

Sentence upheld in Green Bay assisted suicide case

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The Associated Press

WAUSAU — A Green Bay woman sentenced to two years in prison for helping a cancer patient die by smothering him with a pillow received a fair sentence, a state appeals court ruled Tuesday.

"Her sentence is not so disproportionate as to shock public sentiment," Judge Michael Hoover wrote for the 3rd District Court of Appeals.

Donna Trautman, 60, was convicted of assisting the suicide death of 66-year-old Raymond Krerowicz on April 23, 2001, at his home in Green Bay. He had terminal prostate cancer.

Besides the two-year prison term, Trautman was ordered to serve six years of extended supervision after being released from prison.

The three-judge appeals court unanimously upheld the conviction and the prison term.

Trautman contended the sentence was unduly harsh and that Brown County Circuit Judge Donald Zuidmulder abused his discretion by sentencing her according to a preconceived sentencing policy.

According to court records, Trautman told police May 14, 2001, that she held a pillow over Krerowicz's face after a priest performed last rites for him and Krerowicz asked her to help him die.

She went to police because she had been "in hell" and could not put the incident out of her mind, court records said.

Trautman became friends with Krerowicz in October 2000 when she moved into the apartment building where he lived, court records said.

On April 22, 2001, a hospice nurse who cared for Krerowicz noted that his condition indicated death was near and she expected he would survive "at most, another two weeks," court records said.

Until Trautman's admissions, authorities believed Krerowicz had died of natural causes. After receiving the new

information, his body was exhumed, and officials said results of a subsequent autopsy were "not inconsistent" with her version of the death.

In seeking to have her sentenced changed, Trautman argued Zuidmulder basically said he was against granting probation in assisted suicide cases because it was a "moral slope" he refused to go down.

Trautman is incarcerated at Taycheedah Correctional Institution, where she eats her meals in her cell because she is unable to walk to the dining hall and is not permitted to be taken there in a wheelchair, court records said.