

Hearing, July 2006.

- Q. Good morning Sir. My name is Paul Howard and this is a mandatory parole hearing.
- Q. Would you please state your name and register number for the record.
- A. Zvonko Basic, Register # 03941-158
- Q. Counsel:
- A. Carmen Hernandez, on behalf Zvonko Basic
- Q. You can just give me your address.
- A. 717 D Street, NW, Suite 310
- Q. Phone #
- A. 202-628-0090, cell: 240-472-3391
- Q. You are currently serving a life sentence for air piracy and you've been in custody since 1977.
- A. [By CDH]. 1976. He was sentenced in 1977 but he has been serving time since his the date of his arrest in 1976.
- Q. These events involve air piracy, apparently you hijacked an airplane and due to the hijacking there was an incident that happened in New York involving a bomb exploding. You were initial appearance before the Commission you were continued to your 15-year reconsideration hearing and then at your 15-year hearing they continued to your expiration and now you are a coming up on your 2/3 mandatory parole date, November 11, 2, I'm sorry September 11, 2006 and the Commission has now ordered a mandatory parole date to determine if you should be released on that date. Is there anything I've missed? Except the specifics of the offense.
- Q. But before we proceed, do you have a general statement you'd like to make.
- A. Yeah, yeah, before I start I'd like to point out that I have a copy of the recommendation of the last Parole Examiner, two years ago, I wasn't supposed to receive this but through somehow the Freedom of Information they sent us and in this copy he recommend my release.
- Q. You have a copy of which letter
- A. [By CDH] It was provided to counsel who represented him before I did as a result of a Freedom of Information Act Request
- Q. It was a copy of the Parole Examiner's recommendation?
- A. Yeah and he recommend here my release in 2004 so I just wanted to read here just one Commissioner apparently was in agreement with him to let me go two years ago so I just wanted to point out this one thing the world quote:

The world has evolved since subject and the codefendants committed this offense. This offense is not of the magnitude of "terrorist activities" as we view them after the events of 9/11. This offense was committed to bring attention to the plight of Croatia and was not an attack against the United States. The injuries, the victims and the death of the officer was the result of Basic's reckless disregard. The death and the injuries were not the result of premeditation or an attempt to cause massive death and destruction.

This is this Commissioner's [by the way I have other copies if you want to keep it. No, no]. opinion and I wanted to point this out for the record.

As for me, I would like to say a few words. On several previous opportunities during the court hearings and during the parole hearings, I gave lengthy statements and tried to present my side of the story and explain myself the best I could. Today, I would like to just briefly state my present thoughts and feelings. [sigh] Ah, as you know, throughout the ages of human history, divine law keeps reminding us that God works in mysterious ways and that we mortals will never know why there are such great differences, such huge differences between individual destinies of human beings. Indeed, it could be argued that the problem is not in ourselves that the problem is in the stars. Over the years, I have heard many prisoners professing their innocence for the crime they have been convicted of and as a personal survey somehow I used to ask quite a few of those prisoners who claimed that they were framed whether they would exchange the supposed railroaded sentences for the due punishment the judge could on him if he had knowledge of all the crimes they ever committed. Since 99% of them readily admitted that such exchange would put them in much worse situation, my usual comment to them that thereby lied the moral justification for assumed ahh framing and they should cease to complain.

As for myself, my case is quite clear and indeed my whole life is an open book and I can categorically state that I have no skeletons in my closet. Having spent 3/4 of my adult life among America's most serious and mostly incorrigible criminals, I am fully aware of the Parole Commission's difficult and important duty in protecting society. Nevertheless, in my opinion there cannot be true justice where the exercise of power is not seasoned with mercy. Mercy in this sense is not a softening or undermining of the law but an exercise of sympathetic understanding which enhances the power of the law by freeing it from many defects a written law that cannot take into account the infinite varieties of circumstances.

As we know, I have had plenty of time to look back on my life, reflect back and I must admit that it's only about up to closely 20 years I finally managed to gather enough courage to honestly face myself and all my deeds. For a long time, I used to justify my offense with the sorry plight of Croatian people and with a very precarious situation I personally was in also even as I greatly grieved Officer Brian Murray's death for a long time I used to blame it almost entirely on the police negligence or I saw it as an incomprehensible and tragic accident. Now though I am absolutely convinced that no one can nor should escape personal responsibility for their action by blaming by laying the blame on something or someone else. Furthermore, I believe that ultimately it is misfortune for anyone to escape a merited punishment because such punishment may awaken in him the recognition that the wrong has been done and thus purify his soul and improve his character.

Over the years, I have had a chance to read many good books and these extensive readings have enormously widened my horizon and broadened my understanding of life and human nature. And my very painful and prolonged sufferings have inspired many solitary conversations with my own soul so that I can now accept almost any destiny without the

slightest bitterness. I don't have any bitterness toward the people who tried to assassinate me nor towards those who have vilified me. For by forgiving them all, I put myself in a position of earning forgiveness for the wrongs I myself have done.

Thirty years ago my offense resulted in absolutely and totally unintentional death of an innocent police officer and there is nothing I can do about it. We cannot undo the past. And I am truly sorry that I cannot right the wrongs I have done, the hurts, the harms I have caused. But if the past cannot be changed, a profound, powerful and bitter lesson from that past will never be forgotten. I sincerely hope the Parole Commission will now recognize my remorse and exercise the aforementioned sympathetic understanding by granting me prompt release and I equally hope that you Mr. Howard as the examiner will recommend to the Commission my immediate parole.

Thank you for hearing me out.