



*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*



**PAROLE BOARD**

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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**ROBERT GRADY  
W49504**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** February 23, 2021

**DATE OF DECISION:** November 9, 2021

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Gloriann Moroney, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Colette Santa

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review in four years from the date of the hearing.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On December 3, 1990, in Worcester Superior Court, Robert Grady pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of Donna Cavanaugh. Mr. Grady also pleaded guilty to assault and battery on a public servant, use of a motor vehicle without authority, and escape. A sentence of life in prison with the possibility of parole was imposed on Mr. Grady for the murder of Ms. Cavanaugh. Mr. Grady was sentenced to serve concurrent terms of 2 years and 2 and one-half years in the House of Correction for his convictions of assault and battery on a public servant and use of a motor vehicle without authority, respectively. Mr. Grady was also sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than 10 years and not less than 9 years for his escape conviction. All terms of imprisonment imposed on Mr. Grady were ordered to run concurrent with his life sentence.

Prior to the murder, Robert Grady and Donna Cavanaugh were involved in a relationship that had recently ended. However, the night before her death, they spent the night together at a friend's house and left the house together in the early morning hours of December 4, 1988. Later in the day on December 4, Mr. Grady called his father and told him that Ms. Cavanaugh was dead. Mr. Grady's father contacted the authorities. After searching for Mr. Grady, investigators discovered his abandoned, blood-stained car. Officers then traveled to a summer home in New Hampshire that belonged to Mr. Grady's father. Inside, they found Mr. Grady in a bedroom with the body of Ms. Cavanaugh.

Upon being discovered by authorities, Mr. Grady ignited a propane tank that caused an explosion. He was taken to the hospital by police, where he was treated for burns. Subsequent investigation revealed that Ms. Cavanaugh had been beaten and stabbed 17 times. An autopsy conducted on Ms. Cavanaugh's body indicated that some of the wounds were inflicted post-mortem.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

Robert Grady, now 58-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board on February 23, 2021, for a review hearing. He was represented by Boston College law students Sarah Brooks, Mariah Park and Alexander Turchetta supervised by Attorney Frank Herrmann. This was Mr. Grady's fourth appearance before the Board, having been denied parole in 2004, 2010 and 2016. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Grady apologized to Ms. Cavanaugh's family and expressed remorse for his crime. He characterized his actions as "ruthless," "selfish" and "cowardly" and took full responsibility for the crime, claiming that he no longer blames Ms. Cavanaugh. He stated that he has maintained his sobriety and detailed his programming and treatments efforts for the Board. Mr. Grady stated he believes that his "actions speak louder than words" and now fully appreciates the impact of his crime.

Board Members questioned Mr. Grady as to the details surrounding the governing offense, noting the significant level of violence inflicted upon Ms. Cavanaugh. Mr. Grady explained that he and Ms. Cavanaugh were in the process of ending their relationship. As such, he was feeling "rejected" and believed that his life was "out of control." On the night of the governing offense, they attended a party together. Before driving Ms. Cavanaugh home, Mr. Grady parked the car near her house, where they drank alcohol and used cocaine. He wanted more cocaine, but Ms. Cavanaugh refused to give it to him. Mr. Grady claimed that he "snapped" and that the attack "came out of nowhere." Upon inquiry, Mr. Grady denied that Ms. Cavanaugh's murder was sexually motivated. Although he admitted to biting her private area after he killed her, Mr. Grady indicated that this act was not due to sexual deviance. Rather, it was an effort to retrieve cocaine that she had secreted onto her body. When Board Members asked Mr. Grady to address the self-defense claims he made during his previous parole hearings, he acknowledged that he blamed Ms. Cavanaugh for many years. In 2010, however, he told the Board he took full responsibility for her murder, claiming that his inability to "control himself," and the violence "instilled" in him as a child, "caused" him to attack her that night.

Board Members noted that Ms. Cavanaugh was not Mr. Grady's only victim, as he exhibited behavior indicative of domestic violence in his previous relationships with women. In response, Mr. Grady admitted to supplying drugs to one of his former girlfriends with the expectation that she would reciprocate with sexual favors. When she denied his advances, Mr. Grady told the Board that he "attempted" to rape her. Mr. Grady also stated that he married a woman while incarcerated. Due to his abusive behavior, a restraining order was issued against him, as well as accompanying disciplinary reports. When asked to explain, Mr. Grady failed to

take any responsibility; rather, he shifted the blame on her, insinuating that the relationship ended because she stopped taking her medication.

The Board raised concern as to Mr. Grady's propensity to engage in deceitful and manipulative behavior. Upon questioning, Mr. Grady admitted that he often convinced his victims that they "needed" him, so that he could exert control over them. When asked if he continues to engage in similar behavior, Mr. Grady claimed that he does not. Board Members pointed to his interactions with a former female employee and tenant of a sober house he owns and operates. The Board asked whether he saw anything wrong with his interactions and he replied by stating he did not. However, Board Members noted that his behavior towards this woman appeared to be manipulative. Further, his inability to recognize his pattern of manipulation, was particularly concerning to the Board. When Board Members questioned Mr. Grady as to his understanding of his plea agreement, he explained to the Board that he was assured that the District Attorney's office would not oppose parole when the time came. Board Members expressed concerns in regard to the accuracy of this statement. Despite that, he maintained that he was wronged by the District Attorney's office.

Board Members acknowledged Mr. Grady's positive institutional adjustment, noting his participation in a significant number of programs including Restorative Justice and the Sex Offender Treatment Program, as well as his commitment to sobriety.

The Board considered testimony in support of parole from Mr. Grady's cousin and friend. Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Michelle King provided testimony and submitted in a letter in opposition to parole.

### **III. DECISION**

Mr. Grady has served approximately 32 years for the murder of a former girlfriend, Donna Cavanaugh. The Board still has concerns as to his manipulation and deceitful behavior. Since his last hearing, he denies concerning contact and behavior with another individual in the community as an attempt to manipulate for his own gain. In addition, Mr. Grady misrepresented the terms of his plea agreement. His pattern of deceit and manipulation remain prevalent, despite years of treatment and programming. He continues to shift blame and make disparaging remarks to deter from focusing on his responsibility and behavior.

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Grady's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Grady's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Grady's case, the Board is of the opinion that Robert Grady is not rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Grady's next appearance before the Board will take place in four years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Grady to continue working toward his full rehabilitation.

*I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.*

Pamela Murphy, General Counsel

11/9/2021  
Date