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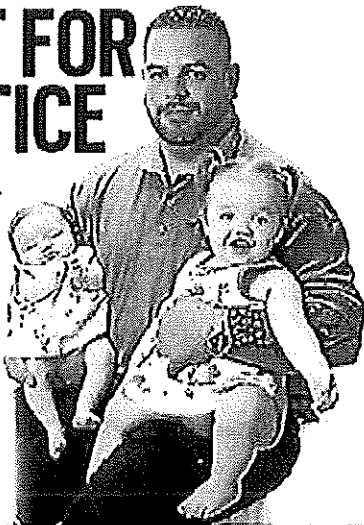
## Family still waiting for justice for Upper Darby's Jimmy Koons

By Tim Logue, Delaware County Daily Times

Friday, April 24, 2015

### WAIT FOR JUSTICE

Upper Darby man's family still seeking closure in murder outside club



Jimmy Koons, father of the two children in this photo, was killed in a club in Upper Darby in 2009. The children are sitting in front of their father's grave at the Upper Darby cemetery. Photo by Tim Logue and David R. Smith.

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Jimmy Koons was laid to rest nearly five and a half years after being beaten to death outside the Oasis Gentlemen's Club in the fall of 2009.

At one point, six people were facing charges in connection with the Upper Darby man's death, including five for murder.

In the years since, charges have been downgraded and dismissed, defendants have died, a mistrial has been declared and continuances have been doled out like beads on Bourbon Street.

Since October 2012, the lone defendant in the case has been former Oasis manager John "Jack" Pettit of Pennsauken, N.J., the man accused of decking Koons on Oct. 16, 2009, during an altercation outside the Essington Avenue strip club.

Prosecutors said the combination of a Pettit punch and Koons' head hitting the concrete rendered the 31-year-old father of two unconscious and fractured his skull in two places. He was placed on life support and died at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania 17 days later.

Pettit was convicted of making false reports, hindering apprehension and conspiring to tamper with evidence in October 2012. He was acquitted of aggravated assault and the jury could not reach a verdict on third degree murder, manslaughter and conspiracy, prompting Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Jeffrey Minehart to declare a mistrial.

Before a new trial was to begin last July, Pettit entered open guilty pleas to third-degree murder and reckless endangerment before Judge Stephen Geroff.

After two continuances — the 22nd and 23rd since Pettit's arrest, according to online court records — sentencing is now scheduled for Monday, but another delay could be in the offing.

Though Pettit waived his right to withdraw his pleas prior to sentencing, his latest attorney, Chuck Peruto Jr., filed motions to withdraw them earlier this week.

"We are aware of the motions, and we're waiting to find out if the judge is going to allow him to withdraw," said Michele Mazza of Drexel Hill, Koons' older sister. "It seems like a last-ditch effort to avoid his sentence. He has hired two attorneys since he made his plea. I guess they have to do something to earn their money."

Voice and email messages left for Peruto and Philadelphia Assistant District Attorney Mark Levenberg were not returned.

"The question is whether it was a knowing and voluntary plea," David Bahuriak, another of Pettit's attorney's, told the Daily Times in December. "I want to review all the discovery, have a sit down with (Pettit) and see if he wants me to go for it and potentially reopen this case."

Attempts to reach Bahuriak were unsuccessful.

Now 54, Pettit has been out on bail since shortly after his initial arrest.

"If I were a defendant and I knew I was guilty of something, I'd like to think I would own up to my mistake and what I've done and accept the consequences," Mazza said. "That's not what he's done."

Mazza said she and other members of her family have submitted victim impact statements and will be in court Monday, whether for a sentencing or 24th continuance. "They may try to say there was a problem with his former lawyer but he understood everything he agreed to," she said. "He's going to be in front of the same judge. If he says he didn't, he's going to look like an ass."

Prosecutors say Koons and his friend George Foreacre were forcibly removed by Oasis bouncers as they were having drinks and taking in Game 2 of the 2009 National League Championship Series between the Phillies and Dodgers. They were allegedly attacked again in the parking lot by the same collection of employees and the club's owner, Robert Laflar Jr.

It was during the second altercation that Koons, a driver for Accurate Recycling in Lansdowne, suffered his fatal injuries and Foreacre four broken vertebrae.

Laflar also had been facing a third-degree murder charge when he died of a drug overdose in January 2012.

Koons is survived by two daughters, Isabella Marie, 9 and Jamie Lynn, 8.

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