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Oakland County businessman jailed in connection with 1999 rape on area golf course

Officials: Advances in DNA helped solve case and link accused to similar crime on Penn State campus



Oakland County Jail (Aileen Wingblad/MediaNews Group)



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An Oakland County businessman was arraigned on felony charges Tuesday in connection with the sexual assault of a 22-year-old woman at an Oakland Township golf course in 1999.

Kurt Alan Rillema, 51, of West Bloomfield, is also linked by DNA evidence to a similar assault in 2000 at a golf course on the Penn State University campus, officials said.



Kurt Rillema booking photo

Oakland County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Unit and police from both Penn State and State College in Pennsylvania collaborated on the case which led to Rillema's arrest Monday in Oakland County. Pennsylvania charges include rape by

Rillema, who reportedly owns a construction company, was arraigned Tuesday in 52-3 District Court in Rochester Hills on first-degree and second-degree criminal sexual conduct charges for the alleged assault at the Twin Lakes Golf Club in Oakland Township on Sept. 6, 1999.

Magistrate Marie Soma denied bond and ordered him to the Oakland County Jail until his next court appearance, a probable cause conference scheduled for April 27 before Judge Lisa Asadoorian.

Soon after the alleged Oakland Township incident, the victim reportedly told Oakland County Sheriff's deputies that she was working at a food stand on the golf course when a man came through the employee door in the back, demanded she remove her clothes and sexually assaulted her. Investigators subsequently obtained DNA evidence from the alleged crime but couldn't identify a suspect.

The DNA information was then entered into a national database.

In 2004, that evidence was matched with DNA evidence from a similar sexual assault on the PSU campus that allegedly happened in 2000. In that incident, officials said, a 19-year-old woman reported she was jogging on the campus golf course when a man confronted her with a knife, held the knife to her neck and sexually assaulted her. That investigation also yielded evidence but, like the earlier case in Oakland County, Pennsylvania authorities couldn't identify a suspect and the cases remained unsolved.

Yet in 2021, with advances made in DNA analysis, evidence from the Oakland County case was sent to Virginia-based Parabon Nanolabs for genetic genealogy testing.

The sheriff's office credits "exhaustive research" — including tracing genealogy as far back as the 1700s, along with investigations from its office and PSU police — which narrowed down possible suspects to one of three brothers. After further investigation, detectives concluded that Kurt Rillema was a prime suspect. A test of a reference sample of DNA confirmed a match to the DNA sample in both cases, the sheriff's office said.

"Victims of violent crimes, like rape, can never forget that terrible moment," Sheriff Michael Bouchard stated in a news release. "It is incumbent on us to never give up on finding perpetrators of these crimes and bring them to justice. With new technology and investigative capabilities, sometimes we can close cases that

A conviction on first-degree criminal sexual conduct carries up to life in prison.
Second-degree criminal sexual conduct is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.



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