



JUDICIARY OF  
ENGLAND AND WALES

**R**  
**-V-**  
**IAIN LAWRENCE**

**LEICESTER CROWN COURT**

**26 JUNE 2013**

**SENTENCING REMARKS OF MR JUSTICE LEGGATT**

You have been found guilty by the jury of murder. On 6 October 2012 – 2 days before the decree nisi for your divorce – you murdered your wife, Sally, by deliberately crashing your car in which she was a passenger into a tree.

The way in which you killed Sally was both brutal and carefully planned. You must have singled out the spot on the Gartree Road, a road you knew well, as a place that suited your purpose: a large tree with clear ground in front of it on a gentle bend in the road. You chose a weekend when your son William was away on a school trip. Several journeys before the final one, you disabled the passenger air bag in preparation for what you planned to do. You chose the time on that Saturday evening when you knew that Sally would be leaving the house to get into her car to drive to Derby, and you lay in wait for her.

How you got Sally into your car, and whether by trickery or force, no one but you can know. I suspect it was a combination of the two. However you achieved it, she cannot have imagined what you were planning to do next.

The evidence at this trial has clearly established how you killed Sally. As you approached the spot which was your target, you reached across and unclipped her seatbelt. Then you steered the car at the tree and drove straight into it at over 50 mph. You aimed so that the passenger's side of the car struck the tree and bore the full brunt of the collision. You had the protection of an air bag and seatbelt – protection you had made sure that Sally did not have. And to protect yourself further, you got into the brace position before the crash. It was

not chance, but the result of your careful and cold-blooded planning, that you came away from the collision with a few bruises, while Sally died of catastrophic injuries.

You thought that the crash would be seen as a tragic accident and that you would get away with murder. You would indeed have done so if it had not been for the careful and thorough investigation carried out by the police.

As we have heard from the statement that has been read out just now in court, the consequences of what you did have been devastating. Not only for Sally whose life you ended so cruelly, but for her daughters and sister and other members of her family and people who were close to her. Above all for your own young son whom you have robbed of his mother, and who will have to live his life in the knowledge that she was murdered by his own father.

The sentence for murder is fixed by law. It is a life sentence. I must also set the minimum term: in other words, the length of time you must stay in prison before you can even be considered for release. It is important to understand that at the end of the minimum term, you will not automatically be released: that will only happen if and when the Parole Board decides that it is safe to allow your release from prison. If and when you are released it will be on licence, and your life sentence will not then come to an end. You will have to obey the conditions of your licence for the rest of your life – otherwise you may be recalled to prison.

The law requires me to set the minimum term by first deciding the appropriate starting point, following rules laid down by Act of Parliament. I must then increase the minimum term upwards from that starting point to take account of any factors which make your offence worse, or downwards to take account of any factors which lessen your offence.

In choosing the starting point, I must consider whether your crime falls within the category of cases specified by Parliament where the seriousness of the offence is particularly high. Cases which would normally fall within this category include a murder done for gain.

It is clear to me from the evidence that you had two motives for murdering Sally. One was that you could not and would not accept that your marriage was over and were determined that Sally would never leave you. Your other motive was financial gain. You refused to accept that Sally should have the money from the house, although you had been advised that it was her due. In a text message Sally sent to her daughter the night before she died – and after you had told her that you wanted half the house and by rights should have more, as well as keeping all your other assets – Sally said: “I know money isn’t everything, but to him it is”. You chose to murder Sally rather than lose her and face what you felt was the humiliation of

divorce; but also, and just as importantly for you, to prevent her from getting the money from the house, and to keep the house for yourself.

The fact that you were motivated partly by financial gain is therefore one factor which makes your crime all the more serious. The law also punishes more severely crimes which involve the use of a weapon, particularly if the weapon is taken to the scene with the intention that it will be used. In this case you did not arm yourself with a gun or a knife. But in disabling the passenger airbag and unclipping Sally's seatbelt before crashing your car into the tree, you made your car into a machine as lethal as any weapon, and drove it to the scene with the intention of using it to kill.

A third factor which makes your crime all the more serious is the high degree of planning and premeditation that went into it. The way in which you killed Sally involved a plan that you must have plotted out over days, if not weeks, in all its malevolent detail, and which you then executed with ruthless efficiency.

Despite these factors, the view I take is that this case falls short of the category where the seriousness of the offence is particularly high even for cases of murder – but only just. That means that the appropriate starting point in setting the minimum term is 15 years; but I must increase its length very substantially beyond that to reflect the seriousness of your offence and the factors I have mentioned.

The only factor in your favour is that you are previously of good character – though that can count for little where the crime you have committed is as vile as this.

I also take account of your age – which is 53 – and how much of the rest of your life you are likely to have to spend in prison. Had I not made allowance for that, the minimum term would have been higher.

I have weighed up all these factors. My conclusion is that the minimum term which you must spend in prison before you can be considered for release on licence is a term of 24 years. The 257 days you have already spent in prison will be deducted from that.

The result is that the sentence I pass is a life sentence, and you must stay in prison for at least the next 24 years (less 257 days).