

CALIFORNIA

Lisker denied bail while murder case is appealed

By Scott Glover

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A San Fernando Valley man who has amassed compelling evidence that he was wrongfully convicted of killing his mother more than two decades ago was denied bail Friday by a federal judge.

Bruce Lisker's unusual request to be released from prison while he appeals his conviction was denied by U.S. District Judge Virginia A. Phillips, who last year found there was "essentially no evidence" that Lisker is guilty of the 1983 beating and stabbing death of his mother.

Phillips rejected the bail request, in part, because Lisker's appeal is also pending before the California Supreme Court. The judge also found unpersuasive his legal arguments for being freed before his case is resolved in either state or federal court.

William Genego, one of Lisker's attorneys, said he understood the judge's ruling, given the highly unusual nature of the request.

"We're obviously disappointed," Genego said, "but also encouraged by the seriousness with which the court has considered the request."

Lisker was convicted of the March 10, 1983, slaying of his mother, Dorka, who was beaten and stabbed in her Sherman Oaks home. Lisker told police he came home to find his 66-year-old adoptive mother near death in the entry hall of the home and called paramedics.

Police were immediately suspicious of the frizzy-haired 17-year-old, who had a history of drug abuse and of arguing with his mother.

After his conviction, Lisker was sentenced to 16 years to life in prison. In 2003, the state Supreme Court rejected his appeal. Since then, a Los Angeles Police Department sergeant and Times reporters have uncovered new evidence suggesting Lisker's innocence.

The new evidence persuaded Phillips that Lisker had demonstrated his probable innocence and should be allowed to proceed with his case in federal court, despite having missed a filing deadline years earlier.

But Lisker's case was put on hold in federal court because the new evidence had not been presented in state court, as the law requires. The case has been awaiting action in the state high court since February.
