

# Woman Forgives Rapist 14 Years Later

## Convicted Rapist Apologizes to Victim After DNA Match



**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, Va., Nov. 29, 2004** -- Anne Heck lived with a painful memory for more than 14 years, never knowing if she would see the day when she might find closure. When the day came, Heck was momentarily paralyzed by the news.



Anne Heck says she had to forgive the man who raped her 14 years ago in order to move on with her own life. (ABC News)

Detective Samson Newsome of the Prince William County Police Department made the long-awaited call.

"We've got him," Newsome says he remembers telling Heck. "We've got the man who assaulted you."

Newsome says he waited awhile for a reply.

"And there was just silence on the other end and a sigh of relief and she said 'I'm OK.'"

Heck, now married with a young daughter, says she will never forget the sunny morning in northern Virginia that changed her life forever. Heck, then 26, had been riding her bicycle to work when a driver asked her for directions.

As Heck looked for a map, the man suddenly attacked her, forced her into the woods and brutally raped her.

When it was over, Heck vowed she wouldn't let the man who invaded her life for just a few minutes ruin it forever.

Heck moved on with her life. She took self-defense classes and counseled other rape victims and eventually found love.

When she got the call that her rapist had been identified 14 years later, she says she was ready to face him and even forgive Terry Leon McDonald.

Heck, whose maiden name was Reeder, looked at McDonald's face as he apologized for raping her after escaping from a West Virginia prison road crew.

"Ms. Reeder, Ms. Anne . . . There's not enough that I can say. I am very sorry," McDonald said in Prince William County Circuit Court a few weeks ago.

Heck says that while McDonald caused her years of pain and fear, she had forgiven him. She says she had to in order to improve her own life.

"I had been sending him thoughts of support and forgiveness and I never said that in my statement, my verbal statement, but he got it," Heck said.

McDonald was identified as her attacker when a DNA sample, taken from Heck after the violent assault, was sent to the FBI's national database. The sample linked the crime to McDonald, who had been serving a 48-year sentence for escape, robbery and the aggravated assault of another woman.

McDonald, 42, was sentenced to two consecutive life terms in prison for raping Heck on July 26, 1990.

Heck read a statement at her attacker's sentencing, breaking into tears at one point.

"Seeing him was not significant to me. I had spent so little time with him. That day was for me. That day was a declaration of my strength and I was ready to let go of anything that was attached to that incident."

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