

To Whom It May Concern,

I am appreciative of the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of myself and my family. My name is Mac Holcomb and I am the son of Robert Holcomb, who was murdered by Mr. Castonguay on November 21st, 1977. My father Bob was an amazing person. A United States Marine and veteran of two tours in Vietnam, he returned home in 1970 after the war to marry, start a family and settle down in his childhood home of Plainville. Plainville is a small working-class town with rich traditions and a caring, welcoming community of people, and these are attributes my father shared. He was active in the community at Our Lady Of Mercy Church as well as the local karate gym. He worked at times with his brother Bill for the Holcomb Tree Service, a local service company in the Plainville community, working alongside his brother, nephews, and brothers-in-law. Most significantly, he joined the Plainville Police force as a patrol officer. He had a deep commitment to civic service and a heart for protecting his family and community. He loved police work and was excellent at it, earning the respect of the community which he served. He was by any measure an outstanding citizen, loving brother and uncle to our large Holcomb family, and loving husband and father to my mother and me. My many cousins still speak with such love and joy about their experiences with Uncle Bob, and I know that he was a positive influence and role model for many who knew him. As for me, he was the kind of warm, gentle and loving father that any son would wish for. I have one vivid memory of him returning from night shift on the police force with a box of donuts, which he hid and sent me on a treasure hunt for them before we all sat down to share them for breakfast. I loved and admired him the way a son should toward his father in every way.

This brief memory I've just described is actually the only surviving memory I have of my father. The actions of Mr. Castonguay on that night in 1977, just one month prior to my fourth birthday, not only took my father's life but forever deprived me of growing up knowing my dad. When someone is murdered, the ripple effects on the lives of all those who knew the person are amazingly far spread and resounding. Everyone who ever knew Bob Holcomb, the vast community of family, colleagues, friends and townspeople whom he had served, suffered the loss. As for me and my mother, losing him shattered our lives. Not long after dad was killed, we moved away to Rhode Island. I think my mother just needed to escape our home, community, and the life that so reminded both of us of dad. I remember the time we spent in Rhode Island as the saddest, loneliest time of my life. It is devastating to see one's mother fall apart, broken and suffering, with no one to share life with but me, a young child. For all the people we met in our new community, we had no real relationships, no one to truly share in our lives. Everything that had been the hallmarks of our lives; family, community, relationship; it just disappeared entirely from us.

Back home in Plainville, I'm told that the community there reeled from Bob's loss as well. Dad was, and remains, the only officer on the Plainville force ever to lose his life in the line of duty. The community rallied in support of my family in many ways. One of the most visible ways was renaming the street on which Plainville High School is located Robert Holcomb Way. Behind the scenes and within the police department and local government, countless individuals did much to support and care for the Holcomb family during this time. The support of the broader community was amazing. I still have literally hundreds of letters sent to my mother, most from people we'd never even met. One letter I recall was from an elderly woman who read about our family in the newspaper. She sent a \$5 bill, with a note that my mother should use the money to help give me a good Christmas. I personally find these letters devastatingly difficult to read, and although I've had them for many years, many of them still go unread by me all these years later.

I am eternally thankful for God's Grace to my family during this time. It is only by His mercy that our family, mom and I, managed to turn life around. Mom remarried a few years later, a wonderful, loving man who is in every respect my father now. All-together I have five siblings, and I am so blessed to be a part of a large, loving family. When I think about the wreck our lives had become, about the loneliness and loss that marked our existence, I realize that it truly a miracle that we have become the family we are today.

The town of Plainville has continued over the years to honor my father's memory and legacy. In many ways large and small, the community there has continued to support me and the entire Holcomb family, and to ensure that my dad's legacy of service lives on. Although I haven't lived in Plainville since I was a young child, I still feel at home there. Most of what I know about my dad now has been told to me by others who knew him better. I am very grateful for the stories of his life I've heard from so many, as these are my own lasting legacy of my father. While I have some of his "stuff" (war medals, police badges, the photo of his name on the National Police Officer's Memorial), it is the memories of his great life, his love and service to others, that I truly carry with me.

Which brings me to today and this hearing. I am truly sorry for the circumstances that led to this day, but the full responsibility and guilt for them lies with Mr. Castonguay. He killed my father. He murdered him in cold blood and with malice. My father, with his two tours in combat, didn't lose his life on the field of battle. His life was taken because of the actions of Mr. Castonguay, actions which are forever irreversible and which have a lasting impact on me and so many others. Because of Mr. Castonguay's actions, I was forced to grow up without a father, my mother without a husband. I have no idea what was Mr. Castonguay's motivation on that night in November 1977, nor do I know anything about the kind of person Mr. Castonguay was, then or now. I do not care. He killed my father. This can never be changed. He took a life. He should pay with his

own. I realize he has spent many years in prison and now is an old man. I hope he realizes that because of him, growing old is an experience my father will never have. My father was taken from me at 27 years old, in the prime of his youth and the start of his adult life, the very beginnings of his marriage and parenthood. Before I really ever got to know my dad, Mr. Castonguay killed him.

I spoke earlier of the ripple effect of my father's death in the larger community. Every year in Plainville, local officers and a few family members gather graveside to remember my dad. In a small, personal ceremony, a few of those who served with him speak briefly. They pass around a cup of coffee which they share and then pour over the gravesite. Anyone familiar with local law enforcement knows the significance of officers sharing a cup of coffee, a real and visible sign of the fraternity shared among these individuals who put their lives on the line, together, to serve their communities. I've noticed over the years that many of the officers who attend this ceremony now are young. They never served with my dad, yet still attend out of respect for a fallen comrade. I have such love and respect for these men and women and for the work they do.

What a tremendous disrespect it would be to them if you now allow Mr. Castonguay to go free. What a disrespect to every individual who serves in law enforcement, that a cop killer should be allowed to live freely in the community. I truly cannot imagine how they could continue to gather in the same way, every year graveside, if my dad's killer were walking free. I don't know how the Holcomb family, who for so long has been indebted to the efforts and supports of the justice system, could continue on knowing such a great injustice had taken place. For myself, I don't know how I could reconcile myself with the fact that this man, whose callous deadly actions forever changed my life and robbed me of my father, walks free. Truly I am amazed that parole is even considered for Mr. Castonguay. And for what? Because he has served his time? What time is that? How many years does this parole board consider to be satisfactory recompense for his actions? Did Mr. Castonguay consider the lasting, forever impact of his actions on the night he *chose* to kill my father? I think not. Mr. Castonguay murdered a man because he was inconvenienced in the course of a criminal activity. For this he should remain in custody for the remainder of his life.

Thank you for allowing my words to be heard at this hearing. I continue to have respect and faith in the institutions of justice which you represent today, and I trust that you will do what is right in this case by denying parole. I thank you in advance for your actions, which will speak volumes to all those who loved Robert Holcomb.

Sincerely,  
Mac Holcomb