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(Indicate page, name of newspaper, city and state.)

Date: November 4, 1996  
 Edition: The Journal-Patriot,  
 North Wilkesboro, NC

Title: "Bright trial underway"

7A-CE-75960  
 Character: 88A-CE-75569 (Top Ten  
 or Fugitive)  
 Classification:  
 Submitting Office: Charlotte

Indexing:

## *Jury selection starts today*

# Bright trial underway

By ADAM HATCH

The trial of Ricky Allen Bright, the man who created statewide controversy after he was released from prison early, only to be accused of molesting another child, will begin today in Wilkes Superior Court.

Bright, a former Wilkes resident, is accused of raping a 9-year-old Hays girl after taking her from her parent's home and driving her to West Virginia where the prosecution believes the acts were committed.

Bright is charged with first-degree burglary, first-degree kidnapping, first-degree statu-

tory rape and three counts of first-degree sexual offense with a minor.

District Attorney Randy Lyons said jury selection should begin by 2 p.m. Monday and he expects the selection process to take most of the day.

Bright will be represented by Wilkesboro attorney William F. Brooks.

Brooks sought to have the case moved from Wilkes County due to excessive publicity, but a judge refused his request.

Lyons said he expects the trial to last less than a week.

In January 1994, the N.C. pa-

role commission released Bright after he served 15 years of a life plus 15 year sentence for the kidnapping and attempted rape of a seven-year-old girl from a Gastonia bowling alley.

The Wilkes Sheriff's Department believes that on Oct. 8, 1995, Bright abducted the nine-year-old Hays girl, beat her, drove her to West Virginia, raped her and then released her on a road near her home.

The prosecution believes forensic evidence found on the girl's clothes such as blood, hair,  
 (Continued On Page 2)

# Bright

(Continued From Page 1)

saliva and semen match Bright's DNA.

Bright became the subject of a nine state manhunt after he was placed on the FBI's 10 most wanted list.

Reports of sightings reached as far north as Michigan.

Bright was able to elude police for several months until he was captured in Knoxville, Tenn. on the morning of Jan. 8.

Bright was featured on the shows *America's Most Wanted* and *Unsolved Mysteries*. Both shows received many calls from concerned viewers. He was caught by an anonymous informer who had seen him on the show and saw him the next day playing drums in a country music band in Knoxville, Tenn.

Bright is originally from Charleston, W.Va., but had been living on DAV Road in Hays after being released from the N.C. Department of Corrections facility in North Wilkesboro.

Governor Jim Hunt's office offered a \$10,000 reward for the capture of Bright.

In the wake of extensive publicity about the case, Hunt and others have criticized the N.C. Parole Commission for releasing Bright too early.

Hunt, in December, said, "I'm stunned that the parole commission would parole a vicious criminal like Bright. Sex offenders should stay in prison for as long as the law allows."

In order to lessen his own prison time, Bright entered a program called MAPP.

MAPP is a three way agreement between the inmate, the prison system and the parole commission that offers a release if the prisoner complies with all the requirements of the agreement," said Tracy Herring, an officer with the N.C. Department of Probation and Parole.

MAPP requirements could include psychological counseling, entry into drug treatment programs, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and other things designed to return the criminal to society.

All records show that Bright was a model prisoner and parolee.