

FATHER SEEKS DATA ON A LOST DAUGHTER;
AFTER TWO YEARS AN APPEAL IS FILED

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The father of Maura Murray, the Massachusetts woman who vanished on a rural New Hampshire roadside almost two years ago, will file an appeal with the New Hampshire Supreme Court in an effort to get case records that could help him find his daughter, his lawyer said.

Last week, a Superior Court judge denied Frederick Murray access to the records, saying releasing them may impede the probe.

But the lawyer, Timothy Ervin of Chelmsford, argued that the information falls under the state's right-to-know law and should be disclosed.

"They can't just, with a broad stroke, say everything's exempt," Ervin said. "This is a missing person's case. It's not a criminal investigation."

Murray had sued a number of agencies, including the attorney general's office and the State Police, after he was denied accident reports, an inventory of items taken from her car, and a copy of his daughter's computer hard drive, among other records.

Grafton County Judge Timothy J. Vaughan wrote that "review of the records is not warranted because the evidence proffered confirms that Maura's case is an on-going criminal investigation and because disclosure of the records could interfere with law enforcement proceedings."

But Murray knows his daughter better than anyone, Ervin said, and somewhere in the stacks of 2,500 pages of records may be a phone number, an e-mail address, or a name that gives him a clue.

"We want to add to what the police have done and see if we find something new," Ervin said.

Right now, he said, Murray doesn't even have a complete timeline of events for Feb. 9, 2004, the day Maura Murray, a nursing student at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, disappeared after a minor car accident on Route 112. With the appeal, he said, Murray hopes that the court will release at least some of the documents so Murray and the private investigators he hired can try to figure something out.

Maura Murray's boyfriend does not understand the decision either. "I really don't see why such a request would not be granted," said Army Captain Bill Rausch, 25, now stationed in Lawton, Okla. "If nothing else, we're just asking to be put on the same playing field."

The day Murray disappeared, officials and family members had said she lied to a professor and the campus art gallery where she worked, informing them through e-mails that she needed to return to her hometown of Hanson because of a death in the family.

Driving on the rural highway, she crashed into a snowbank. A witness offered to help Murray, but she declined, and the witness alerted the police. When police arrived, she was gone. She has not been seen or heard from since.

Murray, a former top student and track standout at Whitman- Hanson Regional High School, was described by friends and family as a responsible young woman who was very close to her family, particularly her father. She spent three semesters studying chemical engineering at the US Military Academy at West Point before transferring to UMass.

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