

Poison Drummer Rikki Rockett Cleared Of Rape – He Was 2,000 Miles From Crime Scene

Poison has been a popular rock band since its debut album in 1986. Their top hit, *Every Rose Has Its Thorn*, was the #1 record in the country for three weeks beginning on Christmas Eve 1988. Founded by drummer Rikki Rockett and vocalist Bret Michaels, Poison continues to record and play live dates. The band is currently comprised of its four original members, and their most recent album – *Poison 'd!* – was released in June 2007. The group has enough name recognition that the album debuted at #32 on Billboard's best selling album chart.



Rikki Rockett

On the morning of March 24, 2008 the band returned to the United States after playing at a heavy metal show in New Zealand – Rock2Wellington. When Rockett went through customs at Los Angeles International Airport a check of his name alerted officers that he was wanted on a felony fugitive sexual assault warrant from Mississippi. The warrant was for the September 2007 “strong arm rape” of a woman in Choctaw, Mississippi. Rockett was arrested by Los Angeles Police Department airport security officers. Across the country the media had a field day playing up the story of the aging rocker rapist.

After spending the night at the Los Angeles County Jail, the 46-year-old Rockett, whose real name is Richard Ream, was released on bail. He hired lawyers Barry Tarlow and Mi Kim to defend him against the rape charge – that he insisted he had nothing to do with.

After more than a month of intense investigation Tarlow and Kim had pieced together what actually happened. A man named John Minskoff met the woman at the Silver Star Resort Hotel & Casino in Choctaw, Mississippi. He convinced the woman that he was Rikki Rockett and she left the casino with him, after which they apparently went to a hotel room. She later reported to the local police that rock star Rikki Rockett had raped her.

Rockett's lawyers discovered that Minskoff has a history of picking up women by impersonating a rock star, and has multiple felony convictions for violent crimes and perjury. In a 1996 in-



cident, Minskoff kidnapped a 15-year-old girl in Reno, Nevada after convincing her he was a member of the rock band White Snake.

Tarlow and Kim were also able to prove Rockett's alibi that at the time of the alleged assault, he was almost 2,000 miles away in Los Angeles with his fiancée and several friends while she was trying on wedding dresses. Through travel and phone records the lawyers were also able to establish that Rockett had not been in Mississippi at any time during September 2007.

In early May 2008 Tarlow and Kim informed the Neshoba County District Attorney about the findings of their investigation. The DA's office verified the findings clearing Rockett, and in late May he was informed that they wouldn't seek an indictment for the rape charge. Rockett immediately posted that news on his Myspace.com webpage. However, it wasn't until July 1, 2008 that the DA's office publicly confirmed that the rape charge against Rockett had been dropped. The DA also revealed that the authorities were looking for Minskoff in connection with the alleged sexual assault and his impersonation of Rockett.

Rockett had never been arrested prior to the false rape accusation, and during an interview with the Associated Press he expressed his concern that if he hadn't been absolutely cleared of the charge it could have ruined his reputation: “That is one word you don't want associated with your name. Rape is right up there with murder and child molestation.”

Aware now of how easily an innocent person can instantly have their life turned upside down by being wrongly accused of a heinous crime, Rockett wrote on his Myspace.com webpage, “I look forward to helping other people who have been falsely accused of committing heinous crimes.” Tarlow had worked with Centurion Ministries in the freeing of Clarence Chance and Benny Powell in 1992 after almost 18 years of wrongful imprisonment for murder. After Rockett was told by Tarlow about Centurion Ministries, the United States' oldest innocence project, he wrote on his webpage: “My lawyers, Barry Tarlow and Mi Kim, are helping me seek out organizations like Centurion Ministries to help if I can.

This wonderful organization works to free innocent people in prison who have done serious time for crimes they did not commit.”

True to his word, on Saturday, June 28, 2008 Rockett held a fund raising party for Centurion Ministries at the Off Broadway Bistro in Valencia, California. The next day Rockett wrote on his Myspace.com webpage:

“I couldn't be happier with the benefit party yesterday.

The party was as fun as I pictured it to be, but the surprising thing was how well the charity auction went. We raised several thousand dollars for Centurion Ministries on the auction alone! This money and other silent contributions will go directly to help those who are innocent and do not have the resources to get decent legal help. Many of these people are on death row awaiting execution for a crime they did not commit.

...
This party was simply a kick off to an idea. I hope to do this annually as a benefit while maintaining the spirit of the excitement of a party. After all, we are the lucky ones with the freedom. Celebrate it everyday.”

In addition to being a member of Poison, Rockett is also a successful entrepreneur. He founded and is president of Rockett Drum Works, a custom drum manufacturer headquartered in Woodland Hills, California. On July 3 in Salt Lake City, Poison began its forty city Live, Raw & Uncut Summer Tour 2008.

Choctaw was also in the national news in 2002 after it was discovered that three people had been convicted of the murder of a child that had never been conceived. Although it is medically impossible for the alleged mother to have gotten pregnant, and there is no evidence the child ever existed, as of July 2008 only one of those three people, Medell Banks Jr., has had their conviction overturned. See, “Medell Banks Jr.' Conviction for Killing A Non-Existent Child Is Thrown Out As A “Manifest Injustice,”” *Justice: Denied*, Vol. 2, Issue 9.

Note: According to mapquest.com, Los Angeles is 1,950 miles from Choctaw, Mississippi.

Sources:

Poison's Rikki Rockett Arrested on Rape Warrant, *TMZ.com*, March 28, 2008.
Rape charge dropped against poison drummer, By Chris Talbot (AP writer), *USA Today*, July 1, 2008.
Rockett wants to help wrongly convicted prisoners, *PR-Inside.com*, May 23, 2008.
Rikki Rockett's webpage on Myspace.com, <http://www.myspace.com/rikkirockett>
Email from Lisa Kurtz, Centurion Ministries Office Administrator to Hans Sherer, July 10, 2008.

