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PAROLE BOARD

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Josh Wall
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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

RICHARD SEYMOUR

W42787

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: April 26, 2011

DATE OF DECISION: January 20, 2012

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, John Bocon, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Ina Howard-Hogan, Roger Michel, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: Parole is denied with a review in five years. The decision is unanimous. Richard Seymour beat his teenage son to death, and then assaulted his wife and daughter with a knife. As he demonstrated by committing those criminal acts, Seymour is too dangerous for release to the community.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Patrick Seymour, age 18, was beaten to death on January 20, 1986 by his father, Richard Seymour, in the family's Billerica residence. Richard Seymour killed his son in a sustained and vicious attack that escalated from what in most families would be a routine disagreement between a parent and a teenage child. Unlike most families, the Seymour family patriarch used daily physical violence and emotional abuse to control his wife and two teenage children. Unlike most families, the Seymour family patriarch abused alcohol and cocaine every day. Acting out the pattern of extraordinary domestic violence fueled by alcohol and cocaine, Richard Seymour used his fists, a propane gas tank, and a hammer to beat his son to death. Crime scene and autopsy evidence show that Seymour struck Patrick with the gas tank at least three times in the back of the head as Patrick was on his knees or lying on the ground.

Seymour inflicted the hammer blows with such force that he bashed through his son's skull and penetrated into his brain. After killing Patrick, Seymour tied his hands and legs and dragged the young man behind a workbench, and covered him with blankets and boxes. The evidence supports the conclusion that Patrick was still alive, albeit in the process of dying, when Seymour bound and dragged him.

Seymour's familial crimes continued that evening when his wife and teenage daughter arrived home approximately two hours after the murder; a female friend of the daughter accompanied them. Seymour took a sustained series of violent actions against his wife, his daughter, and his daughter's friend. With a large kitchen knife in hand, Seymour threatened them, chased them, physically assaulted them, and tied them up. He stuffed socks in the mouths of his daughter and her friend. His violence included holding the knife to his daughter's throat while threatening to kill her and cutting his wife with the knife. Seymour fled from the house only after he realized the two teenage girls had freed themselves from their bindings and run from the house. Police apprehended Seymour the next day.

Seymour pleaded guilty to second degree murder for beating Patrick Seymour to death. In addition to the life sentence, Seymour received concurrent sentences for three counts of kidnapping and three counts of assault with a dangerous weapon.

The Parole Board has previously denied parole after hearings in 2001 and 2006.

II. OTHER CRIMINAL CONDUCT OR BAD ACTS

By the time of the murder, Seymour had persisted for many years with alcohol abuse, cocaine abuse, and violence. Seymour was known in the community for his anger and violence which erupted against people he encountered in his construction business or that crossed him in the bars he frequented. Most tragically, he terrorized his wife and two children with verbal abuse, uncontrolled and unprecipitated rage, intimidation, threats, and frequent physical violence.

Seymour's criminal record includes two convictions for driving drunk (1972 and 1985).

III. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 26, 2011

Seymour apologized at the hearing for killing his son and attacking his wife and daughter. He displayed limited emotion or empathy; he expressed remorse but appeared to be the only person in the hearing room who was not horrified by the conduct perpetrated on his son, his family, and his community. At the outset of the hearing, Seymour stated, "I had a good relationship with Patrick." Questioning of Seymour established that he was a violent menace in his house and the town of Billerica. Seymour acknowledged a number of actions and behaviors connected to his substance abuse, family violence, and community violence: he beat Patrick on previous occasions; he physically abused his wife throughout the marriage; he quit family counseling because the counselor assigned blame to him; he assaulted people he worked with; he assaulted people "on Little League fields;" he assaulted strangers, often in barrooms; his behavior was very combative with frequent fights.

Seymour admitted punching Patrick, throwing things at each other, including the propane gas tank, and picking up a hammer and striking Patrick. His admissions were made factually with little emotion. There was no indication that Seymour is cognizant of, much less moved by, the horror of his filicide.

Seymour's conduct in prison is good. He has participated in many programs.

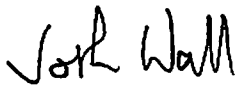
Three of Richard Seymour's cousins spoke in support of parole. As one said, if paroled "it is a flip of the coin" whether Seymour stays sober.

Opponents of parole for Seymour filled the hearing room. Seymour's former wife testified in opposition to parole and described the atmosphere in the Seymour house: "I was in fear; he threatened to hurt me if I told anyone what was going on; he picked on Patrick; he picked on all of us; he didn't need drugs or alcohol to be mean to us." Seymour's daughter described the abuse as daily: "I relive the horror of being beaten; I was constantly in fear; I thought I was going to die that day." They described Seymour's constantly controlling and frequently violent behavior. Their testimony made it clear that Seymour is deceptive or delusional when he asserts that "I had a good relationship with Patrick." Seymour's former sister-in-law said her parents often had to throw him out of their house because of his angry behavior and that Seymour struck her parents. She saw bruises on her sister's face during the marriage to Seymour. Middlesex Assistant District Attorney Steve Hctor appeared in opposition to parole. The Parole Board received many letters from community members opposing parole and received a petition signed by 37 community members who oppose parole.

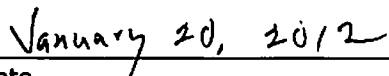
IV. DECISION

The former family and community of Richard Seymour, those who knew him best, are terrified of him. They do not believe he has changed or can change. He appears to fit a pattern of domestic murderers who, for a variety of reasons, behave better in prison than in their own homes. Seymour's long history of family and community violence, capped by the paternal filicide and other violent acts on January 20, 1986, provides a pattern of violent antisocial behavior that is a warning sign. His combination of explosive anger and fundamental lack of empathy make him a continuing threat to public safety. None of the goals of sentencing – punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, and public protection – has been accomplished. Parole is denied because Seymour is likely to re-offend and his release is incompatible with the safety of the community.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.



Josh Wall, Chairman



Date