

How judge became target of hate

Chicago Tribune (IL) - March 2, 2005

Author: Chicago Tribune.

U.S. District Judge Joan H. Lefkow originally ruled in favor of Matthew Hale and his white supremacist church when a trademark infringement case filed against the World Church of the Creator first came before her in January 2002.

But when an appeals court overturned Lefkow's decision and she tried to enforce the new ruling later that year, Hale became angry and plotted to kill her, a federal jury ruled last year.

The jury of six whites, five blacks and one Hispanic convicted Hale on April 26, 2004, of soliciting his security chief to murder Lefkow.

The security chief, Anthony Evola, was in fact an FBI plant in Hale's church who had secretly recorded their conversations.

On one of those tapes, recorded Dec. 5, 2002, at the church's headquarters in East Peoria, Evola is heard asking Hale, "We gonna exterminate that rat?" in reference to Lefkow.

Evola testified at trial that Hale leaned back in his chair with both hands behind his head and "nodded yes with a smile on his face."

"Whatever you wanna do," Hale then said on the tape. "My position's always been that I, you know, I'm gonna fight within the law. ... If you wish to, ah, do anything yourself, you can, you know?"

Hale then added: "So we're clear?"

"Consider it done," Evola said.

"Good," Hale replied.

The taped conversation took place one day after Hale sent Evola an e-mail asking for Lefkow's home address.

Prosecutors said Hale had targeted Lefkow because she presided over the case in which an Oregon church had sued the World Church of the Creator for trademark infringement.

Hale was on his way to a hearing in Lefkow's courtroom on Jan. 8, 2003, when he was arrested in the Chicago courthouse on charges of soliciting her murder.

Lefkow later rebuffed suggestions to move Hale's trademark case to another judge, saying that doing so would only pass along Hale's hatred to that judge.

After Hale was convicted last year of soliciting Lefkow's killing, her husband, Michael Lefkow, said he was grateful for the help of law enforcement and the support of the judge's colleagues.

"We hope Mr. Hale will repent of his advocacy of evil," Michael Lefkow said.

Memo: SPAWNED IN TRADEMARK CASE

Edition: Chicago Final

Section: News

Page: 21

Index Terms: PROBE ; CHICAGO ; FEDERAL ; OFFICIAL ; FAMILY ; MURDER  
; ISSUE ; DATE ; RELIGION ; GROUP ; ATTEMPT

Record Number: CTR0503020259

Copyright (c) 2005, Chicago Tribune Company. All rights reserved.