

Grandfather of alleged rape victim charged for threatening accused attacker's family

By **Harold Bosstick**

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A Farmersburg man faces four Level 6 felony counts of intimidation for reportedly threatening the lives of a juvenile male and his family — the same juvenile who had been accused of but not charged with raping the man's granddaughter.

The charges were filed against Jerry Hawker, 65, in Sullivan Superior Court late Wednesday. He was taken into custody by the Sullivan County Sheriff's

Department at 5 p.m. Wednesday and remained so Thursday evening on \$32,000 cash bond. The charges — one for each of the family member and one blanket count — have their roots in the alleged rape of Hawker's granddaughter, herself a juvenile, in December 2014.

She reported the rape last November, which set off an investigation but, ultimately, no arrest or formal charges against the alleged rapist. Sullivan County Prosecutor John Springer previously told the times that there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against the juvenile.

However, due to circumstances surrounding the handling of the aftermath by Northeast School Corp. officials, an investigation has been opened against the corporation by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights into possible Title IX violations.

Harassment of alleged victim

Preceding his charging and arrest, Hawker had filed an initial protective order against his granddaughter's alleged rapist in Sullivan Circuit Court on March 2.

This was after an incident on Feb. 26, during which the alleged rapist and "the whole auto mechanics class" at NCHS harassed her and reportedly caused her to suffer a panic attack, according to an incident report written by SCSD Deputy Jeff Kinnett on Feb. 29.

Judge Robert E. Hunley approved the ex parte order for protection on March 9, barring the alleged rapist from threatening or committing acts of violence against Hawker, the

alleged victim and other members of their family; prohibiting harassing communication; and ordering the alleged rapist to avoid contact with them.

“Respondent (the alleged rapist) is ordered to have no incidental contact with the Petitioner (Hawker, the alleged victim and family) pertaining to attending School or at School Activities,” the order states. “The Respondent is not refrained from attending school.”

However, according to an incident report written by SCSD Deputy Dave Holmes filed in the criminal case, the family reported on March 15 that the protection order had been violated.

The alleged victim told Holmes that her alleged rapist “made eye contact with her. She felt like he was harassing and intimidating her ...” Holmes notes that he informed the grandmother that he would send a harassment report to the prosecutor for review.

The threats against alleged rapist, family

However, later that day, Holmes adds, he was informed that “Jerry Hawker was on his way from Indianapolis and was going to kill (the alleged rapist) and his family.”

The Times was provided by Springer with charging information and recordings of two calls that are entered in as evidence in the case. Those calls were made to Sullivan County 911 Dispatch by a man who gave his name as Jerry Hawker.

In those recordings, the individual claiming to be Hawker told officers of his plans to shoot the alleged rapist and his family with a shotgun and burn their house down if officers didn’t take the alleged rapist into custody.

“If you sit on that,” the man claiming to be Hawker says at one point to a dispatch officer, “you’re going to be responsible for it.”

According to his report, after contacting the grandmother, Holmes and other officers received permission to search their home for firearms and were allowed to remove those they found. The grandmother also reportedly informed them that she was unaware of her husband’s location.

“Shortly after (removing the weapons), the Sullivan County Sheriff’s Department received a call from Union Hospital ER (in Terre Haute), reporting that they had Jerry Hawker,” Holmes states. “Union Hospital advised that Mr. Hawker was reporting that he wanted to kill (the alleged rapist) and his family, police and the prosecutor. They also advised that he was hallucinating, hearing voices in his head and that he also was in a lot of pain.

“They were going to emergency detain him at Union until they could find him

someplace to go for help with his mental problems,” the deputy continues. “I asked how he got there; they advised me that he walked in.”

Holmes report also notes that officers and the grandmother came to the hospital for the vehicle Hawker was driving and, after receiving permission to search it, located an additional firearm.

Eventually, the deputy adds, Hawker was transported to Bloomington Meadows Psychiatric Unit.

The following day, the alleged rapist’s mother filed a protective order against Hawker, which was granted one day later on March 17.

That order barred Hawker from threatening or committing violence against the alleged rapist and his family, and prohibited harassing communication, and ordered him to avoid contact with them — similar to the preceding protective order.

While the names of some of the individuals are listed in court documents, the Times generally does not publish the names of juveniles, victims or others involved unless criminal charges have been filed against an individual.

Documents from Hawker’s family

On Thursday, Stop Sexual Assault in Schools — an advocacy group for victims of rape — provided the Times with correspondence written by Hawker’s wife.

SSAIS had contacted — similarly with letters written by the grandmother — the Times in connection to the federal investigation, which was reported in the March 23 edition of the Times.

The email from SSAIS states that Hawker “had a mental breakdown exacerbated by a grave health diagnosis. “After making some threats against the ‘alleged’ rapist, he ended up in a mental hospital in Bloomington where he was recovering and awaiting surgery,” it continues. “Although he was reportedly improving, he was prematurely removed from his 90-day program and put in jail.”

Sullivan County Sheriff Clark Cottom refuted that characterization of Hawker being taken into custody.

“In a million years, we would not be involved with removing someone from a medical or mental health facility prior to their discharge,” he said.

In one of the letters submitted Thursday and apparently written Wednesday, the grandmother sent to the organization her fears about her husband’s mental condition and his arrest.

In the letter, she alleges that the SCSD “don't intend to give him any of his psych meds, so he will decompensate. He said they wished they would have put a bullet in his head two weeks ago ...

“I am trying to gather things, but I know he will probably die tonight,” she added.

However, as to the allegation that Hawker was not going to be allowed his medication, Cottom said “that is bad information. “No inmate is being denied any needed medical or mental health care ... including Mr. Hawker,” he continued.

Contacted Thursday evening, Hawker’s wife advised that SCSD officials indicated to her husband’s attorney Eric Frey that her husband was no longer jailed. “They have him in a medical, secure facility,” she said. “I have no idea on the facility. I’m just glad to know that he’s safe. At least I know he is being cared for.”



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That the Northeast School Corporation earned itself a federal investigation for mishandling reports of multiple rapes against students indicates. The U.S. Dept of Education only opens these investigation when they have sufficient evidence to do so. This investigation does not rely on charging the "alleged" assailant. It's irrelevant whether he was charged or not. It's always about the school's failure to provide the victims an equal education after reporting sexual harassment, unwelcome sexual touching, and sexual violence. Had the school district responded appropriately to reports of sexual violence in compliance with Title IX (a federal civil rights law), the victims could have gone back to school without being tormented by their assailants. When a school acts lawfully, situations are not allowed to spiral out of control. We must remain focused on the school's responsibilities. The general public can't fathom the nightmare that sexual violence brings, and especially when a school district revictimizes the entire family. To this day, we do not really know why Jerry Hawker was removed from his 90 day mental health program after 2 weeks (while also awaiting major surgery) and put in a jail which reportedly did not dispense psych meds. But again, let's stay focused on why this school is under federal investigation and why Indiana has the second highest rate of high school rape in the country. Could it be the failure to charge rapists that allows them to perpetuate violence again? Could it be the schools' failure to take appropriate action under Title IX? Could it be schools' protection of valued athletes?

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