

DNA leads to arrest in '93 rape case

By Cara Rubinsky
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WATERBURY — Police believe they have solved a decade-old rape case that prompted the department to change how it handles sexual assault investigations.

On Friday, police charged John Regan, 47, of 117 Euclid Ave., with first-degree kidnapping in connection with the September 1993 rape. They could not charge him with sexual assault because the statute of limitations ran out six years ago, State's Attorney John Connelly said.

Regan was charged with kidnapping because he allegedly crept into the victim's Overlook home, bound and blindfolded her, then sexually assaulted her while her two young children

Police charge of lying led victim to sue city

slept in other rooms. Her husband was out of state for a wedding.

Regan's family knew the victim's family, though police could not be more specific because they did not want to reveal the victim's identity.

After police officers who investigated accused the victim of lying about the rape to cover up an affair, she filed a civil lawsuit against the department and won \$190,000 in damages.

Regan was arrested Friday night at the ABC Co., a siding and roofing company, on West

Dover Street, where he works. He was held on \$350,000 bond. If he does not post it, he will appear in Waterbury Superior Court on Monday morning. No one answered the phone at his home Friday night.

His name had never come up in connection with the case before September, when he was charged with unlawful restraint for a July incident in which he allegedly took a 21-year-old co-worker to his vacationing father's home and tried to assault her, police said.

Acting Police Chief Neil O'Leary, who was second-in-command of the detective bureau

when the 1993 victim was raped, wondered if Regan could be connected.

O'Leary was familiar with the 1993 incident because he and an investigator from Connelly's office were asked to look into it after the officers who initially handled the case accused the victim of lying to cover up an affair.

They never indicated whom the affair might have been with, and there was no evidence she



Regan

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had been having one.

"There was some information learned by my investigation 11 years ago that led me to become suspicious if he (Regan) could have been possibly involved," said O'Leary, who could not say what that information was.

Based on their suspicions, police requested a sample of Regan's DNA and sent it to the state police lab. On Wednesday, they learned it matched DNA found on the 1993 victim after she was assaulted.

O'Leary and Connelly informed the victim about the arrest Friday.

"She expressed relief that it appears as though the suspect has finally been identified and arrested," O'Leary said.

The victim had already publicly relived the incident once, during testimony for a civil lawsuit she filed against the police department and the city.

During the trial in early 2001, attorneys for the city argued the officers had many reasons to doubt the victim's story about what happened to her that night. Her attorney argued she was victimized twice, once by the rapist and once by officers who did not believe her.

At one point, what officers considered oddities in the case, including the fact there appeared to have been no

forced entry into her home, led them to bring the victim to the police department, read her her Miranda rights, and accuse her of lying.

In February 2001, a jury awarded the victim \$190,000 after it found two officers negligent for traumatizing her by failing to properly investigate.

Her attorney had asked for \$2.5 million, but the jury found another police officer named in the suit was not at fault. The victim said at the time the case was more about changing the culture of the department than about money.

O'Leary said the case led the department to change the way it handled sexual assaults even before the civil suit was resolved.

Sexual assault investigations are now handled by the detective division instead of the vice and intelligence division. The department started assigning female officers to do the first interviews with rape victims and started providing better references to counseling and other services.

Connelly said the arrest was a result of good police work. Lt. David Jannetty and Sgt. Scott Stevenson assisted in the investigation.

"Of course we always believed the victim's initial complaint," he said. "Neil and our office stayed on top of it for the last 11 years, and they got a hit on the DNA."