

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Julie Mattox. My sister, Carrie Williams, was murdered when I was 26 years old. I am now 54 and have spent over half of my life dealing with the legal aftermath from being involved in a death penalty case in Kansas.

My sister was a 20-year-old student at Pittsburg State University. She did not personally know the 40-year-old male neighbor that stalked her, broke into her apartment, stole from her and eventually one Friday night forced his way in and killed her. Three days later he confessed to her murder and based on evidence there was never a shadow of a doubt he did it. This case would become the first death penalty case tried in Kansas since its reinstatement in 1994. To be eligible for capital murder you must commit horrific acts against a person. The terrible things he did to her are hard to hear about. The terror and pain Carrie endured are forever etched in my memory. My entire life was altered from that point on.

From the first pretrial hearing to this day my family has felt frustrated, angry, and disappointed in the judicial system in Kansas. The amount of time it took to even get to trial was almost a year and a half. This is with a confession three days after the murder. When you are already experiencing unbearable grief from a loss, trying to deal with the emotional toll of knowing the suffering she went through and the questioning yourself of could I have prevented this, it's hard to deal with so many delays. Lawyers are doing anything they can to try and get something to stick that will free him of his punishment. Wasting our time and money lawyers tried to build the perception he was incompetent to stand trial, he had amnesia, he had blackouts, he used drugs, his childhood wasn't great, etc. all to keep him from being held accountable. When that didn't work the endless appeals set in.

No consideration is given to the victim's family and what the unlimited appeals do to them. My family has been in a never-ending cycle of reliving the nightmare over and over every time the case comes up for another court date. Just imagine years of having to worry about the conviction being overturned because of an error in the wording in a document. Feeling like you must be present at every court case but knowing it will cause sleepless nights and emotional stress. It leaves you feeling so frustrated and let down by the process. The toll it takes on relationships because everyone handles the stress and grief in different ways. It is just on constant repeat because the appeals just keep coming. Countless holidays have been marred by court dates, correspondence or media regarding her murder. Instead of remembering all the fun and happy things about my sister during these times we discuss what's going on with the case.

Watching my dad go through this whole process feeling like he should've been able to protect her and failed and him not being able to have a normal healing process was unbearable. He died a few years ago and never got to experience life after her death with any closure of this case.

There is no way to briefly summarize what it has been like having this process span almost three decades. My daughter was four years old when my sister was killed and now, she is 32 with a family of her own and she will have to explain it to her children when they see it on the news or hear people talking about it. She should be able to share her memories of her aunt of happy times and not have her life defined by a never-ending court case because the state of Kansas refuses to uphold the death penalty and see it through.

Julie Mattox