

Hidden life shocks friends

Guilty in New York, Regan faces charges here

BY BEN CONERY
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

WATERBURY — There were no cracks in John Regan's veneer of normalcy.

"Whatever he had on his dark side, he hid it from me," said Martin Hogrefe of Watertown, who bought building materials from Regan and played golf with him several times.

It came as a shock to Hogrefe and others when Regan, a mar-

ried, churchgoing father from a prominent family, was charged five times during the past year-and-a-half with sexually assaulting, or trying to sexually assault, four women over the course of 25 years.

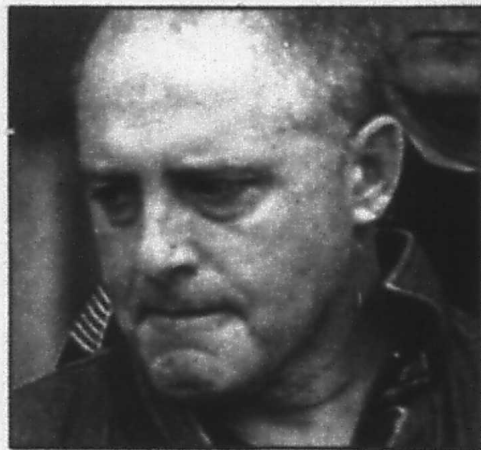
Two weeks ago, Regan, 49, pleaded guilty in upstate New York to trying to drag a 17-year-old high school girl into his van. A judge said he will sentence Regan in July to 12 years in prison. Regan still faces

charges in Waterbury that could bring him decades more behind bars.

"If he is guilty," said Jerry Eterginio, a friend, "he completely fooled me and everyone else."

Regan, a powerfully built man with a prominent jaw, grew up in the city's Overlook neighborhood with his brother and two younger sisters. He

See **CHARGES**, Page 7A



Police believe John Regan of Waterbury committed his first assault back in 1981. He was charged for it decades later.

CHARGES: Family well known in city

Continued from Page One

was the second son of Dr. Frank G. Regan Jr., known as "Scoop," and Gioia Regan.

His family was well known in Waterbury. His father was a beloved dentist, and Regan School is named for his grandfather, Frank G. Regan, a high school principal who retired in 1962.

Regan went to Holy Cross High School, where he played linebacker on the football team before graduating in 1975.

"I always found him to be a good person," said M. Leonard Caine, who played on the team. Caine said he and Regan didn't socialize in the same circles in high school and he lost contact with him in recent years.

Regan's brother, Patrick, graduated in two years and went on to become a partner in a successful law firm in Washington, D.C. Washingtonian Magazine named him one of the top 10 lawyers in the district in 2004.

The younger Regan brother stayed closer to home.

John Regan attended Norwich University in Vermont where he graduated in 1980 with a bachelor's degree in education. During college, he worked for his uncle at Regan Valley Roofing in Waterbury. He continued working there after finishing college, first as a foreman and installer and later as a sales representative.

Though he would not be charged for nearly 25 years, police say the first known as-

lice, and drove back to the cookout.

Life apparently went on as normal for Regan after that.

He and his wife, Ruth, had their first son in 1985. Two more sons would follow; the second was born in 1987 and the third in 1991. They would all end up attending the same high school their father did.

The Regan family moved into a stately Colonial house at 117 Euclid Avenue in Overlook. Ruth Regan was a school teacher and John Regan sold building materials for several companies.

Regan went to church frequently, and even volunteered to fix the pews, said the Rev. John Looney, pastor of Saint Margaret's Church.

In 1993, Regan attended a stag party that would figure heavily in a future case against him. The same night as the party, an Overlook woman was raped in her home while her two children, ages 5 and 7, slept in nearby rooms.

The woman said she awoke to see a figure standing in her bedroom. She said he pinned her to the bed, tied her hands behind her back with nylons, slipped a pillowcase over her head and sexually assaulted her. He left after 20 minutes.

The timing of the rape was suspicious; it was the first time her husband had been out of town overnight in 13 years and, had he been in town, he likely would have been at the same party as Regan. But more importantly, according

to

Regan won several company sales awards and was named branch manager in 1997 when ABC Supply, a national company, opened a branch in Waterbury.

It was during those years that his friendship with Eterginio, a builder from Naugatuck, grew.

Eterginio attended ABC-sponsored golf tournaments and played golf with Regan.

ABC Supply also sent Regan on Caribbean cruises with customers, including Eterginio, who said he went on three or four cruises with Regan and his wife.

"He was never out of line, even when the guys were out drinking," he said.

In 2004, a woman who worked for Regan said he tried to force himself on her. Her accusation began the unraveling of Regan's life.

The 21-year-old woman told police Regan had taken her to his father's house at 22 Fleming St. where he pulled her onto his lap and later got on top of her. She said she was able to slip from him and run away.

Police charged him with unlawful restraint, but Police Superintendent Neil O'Leary said Regan's name conjured memories of the 1993 rape.

Acting on a hunch, O'Leary said, police obtained a warrant for Regan's DNA. They sent it to the state police laboratory for comparison with the DNA sample taken from the victim in the 1993 case. According to

into a noose. A bottle of Jim Beam whiskey and a six-pack of Samuel Adams Oktoberfest beer were also in the van.

The girl screamed and kicked while Regan tried to cover her mouth with his hand, police said. Eventually, she broke free and Regan took off in his van.

The coach of the cross country team got in his car and followed Regan before police arrested him.

He was ordered held without bond. On his 49th birthday, he tried to hang himself in his prison cell with a bed sheet. He survived, but was hospitalized and treated for depression.

Even with Regan behind bars, the police investigation did not end.

Police in Waterbury obtained an arrest warrant charging Regan with stalking the co-worker he was previously charged with trying to assault.

The 21-year-old co-worker was among the more than a dozen women police said had their pictures taken by Regan. The pictures of the woman walking at Farmington Canal Linear Park in Cheshire or standing near office buildings were on the same roll as pictures Regan took of his son's high school soccer game.

Regan's arrests sparked a firestorm of media coverage. His cases became a mainstay of cable news, and hopeful investigators throughout the Northeast tried to link Regan

a woman came in 1981. While

attacks he would be charged with, the allegations all include a pattern of impulsiveness by Regan.

Regan, who was 24 at the time and engaged to be married later that summer, met the woman at a Memorial Day cookout near Columbia Boulevard, police said. She told police last year that Regan gave her a ride so she could run an errand.

But Regan didn't return to the cookout when the errand was done, according to police.

He drove to a nearby alley and parked his truck, police said. The woman told police Regan pulled down his pants and tried to force her to perform a sex act. He pulled her on top of him and she begged him to stop, police said. Eventually, he did, according to po-

party would have known he

gating the case did not believe the woman was raped; they thought she concocted the rape allegations to conceal an affair.

The woman later filed a civil lawsuit against the department and won \$190,000 in damages. The case ultimately led the department to change the way it handles sexual assault cases.

Hospital workers were able to obtain a DNA sample from the alleged attacker, but no arrest was made.

None of the party goers, including Regan, were ever suspects.

Regan continued working as a salesman in the 1990s, first at Alpha Distributors in Waterbury and then at Viking Building Products in Berlin, which was bought out by ABC Building Supply Co. in the mid-

Regan was then charged

with sexual assault because the statute of limitations had run out six years earlier.

The arrest in connection with the 1993 case sent shock waves through Overlook. Regan's family was friendly with the victim's family. Not everyone believed he was guilty.

Soon after, ABC Supply fired Regan.

In fall 2005, Regan was in upstate New York fixing up houses owned by his uncle. It was there Regan would be arrested for the last time.

On Halloween, Regan tried to drag a star cross country runner into his van from the parking lot of Saratoga Springs High School. Regan had removed one of the rear seats of the van and laid out a tarp, on top of which was a rope tied

towns.

Regan of trying to sexually assault her nearly 25 years ago came forward. Regan was charged with first-degree kidnapping as a result of the woman's allegations. As in the 1993 case, police could not charge him with sexual assault because the statute of limitations had expired.

A multi-agency task force has continued working to see if Regan is connected to any unsolved crime. So far, they've come up empty.

Through his attorneys, Regan maintained his innocence, until he pleaded guilty to the New York charge two weeks ago. The charges in Connecticut are still pending, and it is unclear whether Regan will go to trial or seek a plea agreement.