

State of North Carolina



MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

PARDON OF INNOCENCE FOR DARRYL EUGENE HUNT

Whereas, in June, 1985, Darryl Eugene Hunt was convicted of first-degree murder of Deborah Sykes in Forsyth County Superior Court and sentenced to life imprisonment. On appeal, the Supreme Court of North Carolina reversed the conviction and ordered a new trial. *State v. Hunt*, 324 N.C. 343 (1989);

Whereas, in October, 1990, Mr. Hunt was convicted of first-degree felony murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. The basis for the conviction of felony murder rested upon the underlying felony of rape;

Whereas, no DNA evidence was presented by the State or Mr. Hunt during either the 1985 or 1990 trials;

Whereas, in 1993 and 1994, as the result of an evidentiary hearing ordered by the Supreme Court of North Carolina, and although DNA testing in 1994 excluded Mr. Hunt as the source of semen found in the victim's body, the trial court in November, 1994, denied Mr. Hunt's Motion for Appropriate Relief concluding that he could still be guilty under an "acting in concert" theory;

Whereas, Mr. Hunt's conviction and the denial of his Motion for Appropriate Relief were affirmed by a four to three vote of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. *State v. Hunt*, 339 N.C. 622 (1995);

Whereas, in April, 2003, Mr. Hunt requested, and, with the consent of the Forsyth County District Attorney, the trial court ordered additional DNA testing pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 15A-269 (2001). The Order directed the State Bureau of Investigation to conduct additional testing of the original DNA sample obtained from the victim and compare the results to the State and National DNA databases to determine whether the source of the semen could be identified;

Whereas, additional DNA analysis led to new leads, and on December 16, 2003, law enforcement officers learned that a Willard E. Brown, who was in police custody on December 16, had been a suspect in a 1985 rape in Forsyth County which had many similarities to the rape and murder of Mrs. Sykes;

Whereas, Mr. Brown's DNA had never been obtained by any law enforcement authority and, therefore, was not in any DNA database;

Whereas, on December 17, 2003, the investigating officers obtained a DNA sample from Mr. Brown. On December 19, 2003, the State Bureau of Investigation tested the DNA sample obtained from Mr. Brown and determined that it matched the DNA sample left by the person who had raped Mrs. Sykes prior to her murder;

Whereas, on December 22, 2003, Willard E. Brown was arrested on warrants charging him with the murder, rape, robbery and kidnapping of Deborah Sykes. Mr. Brown, while being "booked," spontaneously confessed to the murder of Deborah Sykes, and further stated that he had acted alone when he murdered Mrs. Sykes, and that Darryl Eugene Hunt was not involved;

Whereas, on February 6, 2004, a hearing was held in Forsyth County before Superior Court Judge Anderson D. Cromer on motions filed by Mr. Hunt and the Forsyth County District Attorney to vacate and set aside the 1990 murder conviction of Mr. Hunt;

Whereas, at the February 6, 2004, hearing, the investigating officers testified that there was no evidence that Mr. Hunt was involved in the rape or murder of Mrs. Sykes and that Mr. Brown acted alone when he raped and murdered Mrs. Sykes;

Whereas, at the conclusion of the February 6, 2004, hearing, Judge Cromer issued a written Order vacating, and dismissing with prejudice, Mr. Hunt's judgment of first-degree murder and the sentence of life imprisonment imposed in October, 1990;

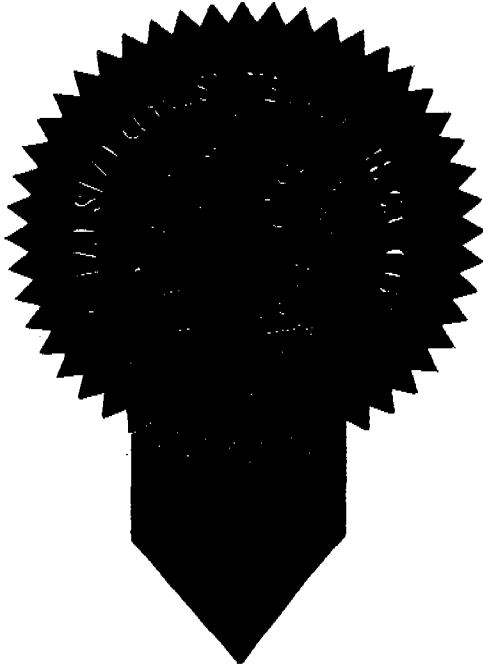
Whereas, Darryl Eugene Hunt now seeks a Pardon of Innocence by the State;

Whereas, the Forsyth County District Attorney both recommends and supports the issuance of this Pardon of Innocence;

Whereas, the Superior Court Judge who vacated and dismissed with prejudice Mr. Hunt's 1990 conviction of murder, both recommends and supports the issuance of this Pardon of Innocence;

NOW THEREFORE, I, Michael F. Easley, Governor of the State of North Carolina, in consideration of the above factors, and by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution of the State, do by these presents PARDON the said Darryl Eugene Hunt, it being a Pardon of Innocence.

This Pardon is effective this 15th day of April, 2004.




Michael F. Easley
Governor