

Son of cold-case killer sent to prison for drug conspiracy

Michael Paiva's father was convicted in 1979 slaying of Janet Chandler.

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GRAND RAPIDS — Michael Carlton Paiva, whose late father, Arthur Paiva, was a ring-leader in the 1979 killing of Hope College student Janet Chandler, was sentenced to 30 months in prison for his role in a “dark web” drug conspiracy.

Paiva, 30, of Norton Shores, was sentenced Thursday by U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker.

Paiva suffered years of “heartbreak” after his father was convicted of “unimaginable crimes,” his family said.

He was identified as a buyer of amphetamines and psychedelic compounds — including ecstasy, LSD, mescaline and liquid mushrooms — after an international police operation brought down “Silk Road 2.0,” known as a “dark web marketplace” for drug distribution.

He ordered drugs, from at least 2013 to 2016, using Bitcoin, a digital currency not regulated by the government. He converted cash into Bitcoin to make online drug buys, the government said.

“Drug traffickers who believe that the dark web and cryptocurrency will provide anonymity and shield them from the rule of law are sorely mistaken,” acting U.S. Attorney Andrew Birge said.

Steve Francis, acting special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Detroit, said “criminals have the false impression that their black market activity using digital currency like Bitcoin is avoiding scrutiny.”

Paiva's attorney, Paul Mitchell, said his client grew up in a good home with his mother, stepfather and sister, Jamie.

He had been involved in the drug subculture, but his life was turned upside down when his biological father was convicted in 2007 in the 1979 rape and killing of Hope College student Janet Chandler.

The events were “earthshaking,” Mitchell wrote in a sentencing memorandum.

“This catastrophic turn of events would seem to have thrust Michael into the aforementioned subculture. It is, of course, quite possible that that was going to happen regardless of any intervening trauma, however these circumstances could not have helped to steer Michael away from a culture that was not only destructive but illegal ...

“It is quite interesting, however, to see in hindsight that the trauma described by Jamie Paiva and experienced by both siblings resulted in sister Jamie ultimately pursuing a significant career in nursing and brother Michael pursuing the ‘dark web,’”



Arthur Paiva was in court during his 2007 trial. He was a security guard convicted in the rape and murder of Hope College student Janet Chandler. He died in prison four years ago. *MLive.com files*



Janet Chandler was murdered in 1979. Michael Paiva, who was sentenced to prison last week on drug charges, is the son of one of her killers.

Mitchell wrote.

“Interesting or not, that is precisely and tragically what happened. Unfortunately, people can react to trauma in different ways.”

He said his client, “bright and personable,” can lead a productive life.

His sister said the siblings “endured years of heartbreak, mental and emotional distress from our father being convicted of unimaginable crimes in 2007. ... To be told that your father, the person you adore most in the entire world, partook in the kidnapping, rape and murder of a young woman in 1979 is extremely traumatic.”

Their father, who died in prison four years ago, was one of six Wackenhut Corp. security guards convicted of killing Chandler, who worked at the Blue Mill Inn in Holland. The guards were staying there while protecting a Chemtron plant during a bitter strike.

Chandler was abducted, raped and strangled. Her body was left near South Haven in the wooded median of I-196.

When the strike ended, with the killing unsolved, the security guards returned to their homes, scattered across the country. Arthur Paiva lived in Muskegon.

In the son's case, the government said sentencing guidelines of a minimum ranging from 37 to 46 months in prison did not reflect the “sophistication” of his scheme or involvement in distributing common drugs such as cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.

“In total, the defendant placed 29 orders from Silk Road 2.0, buying more than \$11,000 worth of drugs, which he both used and distributed to others,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Justin Present wrote.

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Jamie Paiva, describing the childhood her brother, Michael, also experienced