

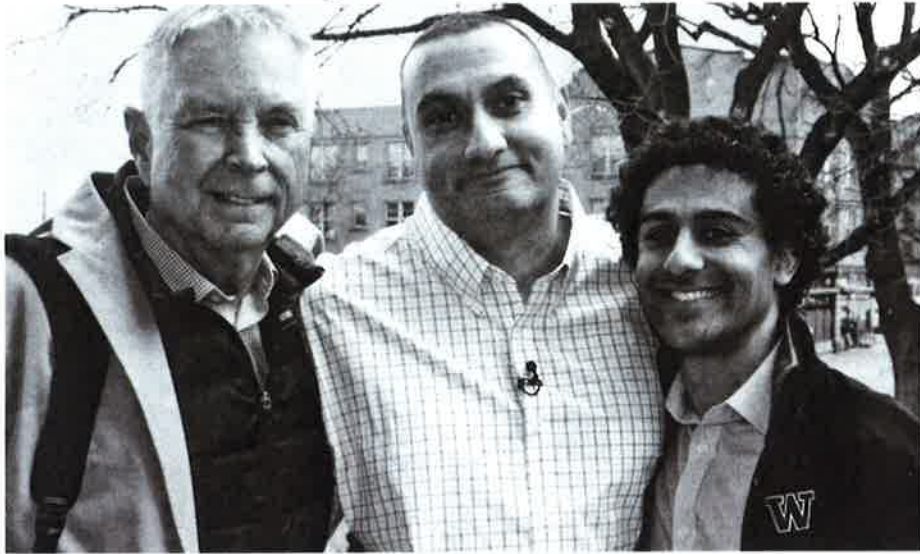
# COLUMNS

THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON ALUMNI MAGAZINE JUNE 17

## On 'Doing Justice'

He was locked up for 20 years for a crime he didn't commit. I helped set him free.

BY FARAZ ZARGHAMI



Judge Mike Heavey, Christopher Tapp and I meet outside the Idaho courtroom.

On June 13, 1996, 18-year-old Angie Dodge was brutally murdered and sexually assaulted in Idaho Falls, Idaho. On Jan. 29, 1997, Christopher Tapp confessed to the crime and was convicted. The prosecutor asked for the death penalty, but the judge spared his life and sentenced him to life in prison. On Oct. 13, 2014, I joined a team to help free Tapp.

During a mutual friend's birthday party, I was approached by Mike Heavey, '73, a retired King County Superior Court judge, who had started a nonprofit called Judges for Justice; its mission was to free innocent people. He needed a videographer to help him show that Tapp was coerced into falsely confessing.

I knew this would be a difficult and time-consuming task. But I couldn't resist the chance to help free an innocent man.

Mike was certain of Tapp's innocence because Tapp's DNA was not found at the scene.

And then came 28 hours of interrogation and polygraph videos showing a naïve and trusting 20-year-old confessing to the police.

Mike would say, "Corroboration is the key. Does Tapp know something that only someone who was at the crime would know?" After reviewing the interrogation tapes, it was clear that Tapp had no idea what happened to poor Angie. He didn't even know basic details of the crime, like where her apartment was located.

The police told Tapp the polygraph read his mind and said he was at the crime. When he asked why he couldn't remember being there, he was told that his subconscious had blocked out his memory. Tapp came to believe these absurd propositions and changed his story to comport with the "truth" of the polygraph.

Those coercive polygraph videos were the key that allowed Christopher Tapp to walk out of the Idaho Falls courthouse a free man on March 22, 2017. He had spent 20 years and 52 days behind bars for a crime he had nothing to do with.

You can see the videos we created, including the coercive polygraph segments, at [www.judgesforjustice.org](http://www.judgesforjustice.org). Tapp's case was also featured on CBS' "48 Hours" on April 15, 2017, entitled "The DNA of a Killer."

Faraz Zarghami, '06, is a marketing director in the healthcare industry. He has been telling stories through video for more than a decade.

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Fresh festive fun  
Holiday gift guide with the cast of the  
new movie 'Annie': PARADE

# Post Register

www.postregister.com SUNDAY November 30, 2014

Chris Tapp has spent 18 years in jail for a murder that renowned experts say he didn't commit



## Moments lost to time

Mother, son hold onto hope justice will finally prevail



# Free Tapp now

(Post Register newspaper editorial opinion of September 11, 2016.)

According to an independent investigator contracted by Bonneville County for the past 14 months to the tune of nearly \$36,000, there is no reliable evidence that Chris Tapp participated in the murder of Angie Dodge, a crime he confessed to, and for which he has been imprisoned since 1997 as part of a 30 year-to-life sentence.

About Tapp's confession: If you have any doubts the confession was forced out of Chris Tapp like blood from a stone, stop what you are doing and go watch video of the interrogations yourself. They're available at [Tinyurl.com/JudgesforJustice](http://Tinyurl.com/JudgesforJustice).



Tapp

Or, you could read the reams of reports from numerous independent experts who all concur — there's no concrete evidence that shows Tapp committed the crime he confessed to. Go to [JudgesforJustice.org](http://JudgesforJustice.org) to read those.

The newest report, released Thursday, was written by Stuart Robinson, a Twin Falls private investigator. He backs up the other experts, saying there's no evidence supporting Tapp's confession that he participated in Dodge's murder.

If videos, reports and evidence aren't enough, ask Angie's own mother, Carol Dodge, an inexhaustible, creative and endlessly resourceful advocate for Tapp's innocence and the continued search for her daughter's killer.

Beyond the confession, what of other evidence? Though DNA evidence belonging to other unidentified men has been found, not one test has confirmed Chris Tapp was ever even in Dodge's apartment.

The specifics of Tapp's confessed involvement are even disproved by physical evidence. For instance, Tapp said he was forced by two other assailants to slash Dodge across the breast. He said her shirt was pulled

up when this happened. Evidence shows it was pulled down.

Robinson's report finds serious flaws in the entire investigation. In fact, Robinson throws the book at the Idaho Falls Police personnel who were involved. Besides questionable interrogation tactics, including giving Tapp myriad details about the crime, investigators also convinced Tapp the polygraph showed he was hiding details of the murder from even himself (one expert on false confessions called this usage of the polygraph a "psychological rubber hose"). They gave Tapp an undomesticated tour of the crime scene — something Robinson calls "disturbing." Robinson said in a serious investigation, there should be hundreds of photos. The IFPD took only 43 photos, citing budget concerns.

One life was brutally, abruptly, heinously, unfairly ended. Another life is being taken slowly by our county while her real killer still walks free.

Bonneville County has its answer — the investigation was seriously tainted, the confession was coerced. The charges leading to Tapp's conviction are based on lies. There is no definitive evidence that he was involved.

Now it's time for the county to act. We have to stop punishing Chris Tapp for a crime it's clear he did not commit.

Daniel R. Clark, Bonneville County's prosecuting attorney wrote in a news release sent with Robinson's report on Thursday, "This Office has an obligation to ensure that a criminal defendant is given procedural justice, and is convicted on sufficient evidence."

It's time for Clark to take the first step toward righting this clear miscarriage of justice by seeking Tapp's release from prison now. This has gone on for far too long.

Katie Stokes is the Commentary page editor. Email her at [kstokes@postregister.com](mailto:kstokes@postregister.com).

## '...Roll down like waters'

(April 5, 2017, Op-Ed Post Register newspaper)



Mike Heavey

Guest columnist

Idaho Falls is blessed with great beauty. Standing on the Broadway bridge looking north one sees magnificent grandeur — the mighty Snake River rolls down over the falls as the stately Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Temple stands watch. It is breathtaking.

On March 22, 2017, Chris Tapp walked out of the Bonneville County Courthouse a free man. An innocent man had spent 20-plus years behind bars.

In the Old Testament Book of Amos, Chapter 5: verse 24, the Bible says, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness flow like a mighty river."

However, "justice does not roll down like waters" today in Idaho Falls because Chris remains a convicted killer.

In 1997, over a three-and-a-half week period and nine interrogations, Chris Tapp told six different stories. Before each of the five changes in story, there was a polygraph examination. When the polygraph examinations were first viewed in 2015, all could clearly see the extraordinary coercion, manipulation and brainwashing of the then 20-year-old Tapp.

These coercive manipulations were "jaw-dropping." There was no DNA evidence or witness testimony connecting the 20-year-old to the vicious murder of Angie Dodge, whose killer has never been brought to justice.

However, in his May 1998 death penalty trial, the state presented videotape evidence of Tapp confessing to being at the June 13, 1996, murder. After three weeks of interrogations, Tapp said he was at the crime with Ben Hobbs and a third man, whose name he could not remember. It was potent evidence. The problem — it is not true.

Tapp's jury knew that the DNA evidence left at the scene did not match Chris Tapp or Ben Hobbs. Seven DNA tests have shown that only one man was present, and he has never been identified.

Renowned polygraph expert Dr. Charles Honts, professor at Boise State, stated that Tapp's polygraph examinations were used to coerce Tapp into implicating police suspects Ben Hobbs and Jeremy Sargis in the horrific crime. They were an unethical ruse, a sham. They were "psychologically coercive in the extreme."

In his 20-year-old mind after 25 hours of polygraphs and interrogations, Chris Tapp came to believe that the polygraph was an all knowing scientific instrument that was reading his mind. The police told Tapp that the polygraph was saying he was at the crime with Ben Hobbs. When Tapp emotionally asked why he couldn't remember, he was told that his "subconscious" had blocked out his memory. Tapp came to believe these absurd propositions. See "Video Affidavit of Michael Heavey" at [www.judgesforjustice.org](http://www.judgesforjustice.org). Your jaw will drop.

Angie's killer has been walking the streets for the past 21 years, free to kill and rape again. Good citizens of Idaho Falls, please demand that your government bring in an independent expert to investigate this unsolved crime.

The law requires that a person's conviction be supported by sufficient evidence. But Tapp walked out of the Bonneville County Courthouse on March 22 without any evidence to support a murder conviction. A conviction without evidence is not justice.

Let us all demand that Chris Tapp's conviction for murder be erased and an independent expert be brought in to find Angie's killer. Only then will Idaho Falls be blessed and "justice roll down like waters."

Heavey, a retired state judge, is CEO of Judges for Justice, a nonprofit organization that has been investigating the Tapp conviction and Angie Dodge's murder since January 2013.

Uncertainty  
Rural hospitals unsure on health care bill C1

# Post Register

[www.postregister.com](http://www.postregister.com)

TUESDAY

March 21, 2017

## Chris Tapp to be freed after 20 years



Courtesy of Vera Tapp  
Christopher Tapp and his mother, Vera, pose for a photo during an undated prison visit.

■ Tapp expected to walk Wednesday, with no admission of guilt

BY BRYAN CLARK  
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BOISE — A deal has been reached in the Chris Tapp case that is expected to make him a free man Wednesday. He has spent just under half of his life in a prison cell.

Lawyers for both the prosecution and the defense confirmed the existence of the deal to the Post Register on Monday evening. Judge Alan Stephens must approve the deal.

"Chris Tapp has entered into a negotiated deal with the prosecuting attorney wherein he'll give up his right to post-conviction proceedings, and if the judge accepts the deal, he will be a free man on Wednesday," said Public Defender John Thomas. Tapp's attorney in several post-conviction relief actions.

Thomas also said Tapp won't admit guilt as a part of the deal. He said he couldn't disclose the full terms of the deal. Deputy Prosecutor John Dewey confirmed that a deal had been reached but declined to comment further.

Both sides are expected to meet with Stephens today, and a

hearing will be held Wednesday at 11 a.m.

Tapp has spent 20 years in prison for the 1996 murder of 18-year-old Angie Dodge. He was sentenced to life in prison, and he wasn't due for his first parole hearing for 10 more years.

Tapp was convicted because he confessed. But in recent years a slew of reports from false confession experts, geneticists, polygraph experts and former FBI supervisory special agents have concluded that Tapp's confession was false, that the details were

■ In Tapp's confession, he implicated another man named Ben Hobbs

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