

Parole on Hold For Veronza Bowers

Written by Robert ID927

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A former Black Panther Party member convicted of slaying a Point Reyes National Seashore Park Ranger more than 30 years ago was denied his mandatory parole last week, after the murdered ranger's wife sent a letter to the US Parole Commission requesting that his release be postponed.

Veronza Bowers, 59, was sentenced to life in prison after being found guilty of the murder of ranger Ken Patrick whose body was discovered near Mount Vision in 1973. Under a law in place at the time of Bowers' sentencing, his lifetime sentence was reduced to 30 years.

Bowers' mandatory parole was unexpectedly denied by the US Parole Commission in April 2004. A federal judge in Ocala, Florida later overturned the parole board's decision, ruling that Bowers was being illegally detained past his scheduled release and ordering that he be freed Feb. 21. Because his release date fell on the national holiday President's Day, Bowers expected to be released Feb. 18.

Parole Commission to schedule new hearing

But last Thursday, the day before his scheduled release, the Parole Commission sent an order to Coleman Correctional Facility in Florida, where Bowers is being held, ordering the release postponed. The parole commission has ordered a new hearing to be scheduled next month.

The order came after the Parole Commission had received a letter from ranger Ken Patrick's widow stating that her family opposed Bowers' parole.

The letter was solicited by the Ranger Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police, which publicly opposes Bowers' release.

"We were the conduit," Greg Johnston, president of the Ranger Lodge told The Light. "We notified the family, we arranged for her to speak with the parole board."

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Johnston said that despite his model record in prison, where he has worked with young people and led groups in meditation and anger management, Bowers' refusal to admit his guilt shows he is not ready for freedom.

'Still holds anti-American ideals'

"He still holds his anti-government, anti-America ideals," Johnston said. "We feel he's a danger to the public."

Bowers has continued to maintain his innocence since his arrest more than three decades ago. At his trial, Bowers' wife testified that he had been asleep in their Mill Valley home at the time of the murder. Once a captain in the Black Panther Party, Bowers is viewed by his supporters as a political prisoner, according to a website maintained by his supporters.

Bowers was convicted on the testimony of Alan Veale, who claimed to have witnessed the murder while poaching fallow deer with Bowers. Veale claimed that Bowers shot Patrick with a pistol in the chest. Charges were never brought against Veale in the case, and a drug dealer also testified that Bowers had confessed the murder to him.

[Source](#)