



Subscribe Now | Pay Bill | Place an Ad | Contact Customer Service | Contact The Detroit News

RSS | Email Newsletters | PDA

Search ALIGNMENT INSPECTION! Archive: Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Today

Home News Local Sports Autos Business Entertainment Lifestyle Opinion Classifieds Jobs Cars Real Estate For Rent Shopping

Local Metro/State Macomb Oakland Wayne Livingston Schools Commuting Michigan History Obituaries

Macomb County

Macomb County RSS Feed Email Headlines Text Alerts On Your PDA



Article Tools: Print Email Comment Text Size: Save Share

Friday, February 22, 2008

Local experts call sentence fitting, fair

They say judge's reasons for exceeding guidelines were justified, predict appeal would be denied.

Christina Stolarz / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- Legal experts say they weren't surprised by the 50-80-year sentence that essentially will imprison Stephen Grant for the rest of his life.

In fact, they say Macomb Circuit Judge Diane Druzinski provided substantial reasons, citing the psychological impact on the children, to hand down a sentence that far exceeds state guidelines.

"I am not surprised," said Charlie Langton, a Sterling Heights attorney who attended the sentencing.

Advertisement

Find Foreclosures! Get great deals in your neighborhood! SEARCH NOW RealtyTrac

"The judge wanted Stephen Grant to spend the rest of his natural life in prison. Essentially, it is a life sentence. I agree with the judge. It was a fair sentence."

Grant, 38, was sentenced Thursday on a second-degree murder conviction for strangling his wife, Tara, on Feb. 9, 2007, in their Washington Township home. He also was sentenced to six to 10 years in prison for mutilating her body; both sentences will be served concurrently. The sentence was exactly what prosecutors requested -- which is rare. The probation office recommended 19-31 years, while Grant's lawyers sought 15-25.

"Normally, judges follow the guidelines," said Larry

Dubin, a professor at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. "It is only when there are justifiable reasons that a judge can go beyond the guidelines."

And her reasons were substantial -- and fair -- because the state's sentencing guidelines don't consider the psychological impact the "heinous, disgusting and brutal" crime had on the family, Langton said. The guidelines also don't fully weigh the deception that Grant weaved from the start by lying through the media, leaving messages on Tara's cell phone to call home, and leading the police on a wild-goose chase, Langton said.

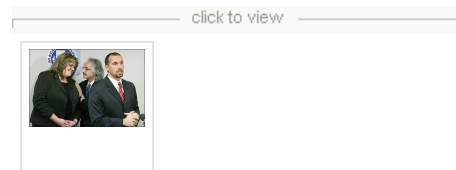
But recent allegations that Grant's two young children witnessed the murder probably had the least impact on Druzinski's sentence, Langton said.

"Everything the judge considers must be objective and verifiable. It is not objective and verifiable that, at this time, the two kids saw the murder," he said. "I think this case has so many shocking elements. This is the O.J. Simpson murder trial of Michigan."

But court officials, Tara Grant's family and legal observers say they expect Grant to appeal.



"He forever will be serving his term behind bars," says Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, right, with assistant prosecutors Therese Tobin and William Cataldo, on Thursday. (Daniel Mears / The Detroit News)



Related Articles

More reports

Kids 'glad' Grant got 50-80 years

More on this topic

- Grant's attorneys charge county \$41K
Grant's attorney seeks \$41,000 in fees
Transcript of comments by Prosecutor Eric Smith
Transcript of Alicia Standerfer's press conference
Grant sentenced to 50-80 years
Tara Grant's sister to get her say
Strict sentence likely for Grant
Grant kids saw mom's murder
Grant sentence battle heats up
Tara Grant's mother to talk
Editorial: Grant deserves maximum jail time
Tapes could influence Grant's sentence
Grant and sister joked about slaying, jail tapes show

"The next step will be an appeal by Mr. Grant that will be denied," Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said after the sentencing. "He forever will be serving his term behind bars." "

If the sentence is appealed, the matter will go to the Michigan Court of Appeals for a three-judge panel to determine whether Druzinski provided sufficient reasons to exceed the guidelines, Dubin said. If they decide the reasons aren't sufficient, the sentence will be kicked back to the trial court to either lower the sentence or provide better reasons to deviate.

The appeal would be paid for with public money, Dubin said. "It's always an uphill battle to get the Court of Appeals to reverse a criminal conviction," he said. "In this case, the judge seemed to be very careful to make an appropriate ruling."

During Grant's trial, his attorney Stephen Rabaut laid the groundwork for a possible appeal. In one instance, Rabaut tried to enter into evidence a blue spiral notebook, which had been recovered from the Grants' bedroom during the police's search of the home. The notebook was a list of Tara's goals for 2007.

Smith objected, claiming it was hearsay, and the judge agreed. But Rabaut said he wanted that notebook entered into the record for a future appeal.

Rabaut said this week that he wouldn't be part of an appeal.

Other issues Grant can appeal include the denial of his request for a change of venue and the admission of his confession as evidence.

"It's possible they could shorten his sentence, but I don't think likely," Langton said. "I think this is a very compelling case to exceed the guidelines."

Grant didn't address the court during sentencing. That came as a surprise to many observers, but his statements wouldn't have had any impact on his sentence, Langton said.

"I don't think that there's anything Stephen Grant could have said that would have helped his cause," Langton said. "However, I do think that there could've been some closure to the case if Stephen Grant would have showed any sign of remorse."

Detroit News Staff Writer George Hunter contributed to this report.

Article Tools: Print Email Comment

Grant swaggers in jailhouse chats  
Grant to fellow killer: 'Ask the ladies if they know 'Steve Grant' "  
Metro-TaraLynnGrant

In the Blogs...

Washington Bureau Blog

Deb Price: Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Hills, announced today that he's throwing his support behind Sen. John McCain for president. He had been a Mitt Romney backer. ... Continued

Raging Bullard

George Bullard: Ralph Nader running again for prez. Score another news coup for Tim Russert and "Meet the Press." But Ralphie has pretty much lost his punch. Democrats are onto his ... Continued

Going Home

Michael Happy: "Focusing your life solely on making a buck shows a certain poverty of ambition. It asks too little of yourself. Because it's only when you hitch your wagon to something ... Continued

More blogs

MORE IN: MACOMB COUNTY

Juror says he did 'the right thing' - 02/22/2008

Local experts call sentence fitting, fair - 02/22/2008

Deadly day in Metro Detroit - 02/22/2008

Canadians plunge into talks on Lake St. Clair - 02/22/2008

Macomb briefs - 02/22/2008

8-year-old boy dies in Center Line house fire - 02/21/2008

Terror ride sentence to last decades - 02/21/2008

Macomb briefs - 02/21/2008

Warren cops pursue traveling scams - 02/20/2008

Communities, group unite to save farmland - 02/20/2008

Macomb briefs - 02/20/2008



Site Index

- Essentials: Home, Page One PDF, Sports PDF, Weather, Horoscope, Letters
News: Nation/World, Politics/Govt, Elections, Religion, Local/State, Metro/State
Autos: Autos Insider, Drive, Joyrides, Auto Shows, Auto Reviews, Auto Photos
Sports: Sports, Lions/NFL, Pistons/NBA, Red Wings/NHL, Tigers/MLB, Shock/NFL
Entertainment: Entertainment, Music, Calendar, Movies, Movie Finder, TV Listings
Forums: Forums Index, Lions Talk, Wings Talk, Pistons Talk, Tigers Talk, Ask Mike
Lifestyle: Lifestyle, Homestyle, Food, Recipe Finder, Health/Fitness, Fashion/Shopping

Special Reports



Lottery	Metro/State	AUTO PHOTOS	STOCK/WINDA	TV Listings	ASK MIKE	Fashion/Shopping
Crossword	Wayne	Autos Talk	MSU	TV/Radio	O'Hara	Families/Parenting
Sudoku	Oakland	Test Drive blog	U-M	Restaurants	Big Ten Talk	Travel/Recreation
Contact Us	Macomb	<b>Business:</b>	More Colleges	Wine Report	News Talk	MichMoms
<b>Multimedia:</b>	Livingston	Business News	High Schools	Celebs	Autos Talk	MichDads
Photos/Video	Commuting	Personal	Golf	Performing Arts	Faith Talk	<b>Other</b>
News Photos	Schools	Finance	Motor Sports	Casinos	Opinions:	Special Reports
Autos Photos	Michigan History	Stocks	More Sports	Puzzles/Games	Editorials	
Audio Galleries	Obituaries	Technology	Ski Guide		Letter to Editor	
Video	Death Notices		Scoreboards		Blogs	
Photo Store					Columnists	
					Cybersurveys	

**Special report: Detroit's mayor under fire**

Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick is hanging on for his political life after the revelation that, among 14,000 text messages between him and his chief of staff Christine Beatty, there was evidence of an extramarital affair... - Jan. 24, 2008

Special report: The foreclosure factory - Nov. 26, 2007

April 15 and you: Help with figuring out your taxes - Jan. 31, 2008

Special Report: Restoring the glory - Feb. 8, 2007

Detroit tax breaks go to the well-heeled - Oct. 31, 2007

[More Special Reports](#)



**NOW! CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN**  
 Bring in this ad and get 6 **FREE** donuts with the purchase of 6  
Good at participating Michigan and Toledo DUNKIN' DONUTS® locations. Offer expires March 9, 2008. Price and participation may vary. Limited time offer. Limit one coupon per customer per visit. PLU#101

Pick up the **The Detroit News** at a Dunkin' Donuts near you. Or [CLICK HERE](#) to subscribe today.

© Copyright 2008 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.

[Terms of Service](#) | [Contact](#) | [Help](#)