

Both families testify at Frese sentence hearing

By SEAN COCKERHAM
Staff Writer

A two-day sentencing hearing began Friday to determine whether 22-year-old George Frese will spend the rest of his life in prison for the kicking murder of teen-ager John Hartman.

"I believe he will be judged in heaven," said Hartman's brother, Robert Kelly. "But here on Earth I don't see how you can let someone who's done a crime like that out to do it again."

Frese, along with three other Fairbanks men, was convicted of robbing, sexually assaulting and murdering the 15-year-old Hartman on the corner of Ninth Avenue and Barnette Street on October 1997.

On Monday Fairbanks Superior Court Judge Niesje Steinkruger will pronounce Frese's sentence, the first of the sentences to be handed down for the Hartman slaying. She will also sentence Frese for the assault and robbery of Franklin Dayton earlier that same evening.

Friday was the day for both Hartman and Frese's relatives to tell the judge how they feel about Frese and the crime.

"You beat, murdered, robbed and sexually assaulted my stepson," said Michael Probert. "Your act was so sick it could not have been the act of a human, it was the act of a rabid dog."

Probert said that, since the death penalty is not allowed in Alaska, Frese should be locked up for life.

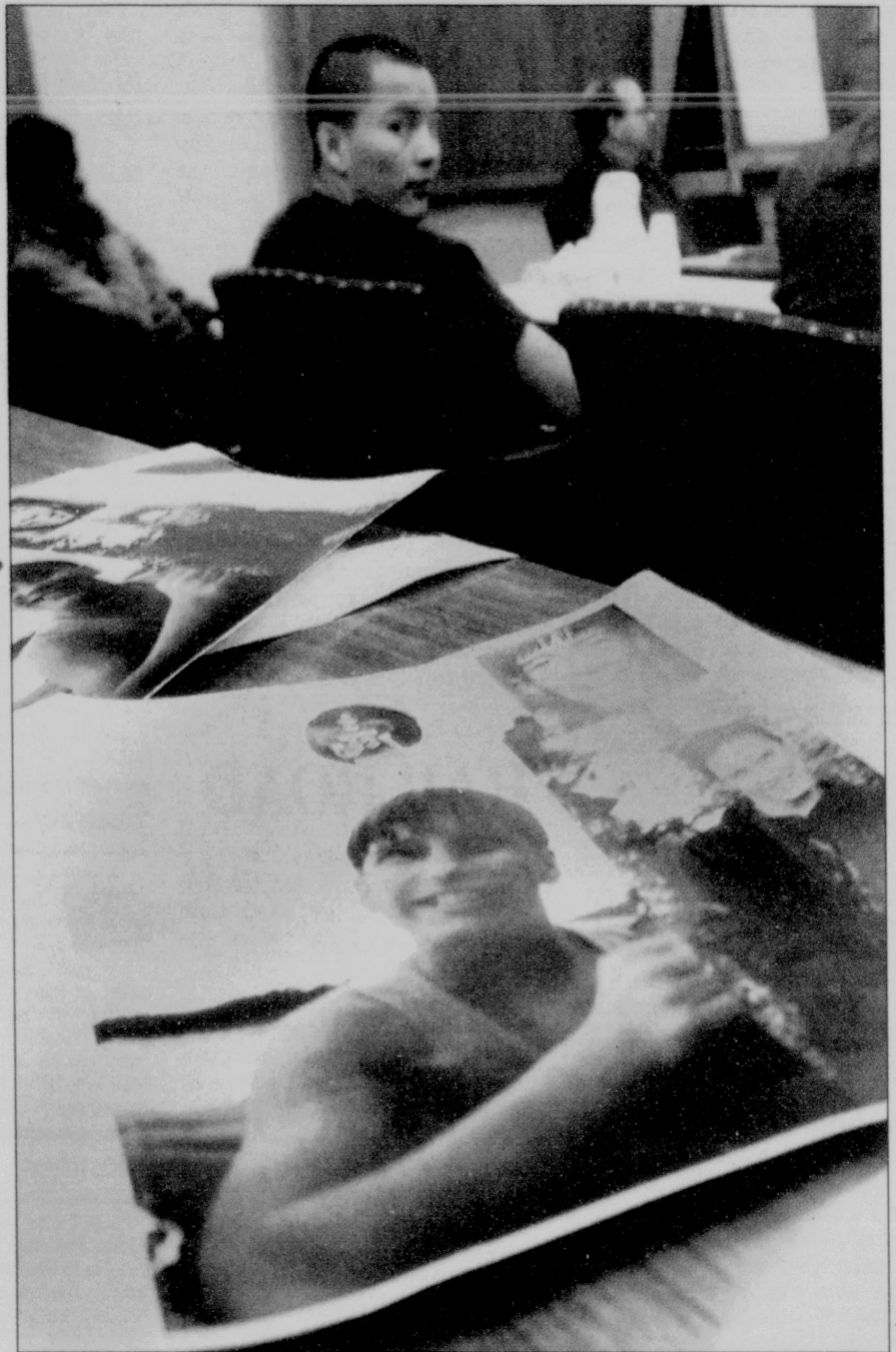
But Frese's relatives described him as a helpful young man who was always a good father to his 5-year-old daughter, Tiliisia. "He's a kind person, he's a kind person to animals and children," said Louise Sisto, grandmother of Frese's child.

Frese's mother, Veronica, said her son is constantly going to the library in jail and she is trying to scrape together money so Frese can take correspondence courses to distract him from prison reality.

"His attitude has become defeated," she said. "Like he wouldn't have any reason to live."

Frese's supporters continued to maintain that Frese is innocent of the Hartman murder.

See FRESE, Page B-2



Eric Engman/News-Miner

HEARING—Pictures of John Hartman were brought in by friends and family during a pre-sentencing hearing of George Frese (background) Friday. Frese is one of the men convicted in the 1997 murder of Hartman.

FRESE

Continued from Page B-1

"Just try to give him all leniency you could because I really believe there is a little bit more involved here than people think," said his father, Dale Frese.

The crowded courtroom was tense, and the judge had to chide those present for muttering during the hearing. There were four law enforcement officers standing by in case of trouble.

As Frese left the courtroom after the hearing, Hartman supporters displayed pictures of the slain teen-ager, and taunted Frese, saying "bye, George."

A little girl in the back of the courtroom was encouraged to respond. "Bye, bye daddy," said Frese's 5-year-old daughter. "I love you."

The hour-and-a-half hearing had ended with the prosecutor and the defense attorney speaking about the possible aggravating factors that would influence the sentence.

"(Hartman) is overpowered, he's outnumbered, he's taken down much like wolves take down a larger animal," said the prosecutor, Assistant District Attorney Jeff O'Bryant.