

Sanchez admits guilt to bike path murders

by **KIMBERLY M. KARCHER**
Clarence Editor

Altemio C. Sanchez of Cheektowaga plead guilty to four charges in connection with three murders and rapes of area women on May 16 in Erie County court.

Sanchez, known as the "bike path rapist," was visibly upset, according to police, when he confessed to the 1990 rape and murder

of Linda S. Yalem, 22, a UB student; the 1992 rape and murder of Majane Mazur and the 2006 murder of Joan Diver, 45, of Clarence.

"He didn't say much," said Scott Patronik, chief of special services with the Erie County Sheriff's Department. "We only saw the back of him, but he did look distraught as they ran through the charges."

Patronik said there were two charges for the Yalem case because Sanchez committed murder while committing a felony (the rape) which brings up two charges. He faced one charge for the Mazur and Diver cases.

Patronik said the courtroom proceedings were standard as Sanchez was questioned on his guilty plea.

When asked by the judge if he committed the crimes intentionally, Sanchez replied "yes," ac-



Altemio C. Sanchez

ording to Patronik,

When the judge asked how he committed the crimes, Sanchez's only reply was "I strangled her," Patronik said.

Sanchez's wife, Kathy, was also in the courtroom, Patronik said, and appeared "upset" as she listened to her husband, whom she's supported in past months, confess to the bike path rapes and murders.

Sanchez was arrested in January after police obtained his DNA from a Williamsville restaurant. Forensics then matched the DNA sample to evidence that was collected from some of the 10 crime scenes in which a rape, murder or both to the "bike path rapist."

Patronik said Sanchez gave no reason as to why he changed his plea — he plead not guilty to the Mazur and Yalem murder in late January. At the time, evidence was lacking in connecting him to the scene where Diver's body was found.

A sentencing date of Aug. 2 has been set, but Patronik said that could change in the future.

As for Sanchez' future, he faces the possibility of life behind bars.

e-mail: kkarcher@beenews.com

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(Editor's note: Call The Bee at 632-0390 and record a one-minute comment on our Bee Heard line. It gives readers an opportunity to comment quickly and candidly on items of local or regional interest. Callers do not have to identify themselves and no callers' names will be used. In the interest of fairness and good taste, The Bee will not publish derogatory or insulting comments. All comments are by our readers and are subject to editing.)

✓The 95- and 65-gallon totes are simply too large for our household. My wife and I rarely fill the 30-gallon can we are currently using. I see no sense in dragging an oversized tote to the curb every week. I'll be putting out my trash once a month.

✓Just why is it that we have heard nothing lately from Amherst Supervisor Satish Mohan regarding the foul-up he created in not paying the withholding tax and the other taxes on employees. This is just another example of Mohan not doing his homework, not following through and the taxpayer footing the bill. The taxpayer is paying a great deal for his job training.

✓I'm very concerned about all the buck-passing going on at town hall regarding the IRS issue. IRS

finances are very expensive, and this is a total waste! At least some of this has gone on under Mohan's and Belliotti's watch; they and the town board have taken no responsibility. This is disgusting. Things are a lot worse now than they were before. At this stage, ignorance is no excuse.

✓The comment about the disrespect shown for the American flag, I'm sure, is felt by many of us who see a complete lack of respect for our beautiful flag. Perhaps people have become ignorant and need a reminder that there are certain rules of protocol for displaying a flag.

✓What an interesting article by Dan Meyer in the recent Bee detailing the disregard by New York State for the education of children in private schools. Since our state assembly has no interest in children in Catholic schools, why do Catholics continue to vote them into office?

✓I recently went to the new Walgreens at Main and Union. I was told the store was open, and I thought for sure they were mistaken because there's no grand opening sign.

✓I urge Williamsville voters on June 19 to vote Mary Lowther out of office. The reason: her adminis-

tration has foot-dragged on too many vital projects needing attention. The Ellicott Creek cleanup has not been attended to in a timely fashion. Neither has the upgrading of the mill.

✓Has anyone from the town bothered to take a look at the dry gulch that used to be called Lehn Springs? If there is a reason for prohibiting water flow, area residents should be notified. I'm sure prospective home-buyers would be impressed with the desert conditions abounding in the area. Please, turn on the water.

✓Shame on town officials for not paying their taxes on time. This is disgusting. Shame, shame shame.

✓To the mayor of the Village of Williamsville: I am completely disgusted that this is the first official week that our parks are to be open, and every park is overgrown and there is garbage in the wading pools. A child was hurt the other day at Garrison Park on a slide that has a hole right through it. I am appalled. Our parks, in the last year, have fallen into decline. This is incomprehensible and needs to be addressed immediately.

School News

Mill Middle School students took part in a debate, via teleconferencing, against a fifth grade class from Union East Elementary School, Cheektowaga. The students debated the issues of global warming.

Budgets approved

On May 15 Amherst residents walked into the polls and voted "yes" to all three school districts' budgets.

Williamsville Central School District

The \$145 million budget for 2007-08 has been approved — 2,378 to 793.

Also, the three propositions passed. The Mill Street campus proposition was approved by a vote of 2,153 to 944. The proposition to purchase land at 480 Lawrence Bell Drive to house the district's Operations and Maintenance and Child Nutrition departments passed, 2,243 to 812. The third proposition, to create a capital reserve fund, passed, 2,253 to 686.

Three board members were elected to the three open seats: incumbent Ramona Popowich received the most votes, 2,208, and newcomers Carrie Kahn, 2,017 votes, and Dawn Cerra, 2,015, will fill the other two seats. Incumbent Carolyn Giambra lost the election, receiving only 1,798 votes.

A representative for the district said 3,330 people voted, a turnout that was slightly higher than the previous year. There are approximately 55,000 eligible voters in the district.

Amherst Central School District

Voters approved the \$40.39 million budget for 2007-08 by a vote of 554 to 174.

The two propositions also passed: the \$16.8 million capital improvement project, 521 to 174, and creating a capital reserve fund, 546 to 168.

Elected as Board of Education trustees for another term were Laura Meyers-Rogerson, with 435 votes, and JoEtte Zaccagnino, with 427 votes. Illana R. Lane was defeated, with 398 votes.

A total of 731 residents voted, of an eligible 18,500.

Sweet Home Central School District

The \$60.31 million budget was approved by 701 to 197.

Voters also approved the proposition to purchase six buses at a cost of \$428,100 by a vote of 653 to 224. A second proposition, to spend \$3.6 million of state EXCEL aid on renovations and security improvements in five of the buildings, passed, 666 to 209.

The two trustees elected to a five-year term were Marianne Jasen, with 592 votes, and incumbent Douglas J. Gali, with 565 votes. Incumbent Scott M. Johnson, with 531 votes, was elected to a one-year term. Johnson had been appointed to fill an unexpired term this past year. Deborah Adams was defeated, with 427 votes.

A total of 898 from 23,435 registered voters went to the polls.

Soccer fields included in final phase for park

by **JESSICA L. FINCH**
Associate Editor

The love for soccer in Amherst is bigger than the space available to house it.

Mark Deyle, of the Amherst Soccer Association, said a study for the recreation master plan in Amherst found the average ratio for a soccer league should be 50 players for every field. In Amherst there are an estimated 250 players for each field.

But good news came for the ASA recently when the Amherst Town Board approved funding to complete the third, and final, phase of Paradise Park, which includes two soccer fields.

Deyle, a past president of ASA, said the main complex for the ASA has been at North French Road. The association also uses fields at Erie Community College's North Campus, when they are available.

"This gives us a secondary complex," he said, adding that this phase of the project will bring the total to three at Paradise Park.

It's also one of the most integrated parks in the town, with a playground, picnic shelter, basketball court and kickball field.

The first phase started in 1999, followed by the second in 2003.

Phase II included 84 additional parking spots in anticipation of the fields.

In addition to town funding of \$139,000 for the third phase, Sen. Mary Lou Rath gave a \$57,000 grant toward the project.

"Senator Rath has been very instrumental in providing funding," Deyle said.

Deyle said the needs for parks followed the population growth in East Amherst, where Paradise Park is located.

"There really aren't many parks in that section of town," he said.

Work was expected to begin in April, and completion will be affected by weather conditions and time needed to seed the fields.

Each year the ASA hosts a Memorial Day tournament with more than 180 teams competing. Deyle said each team is guaranteed four games, which requires a lot of field time.

"If (the fields) are grown in we might be able to use the fields next year, with any luck. We are anxious to get things going," he said, adding that the tournament is the capital fundraising event for the ASA.

This year's tournament is from May 26 to 28 and is running under the direction of Brian Lang, who has been tournament director, registrar, or Webmaster, for the past seven years.

e-mail: jfinch@beenews.com

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