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## John Peel's Family Again Facing Strain of Murder Charges, Trial

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BELLINGHAM, Wash. (AP) — For John Peel's family, it was hard news but no surprise that he again had been charged with killing eight people aboard a fishing boat in southeastern Alaska three years ago.

On Friday, five weeks after an Alaska judge threw out an earlier identical indictment, an Alaska grand jury again indicted Peel on eight counts of first-degree murder and one count of first-degree arson in the September 1982 slayings of those aboard the vessel Invester.

Peel's relatives say the brief time the charges were lifted was a welcome break from the stress of the past year. But Marilyn Peel, his mother, said in a recent interview they remained "a little edgy," at the prospect he would be re-charged.

"It reminds me of the time coming in," she said. "It goes out and you enjoy the sandy beach for awhile and then they're overtake again."

Peel's mother, his sister Kelli Perram and her husband, Jack, spoke of the family's experience about a week before the Ketchikan grand jury handed up the new indictment. Present

at the interview was Peel's Bellingham attorney, Michael Paris.

Peel declined to be interviewed on the advice of Paris, who said an order by Ketchikan Superior Court Judge Thomas Schultz prevented Peel from discussing the case.

The charred hull of the fishing vessel Invester was found drifting near Craig, Alaska, about 10 miles west of Ketchikan, on Sept. 7, 1982. The indictment alleges all eight people aboard the 36-foot purse seiner were shot, and that an unsuccessful attempt was made to scuttle the boat before it was set afire.

Among those killed were the Invester's owners, Mark and Irene Coulthart, both 28, of Blaine, Wash., and their 5-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son.

In dismissing the first indictment, Schultz said prosecutors had misled grand jurors. He said the state presented a witness who said he saw Peel buy gasoline the day the Invester burned, but prosecutors didn't explain that no trace of that type of gas was found on the burned boat.

Peel, 28, has been free since May 6 after family and friends pledged their homes and other property to raise \$1.1 million bail.

In that time, his family says, he's been trying to live quietly. He helps out around his parents' house, goes fishing with Perram, tends a pumpkin patch he planted, spends a lot of time with his wife, Cathie, and their 2-year-old son, Kenny.

Peel, who worked with Perram for a Bellingham boatbuilder before his arrest, has tinkered with the idea of building a small boat, and chafes at not being able to have a daily job, Perram said.

Under terms of his bail, which remained in effect even after Schultz dismissed the indictment, Peel always must be in the presence of a family member approved by the court or with one of his attorneys.

"He's trying to keep a normal life," says Mrs. Perram. "But nothing's the same as a year ago. He can't do anything by himself."

"There's never any way that he'll be able to go back," her mother says.

Though Peel's relatives and friends have said they knew he was under investigation for the killings, his arrest in September still was a shock that made the family draw in tight and lean on each other.

"We're closer now, we have to be," Mrs. Perram said. "You can't talk to all your friends about this."

Peel's wife has been "pretty much of a wreck," his mother says. "I think if it had been me I would have cried gallons of tears. Maybe she does when she's alone."

The bitterness felt by relatives of those Peel is accused of killing hasn't abated. Ruth Moon, mother of investor crewman Dean Moon, called the new indictment "marvelous. It's the first time I can be happy."

Blaine, where most victims lived, is on the Canadian border about 18 miles north of Bellingham. Peel once worked for Coultharts about an earlier slaying, and dated one of Coultharts' sisters. Mrs. Perram went to school with Mark

and Irene Coulthart.

But she said there has been no contact with the Coulthart family since Peel was first charged.

Bellingham, a city of about 20,000, has been generally kind to the Peels. Mrs. Perram said, though "we're not in a position to bear adverse things."

They've heard no threats against Peel, "not one crack phone call of any kind, not even when he was released on bail," his mother said.

Friends helped start a defense fund, and hundreds turned out for two dinners

the family threw to help raise money, Perram said.

The dinner raised about \$1,000 each, said Mrs. Peel, "and a lot of those kids living hand-to-mouth donated for money," she said.

Friends volunteered property as bail, Perram said, adding there was no danger it would be forfeit.

"I think John probably has more interest in this than we do," he said. "Things are mentally draining enough," Perram said. "You have to look at the positive."

## Canada May Build Beaufort Port

FAIRBANKS (AP) — Two Canadian companies say they are planning to build the first deep-water port on the Beaufort Sea coast to supply oil companies exploring and developing oil leases in Canada and Alaska.

The \$100 million facility would be located near Kay Point, halfway between Prudhoe Bay and the Canadian oil district on the Mackenzie River delta.

Monroe Ltd. and a British subsidiary of Interlog Ltd. said they hope to cut in half costs for developing Beaufort Sea leases.

Bruce Smedley, project manager with Monroes, said the port would allow deep draft ships, as opposed to flat, ocean-going barges, to bring supplies to the North Slope. The port would be able to handle 20,000-ton container ships, he said.

In addition, the port could serve mining companies, the Canadian coast guard and drilling mobile companies, Smedley said.

But Alaska companies said the port would bring them no significant benefits in offshore oil development.

ANCO, Alaska spokesman Hank Rosenthal said the port is still a long way from any Alaska leases. Offshore

leases do not extend much farther east than Prudhoe Bay and it will probably be a long time before any are even near the Canadian border, he said.

D.J. Moon, a Sobko Alaska spokesman, said that between the annual swells, the hard road and the pipeline, Alaska oil operations are well-supplied already.

Kay Point was chosen as a location because it would require the dredging

of only a 1½-mile channel to reach ocean depths about 10 fathoms.

"That's a very short channel compared to other ports," Smedley said. "No one lives in the area at the present time, although coastal residents trap and hunt in the area," Smedley said. The land is owned by the Canadian government.

Smedley said the location has been recognized for many years as a prime location for a deepwater port.

## State Court Rules for Churches in Tax Case

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Property used exclusively for religious purposes or operated for charity should not lose its tax-exempt status, the Alaska Supreme Court ruled Friday.

The state's highest court issued the 72-page decision in a suit brought by the Catholic Bishops of Alaska, the American Lutheran Church and one local and two national units of the United Methodist Church.

Each applicant exemption for four tax years, 1979 through 1982, by the city of Nome and a Superior Court.

The city of Nome, which had wanted to collect taxes on the properties, also appealed and the cases were consolidated.

The Supreme court ordered the city to issue new findings on 22 properties it determined should be tax-exempt, either retaining or returning to a lower court legal decisions on the tax status of 23 others.

The churches had sought to exempt religious residences, administrative offices, sanctuaries and property used for religious, educational and charitable purposes.

They also wanted exemptions on properties used as support for exempt

properties, and church property leased to other non-profit groups.

"We acknowledge that property may be exempt," the Alaska Supreme Court said. "But the property is directly for the use of that property is directly for the use of that property."

"Similarly, property used part-time for exempt purposes and otherwise for uses directly incidental to and vitally necessary for the exempt purposes is exempt," the panel said.

Among other things, that freed the churches from having to pay taxes on properties for which they operated programs for the general public, the court said.

That included a Catholic radio station, KNOM, a Methodist youth house and a Methodist thrift shop.

In sum, property will not lose an exemption if it is used exclusively for exempt purposes; its payment is not sought as a result of a dominant profit motive; and the payment is both incidental to and reasonably necessary for the accomplishment of the exempt activity and does not exceed the operating costs of the exempt activity for which payment is received," the court ruled.

## Convicted Murderer Sentenced

JUNEAU (AP) — A Jewish man convicted of first-degree murder in the shooting death of a man closer than in the stabbing death of an elderly couple has been sentenced to 39 years in prison.

Superior Court Judge Walter Carpenter handed down the sentence Friday for Victor Johnson, 37. The maximum sentence for first-degree murder in Alaska is 99 years.

Johnson was found guilty of murdering Emanuel Telle last March 24 while Telle was drinking coffee in a downtown Juneau cafe.

Telle had been acquitted of first-degree murder charges in late 1983 for the deaths of James and Anne Berchuck.

The couple had been bound, sodomized and stabbed repeatedly in their apartment the previous year, authorities said.

Investigators never were able to find a definite link between Telle's apartment and his eventual murder by Johnson, officials said.

But that motive appeared to figure in the sentencing suggestion.

A recommendation that Johnson be given the minimum sentence for first-degree murder, or 20 years, would in effect condone vigilante murder, according to Juneau District Attorney Rick Svobody.

"The probation officer's recommendation seems to be based on a

vigilante attitude that has no place in modern society outside of Charles Bronson movies," Svobody wrote in a sentencing memo.

"At the time of the offense, Victor Johnson thought he was doing the right thing," said John Francis Jr., Johnson's attorney.

The defense lawyer compared the murder to concentration camp victims trying to kill a Nazi leader like Josef Mengele, a man accused of ordering the deaths of thousands of Jews during World War II.

Such a killing would not be acceptable, "but it might be understandable," Francis said.

## Roundtable Set

Sitka Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Abuse's Roundtable Discussion group will meet noon to 1 p.m. Friday in the Human Services Center Classroom.

The Division of Family and Youth Services will host the meeting and report on new legislation affecting all health and human services professionals.

Topics will include hearing laws and testing for children, the runaway bill, new reporting requirements and new protocol for handling child abuse cases.

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