



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 29, 2012

Kennedy Cousin Denied Parole

Connecticut's state Board of Prisons and Paroles [denied parole](#) last week to [Michael Skakel](#), the Kennedy cousin [who murdered](#) young Martha Moxley in 1975.

Skakel, 52, told the parole board that he only hopes Moxley's killer will be found and that he would not admit he killed the girl despite his conviction in 2002. Skakel is the nephew of Ethel Kennedy, the widow Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, who was killed by an assassin's bullet in 1968.



Skakel murdered Moxley on Halloween Eve in 1975. Moxley had attended a party at the Skakel home in Belle Haven, a typical gated community for the rich in Greenwich. Moxley kissed Skakel's older brother Tommy. Moxley left the party but never came home, explains the account at a [website devoted](#) to the 17-year-old murder victim:

Sometime between 9:30 and 11 p.m. that night, Martha left the Skakel house. Home was only 150 yards away, but Martha never made it. Martha's body was found the next day under a tree in her back yard. Her jeans and underwear had been pulled down, but there was no apparent evidence of sexual assault. She had been beaten so hard with a 6-iron that the shaft had shattered. A jagged piece of it was used to stab her through the neck. Police later learned that the club was part an expensive, Toney Penna, set which had belonged to Tommy and Michael Skakel's mother Anne. Mrs. Skakel had died of cancer two years earlier leaving her husband Rushton to raise their large and reportedly unruly family. Their son, Tommy, then 17, was said to be the last person seen with Martha. According to Martha's diary, she had fended off several past attempts by Skakel to "get to first and second base," said Martha's mother, Dorthy Moxley. The day Martha's battered body was found, Greenwich police did a cursory search of the house with Rushton Skakel's permission, but they never obtained a warrant to do a thorough search. This lack of a warrant in the investigation led to accusations of "special treatment" for the well-connected, influential family.

For all intents and purposes, the case was dropped. In 1983, the website reported, the local newspaper hired a free-lancer to investigate the unsolved crime. The article was so controversial, the [website says](#), the newspaper refused to publish "it until 1991, when a rumor started floating around Greenwich that William Kennedy Smith — then facing a rape charge on which he was acquitted in Palm Beach, Florida — knew something about the murder. This rumor proved to be untrue, but sparked curiosity into Martha's unsolved murder. The article stirred new public interest."

[Mark Fuhrman](#), who became nationally famous for his role in the [O.J. Simpson murder trial](#), showed up on the scene to investigate the crime. That kick-started more interest and ended with Fuhrman's publication, in 1998, of [Murder In Greenwich](#).

A few years later, a grand jury indicted Skakel, then 39, for Moxley's murder. The case began in juvenile court because Skakel was 15 when he murdered Moxley. It was transferred to adult court.



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A jury eventually convicted Skakel of first-degree murder, which drew a sentence of 20 years to life in prison. [Said one juror](#), “We worked very, very hard to find something that would acquit Michael Skakel, we just couldn’t.”

In denying parole, a parole official said the board didn’t think Skakel would reoffend, but that his release is “incompatible with the welfare of society and to the community to which you would return,” the [Hartford Courant reported](#). The convicted murderer comes up for parole five years from now. Skakel will be 57.

The [Courant reported](#) that Skakel broke down — but not when talking about the girl he beat with a golf club before stabbing her in the neck with its broken shaft. “In a calm voice — cracking only when he became tearful while talking about his teenage son — Skakel said he planned to continue to press for his release in April, when hearings on a petition he filed for a writ of habeas corpus are scheduled to start,” the *Courant* reported.

Skakel based the petition — often a convict’s last resort to get a verdict overturned or prison sentence reduced — on claims of ineffective assistance of counsel.

Skakel’s lawyer, Hope C. Seeley, who did not represent him at his trial in 2002 when he was sentenced to 20 years-to-life for Moxley’s murder, said that Skakel was not giving up.

“We will do everything in our power to make sure Michael Skakel will get a new trial,” Seeley said....

“Unfortunately, keeping Michael Skakel incarcerated for one more day compounds the miscarriage of justice that’s gone on in this case,” Seeley said.

Like everyone else in prison, Skakel is innocent. “Skakel told the board that he believed admitting to Moxley’s murder would give him ‘the best chance’ of ‘getting paroled.’” the [Courant reported](#).

“But 10½ years later, I can’t do that,” Skakel said. “If I could ease Mrs. Moxley’s pain in any way, shape or form, I would take responsibility for this crime.”

Photo of Michael Skakel: AP Images



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