

Benjamin La Guer
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Robert & Elizabeth Barry
411 Leominster Road
Lunenburg, Massachusetts

6 October 1994

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Barry:

Over the past eleven years that we have known of each other no single day has elapsed when I haven't asked myself - in that way one asks questions of life and death - "When will I find the words to explain to these people what happened that forever changed our lives and the way we experience the world surrounding us." Not a single day has elapsed when I haven't asked myself what actually happened.

Some years ago, a journalist who says he spoke briefly with you (Mr. Barry) told me something that had a profound impression on me: "Barry thinks you're sitting in prison and you have nothing to do except sit there gasping for whatever loophole you can find that'll open the front gate." For this reason I haven't written sooner; I resisted myself unto believing that so long as I could (in some future) offer you a greater understanding of what happened to your mother, a daily deed toward that end would be more compelling in describing me than any group of fancy worded paragraphs.

In these eleven years I have asked the best and brightest people I could find (a number that now reaches into the hundreds) for their help in unraveling what happened to your mother; not once have I asked a lawyer, journalist, politician or clergy to find a legal technicality that might form the basis for me to obtain my freedom.

The office of the district attorney would have you believe, as though a single answer will explain all, that twelve jurors have spoken their verdicts. But whatever those twelve men came to understand, they understood so by fancy words and decked-out phrases from lawyers for both sides. These lawyers pretend in front of juries that they possess the wisdom of Solomon, but they never tell juries that their truths are merely their own understanding of whatever limited facts are available to them, and that juries should take into account neither the people's lawyer nor defense lawyers are present during the eventful hours or seconds of a crime. So what lawyers offered this jury was not the whole truth; the truth merely as they understood it.

It did not matter in this case if the trial ended with unanswered questions about the identity of semen and bloodstain specimens, if detective Carlgren had no answers for the mismatching fingerprint he lifted from the apartment, if the underwear Carlgren reported belong to the assailant was not forensically examined for blood grouping (a procedure routinely performed by extracting perspiration from the fabric), if the knife which your mother told detectives her attacker had used disappeared from police custody, or if the pocketbook which detectives found in the street weeks after I was arrested also disappeared before fingerprints could be lifted for comparison with mine or other potential suspects.

With all of the blood your mother had lost or stained in the fabrics across the apartment, for example, not a single bloodstain returned from the state laboratory indicating her group "O" bloodtype. These are not insignificant questions. In nineteen-eighty-nine I offered to pay for all of the physical evidence to be sent to a laboratory of the district attorney's choice, for retesting under the newest DNA technologies. District Attorney John Conte and Judge Robert Milkem both said no, refusing essentially to grant us truth.

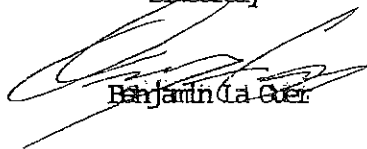
"These people need to believe the system has worked for them," a friend who I respect said to me not long ago. When he said this I understood because the strength of my own need to believe is what keeps me faithful that truth will ultimately prevail.

I do not think it necessary to describe in vivid detail the pain of being innocently convicted or describe what it is like to be inside a prison cell with no explanation to account for what is happening or to stand alone with no one to answer a single question that makes sense of what is occurring, or explain the difference of the real and surreal of what one thinks is happening. These four walls do not respond no matter how many times I ask questions aloud. I have often wished I was guilty, so that I would no longer have these questions. I feel I'll never have peace until these questions go away, until we know for sure what happened.

Virtually everyone I know had told me in nineteen-eighty-nine that I would be granted a new trial. While I felt a comforting warmth by all of the assurances, it must have been a few days prior to a court appearance that, in need of answers to questions I had not thought of, I called your mother and spoke with her over the telephone. This was when she was at Wright Nursing Home. I knew she was there from a friend of a friend who worked there. I thought of our conversation for a very long time, for weeks afterwards. She never knew who I was. After some weeks, I realized, whatever had happened to me had nothing to do with what had happened to her. I also realized, many more months afterwards, that what I was in search for was some explanation or sense of apology for her turning my life into a nightmare. In the way she had spoken, I was certain as one knows one is alive that she knew not what she had done. It was an important moment, because I brought myself a moment of forgiveness. I cannot explain it except in that way one feels something by faith that my destiny was my own, and you mother could not be responsible for that destiny.

In the end, I can only swear before God and my honor as a human being that I am not responsible for what happened to your mother. I have left no stone unturned in to quest to answer the important questions, and in the end I hope that my deeds bear witness to the fact that I could do no more. I have accepted the possibility that I will be made to serve fifteen years, perhaps more, for a crime I did not commit. I hope I have made a difference in your lives with these few paragraphs, because forgiveness and truth has made a difference for what remains of mine.

Sincerely



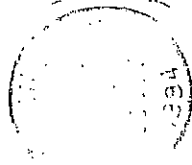
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