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**Jill Karofsky’s bid for Supreme Court backed by rape victim she charged with lying**

Supreme Court candidate Jill Karofsky says the biggest mistake of her 27-career judicial career was bringing an obstruction charge against Patty Murphy, a legally blind woman who claimed she was sexually assaulted and robbed at knifepoint in her Madison home more than two decades ago.

But nearly 22 years later, Murphy believes that Karofsky would be a “terrific” Supreme Court justice thanks to tireless efforts to make amends and teach the next generation of lawyers and prosecutors how to avoid her missteps.

What’s more, Murphy told WisPolitics.com that she will “absolutely” vote for Karofsky next spring when the Dane County district court judge challenges sitting Supreme Court Justice Daniel Kelly for a seat on Wisconsin’s highest court.

But according to Karofsky, Murphy didn’t always feel that way.

**A colossal f\*\*\*-up**

In the wee hours of the morning on Sept. 4, 1997, Murphy says an assailant broke into the apartment she shared with her daughter and anally, orally and vaginally raped her before forcing her into a closet and making off with her valuables.

She called the police, who immediately responded to the scene, collected evidence and took her to a hospital to be examined by a nurse specially trained to work with victims of sexual assault.

Bill Lueders, a Madison journalist and editor of *The Progressive* magazine, authored the 2006 book “Cry Rape: The True Story of One Woman’s Harrowing Quest for Justice,” which details Murphy’s distressing experience. He told WisPolitics.com what happened next could only be described as a “colossal f\*\*\*-up.”

“For the next year, police and prosecutors perpetuated the assault,” Lueders wrote. “Aside from the not-uncommon humiliation of being quizzed by a male detective about penis size and vaginal lubrication, Patty bore the added indignity of not being believed.

“On the initiative of this one detective, Patty’s report of being raped was turned into an investigation of her.”

That detective, Tom Woodmansee of the Madison Police Department, would present Karofsky — who was then a young deputy district attorney — with a document featuring 41 reasons why he believed Murphy was lying and had made up the whole ordeal.

“Among those were the fact that the physical evidence didn’t match up, that the timing didn’t match. He had interviewed her several times and her statements were inconsistent,” Karofsky told WisPolitics.com. “And then ultimately, he confronted her in the basement of the Madison Police Department and she then said this didn’t happen.”

But Lueders said Woodmasee’s report on the investigation should have raised red flags on a number of points.

The State Crime Lab, for instance, found testable quantities of semen on her bed sheet but did not process the sample before obstruction charges were brought against Murphy.

The nurse who was charged with examining her in the immediate aftermath of the incident noted the signs of trauma were not as severe as they could have been. But a bruise on her thigh, scratch on her rectum, small lacerations on her face and neck, and a cut on her index finger were clear to see.

Woodmansee also expressed doubts about the veracity of Murphy’s story, because, as he said to her during a three-plus hour-long interview session, “You don’t act like a rape victim.”

But perhaps most damningly, the confession that Karofsky spoke of was acquired after Woodmansee cornered Murphy in an interrogation cell and lied to her about the results derived from the evidence collected at the scene of the crime.

“He told her that Poarch, the sexual-assault nurse… and State Crime Lab found ‘no evidence’ of rape,” Lueders wrote. “He told her the Crime Lab’s lab test for latex residue from the condom she says her assailant wore came back negative.

“This, he later admitted in court, was a ‘ruse’ — there is no such thing as a test for latex residue.”

Lueders told WisPolitics.com that he believed Murphy’s will was broken in that interrogation room and “she was trying to say whatever the cops wanted to hear” when she confessed to making it all up, just to bring an end to the harassment.

With Woodmansee’s assertions in hand, Karofsky pushed forward with charging Murphy with obstructing an officer, a Class H Felony in the state of Wisconsin. She was responsible for drawing up the charging documents and appeared in court as the prosecutor.

The charge was dismissed after DNA testing on the semen found on Murphy’s bed sheet raised “the possibility that Murphy was assaulted,” but not before Karofsky praised the detectives for their work.

“The police officers in this case ought to be proud of what they did,” Lueders recalls Karofsky saying in court.

For her part, Karofsky did not dispute her portrayal or the claims laid out in the book and praised its author.

“I don’t know that any of this would have come to light were it not for really good reporting on the part of Bill Lueders,” she said.

Woodmansee, who subsequently left the Madison Police Department, did not return multiple requests for comment from WisPolitics.com.

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