

July 20, 2022

Chanda's Victim Impact Statement

I'd like to acknowledge the court and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I do not have the words to accurately express what my daughter and family have been through over this last year, at the hands of Sam Rich. So, I will do my best with the limited vocabulary of the English language.

I will never forget the most terrifying moment of my life. It came at 3am on August 13, 2021. The ringing of my phone woke me from a deep sleep. It was Christie Warner. My heart dropped instantly; I knew something was terribly wrong. I answered and heard the words no parent is ever prepared to hear; "Gracie has been shot in the head. She just left in the ambulance. She said Sam Rich shot her." The next few moments are a blur. I remember thinking that I didn't know my family could move so fast. Once in the car, I realized I had no idea where they were taking her. I finally thought to call Bedford County dispatch, who informed me she was life-flighted to Vanderbilt. They couldn't give me any information on her condition. I called Vanderbilt, who directed me where to go, but, again, couldn't give me any word on her condition. The drive there, while only an hour, felt like an eternity. When we arrived, due to covid restrictions, only one family member could enter. I was taken to a conference room on the 10th floor and left alone to wait some more. No one that I had come in contact with would give me any information about my daughter. After another 30-minute wait, I met with a TBI agent and gave them what little information I had regarding my daughter, Will Warner and Sam Rich. I'd never met Sam before, and from what I did know, I never would have expected him to be around Gracie or Will willingly. I'd only been told he was bad news & dangerous. Then I was alone again, still no word on my daughter's condition. There is no way to explain the fear, anxiety, and jumble of emotions I felt there, alone, left to my imagination. I was in that conference room for nearly 2 hours, when finally, several doctors appeared. They informed me that Gracie was in critical condition. She had lost a lot of blood and several transfusions were required. She had surgery to clamp her left carotid artery as it was severed by the bullet. It was a waiting game to see if it would cause a clot in her brain or cause a stroke. The floor of her eye socket was shattered, and she may require surgery to save her eye. All her nasal bones, sinuses and some nerves were destroyed. There may be more damage, but we would have to wait to find out. The next 48 hours would determine if my daughter would live or die.

Now I'm not sure if it was just the emotional overload of the situation or just the sheer helplessness I felt, but something snapped inside of me when I heard those last words. I burst into laughter. I told those doctors that they had no idea who they were dealing with, and that my Gracie would NOT die. She's the most tenacious fighter that I've ever met, and there's no way she would allow this to be the end of her story. As scared as I was, I knew the words I spoke were true. Now, can I please see my baby?

Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw. There lie my child with tubes running to and from everywhere on her tiny little body. She was covered in so much blood that I couldn't recognize her. Her hair and face were completely covered. And the smell, dear God, was overwhelming. She smelled like rotten hamburger meat. I had to deliberately fight the urge to vomit just to get close enough to touch her.

Once I reached her, I grabbed her hand and said "baby, mama's here." She opened her eyes but couldn't speak due to the ventilator tube down her throat, but you could tell that she was screaming. I could make out MOM, but not much else. She was so upset that the nurse had to sedate her to calm her down, and this cycle repeated for the next hour. Then they asked me to leave my baby all alone once

again. That was the hardest moment of my life. How could I possibly leave her again? It just didn't seem fair.

The next few hours of just waiting, wondering, worrying. Nothing made sense. How did this happen? Will she recover, or is that just wishful thinking? Then all of us realizing that Will was missing. The incredible amount of worrying about his safety but knowing without a doubt something horrible had to have happened to him, or else he would be at Gracie's side. We all knew that nothing short of death would have kept him from her.

After several hours, I was allowed to see her again. She was still on the ventilator to breath, but she was calm enough that she didn't have to be sedated in my presence. I gave her a pen and piece of paper. The very first thing she wrote down was "I think he killed Will." She knew in her heart, and just seeing Sam alone in Will's house was so wrong, that there was no way that Will could be alive. Then she wrote down what happened that night, and clearly stated Sam just appeared in the bedroom doorway and spoke to her. He asked her why she was crying, and in that same moment, pulled a gun from behind his back and shot her. He stood over her for a moment and watched. I thank God every day that she had the sense to play dead. I think that saved her life. While it may be that he just simply ran out of bullets. His revolver only held 5. He shot Will 4 times, and that meant only one left to use on Gracie. If he thought she was still alive, he may have used even more crude methods to ensure he didn't leave any witnesses.

We knew after day 2 that Gracie would survive, but it wouldn't be an easy recovery. She couldn't eat solid foods for over a month and relied on a feeding tube, which is very uncomfortable and inconvenient. She's had multiple surgeries on her carotid artery and vocal cords. She must have a very complicated surgery to reroute and reconnect nerves in her neck to allow for easier swallowing. Her inability to swallow effectively has led to numerous bouts of aspiration pneumonia, several resulting in hospitalization. There are constant follow-up appointments, and she will be under doctors' care for the rest of her life. A blood clot has formed in her brain, and the effect of which may be as simple as going away on its own, all the way to the other end of the spectrum and killing her. She is at a much higher risk of a stroke than normal people. And that's just a part of the physical injuries.

I think the emotional damage she, and the rest of the family have suffered is far worse than the physical. Before this happened, Gracie never had a care in the world. There was nothing she wouldn't face head on and know for a fact that she would succeed. She was a very happy girl, with a very bright future.

Losing Will the way she did has tormented her. She suffers from survivors' guilt, which if you've never experienced, can't be put into adequate words. She has terrible anxiety and PTSD. She awakens most nights with the most blood curdling screams. She's scared to leave the house alone. Has terrible anxiety attacks that leave her frozen in fear. Even everyday things that the rest of us take for granted cause great fear in her. For example, one night while she was suffering from another bout of pneumonia, I went to take her temperature while she was asleep. I thought nothing of it, but it was one of those new type thermometers that you point at the forehead and pull a trigger type button to activate. She awoke while I was doing this and rolled out of the bed screaming and covering her head. I instantly realized what I had done, and how it must have appeared to her, like someone was aiming and shooting at her.

None of our lives have been the same since August 13, 2021. I've had to put my whole life on hold to take care of her. I do so happily but should never have had to in the first place. The truth is that Sam Rich should have still been in prison and unable to commit these terrible crimes to begin with, but he

was paroled not long at all before he murdered Will, and thought he murdered Gracie. Obviously, prison did not reform him the first time around.

And it doesn't seem like he's doing much reflecting on what he's done during his time in jail for these crimes. On several occasions, Bobby Simmons from the TBI, has informed us that Sam is actively seeking out someone to finish what he started and kill Gracie. Causing our family to take drastic actions to hide her from anyone that may take him up on his offer. She asks me all the time if she will have to look over her shoulder for the rest of her life, and the truth is, she will. How is that fair? She's already suffered so much. And he's not even being punished for continually trying to have her murdered. As a parent, this is the hardest part, knowing I would do anything to protect her, and knowing that I can't. How will my daughter ever truly begin to heal if this is never behind her?

I am here today to beg this court to pass down the maximum sentence possible. Sam Rich should never be given the chance to do this to another person or another family. He has not shown one ounce of remorse, and I have no doubt he wouldn't hesitate to kill another person or seek out my daughter to ensure he kills her this time. He doesn't deserve another chance at freedom or parole. He's already proven he won't be reformed. Please imprison him for as long as the law allows.

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today.