to get the mail, as one neighbor said she had been told to do?

But Mr. Pollitt is not the first sex offender to take up residence in this town of 19,000; there are five others living here, according to a state database, and more than 250 in Waterbury, a city of 107,000 about 10 miles to the northeast. And so the police urged residents not to panic.

Instead, they suggested that people lock their doors, buy an alarm system and look out for their neighbors.

"We're working with them as best as possible to ensure everyone's safety in this matter," said Sgt. Kenneth Kramer, the state trooper assigned here.

But for Ms. Rosengren, who lives here with her husband and their two daughters, some neighbors have been overzealous in their concerns. Her lawyer, Jerry E. Attanasio, said in a telephone interview that Ms. Rosengren had received threats and hate mail in recent days. "They knew that this would be a tremendous undertaking," Mr. Attanasio said, "but they were not prepared for this kind of backlash."

Mr. Pollitt, who will be on probation for five years, has been fitted with a monitoring device and is under house arrest indefinitely, according to the Connecticut Judicial Branch. If he violates any of the more than two dozen conditions of his probation, he could face 15 more years in prison.

The Rosengren family released a statement on Friday, promising to ensure that Mr. Pollitt does not violate his probation or pose any risk to neighbors.

"Please know that if we felt we could not handle this responsibility, or if we were not comfortable with the probationary conditions, David would not be living with us," the statement said. "We look forward to returning to our normal routines."

But on Friday afternoon, nothing was routine in this quiet town. In an unlikely spectacle, a caravan of vehicles pulled into the driveway of the Rosengren house at 2:46 p.m. as neighbors and a pack of photographers and television cameramen angled to catch any sight of Mr. Pollitt as his vehicle slipped into the house's garage. Several probation officers parked in the driveway and entered the house through the front door.

"Obviously, the alarm system is going to be set and triple-checked," Mrs. McClure said.

In the house directly across the street from Mr. Pollitt's new residence, Anthony Recupero, 49, said that although he and his wife were not pleased to have a sex offender moving in, he understood Ms. Rosengren's position.

"It is her brother," Mr. Recupero said. "However, are we going to have to live with some fear? Yes."

Correction: October 15, 2007

A headline on Saturday with an article about the release of a serial rapist from a Connecticut prison misstated the circumstances under which the prisoner, David Pollitt, was released. He was granted time off his original

sentence for good behavior; he was not paroled.

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