

Prosecutor unveils Web site to counter bestselling book

ADA, Okla. (AP) _ The Pontotoc County prosecutor criticized for convicting the wrong men in a book by best-selling author John Grisham now is fighting back with a Web site dedicated to exposing what he says are inaccuracies in Grisham's book.

Grisham's book, "The Innocent Man: Murder and Injustice in a Small Town," centers on the conviction and eventual exoneration of Ron Williamson in the 1982 rape and murder of Deborah Sue Carter.

Peterson, who is criticized by Grisham for prosecuting Williamson and co-defendant Dennis Fritz in Carter's murder, says Grisham's book is inaccurate, and he wants people to know that.

On his Web site, www.billpetersondistrictattorney.com, Peterson lays out why he believes the book is factually incorrect in an outline with at least a dozen points.

Peterson meticulously cites page numbers where he suspects errors occurred and disputes conclusions Grisham made in his book, which remains on The New York Times best seller list.

"Mr. Grisham was not very truthful and honest, he was barely scratching the surface," said Peterson, who has been elected to consecutive terms as district attorney since 1980. "I figure I'd put it all on the Web and let people decide for themselves whether I've really got horns and suck people's blood from them. When people read this book, they think it's true, it's John Grisham. I'm just a little old country prosecutor from Ada, Oklahoma."

Grisham's book makes Peterson and investigators look like they're out to get Williamson and Fritz, Peterson said.

The case happened before DNA evidence was available, and circumstantial evidence found at the scene and taken from Williamson and Fritz seem to match up, Peterson said.

DNA evidence later freed both men and linked Glen Gore to the murder. He was convicted in 2006.

"I've tried to conduct myself in an honorable way for 27 years. I was what I was. I was a prosecutor, a passionate prosecutor," Peterson said. "I went after them. I was convinced they killed Debbie Carter. If that was your mother, your sister or your daddy who was killed, you wouldn't want a pansy prosecutor. You would want someone passionate."

A publicist for Grisham's publishing company did not offer comment on the site.

Included on Peterson's Web site is correspondence between Peterson and Grisham that occurred after the book came out last fall. After some exchanges in which Peterson attempts to point out inconsistencies in the book, the author tells Peterson, "I have no desire to re-hash the facts and bicker about who's right and who's wrong. I do not read reviews, fan letters, hate letters, and I will read nothing else from you.

"Save yourself some time. Lose my address and fax number."

Information from:

The Oklahoman: www.newsok.com

On the Net:

District Attorney Bill Peterson: www.billpetersondistrictattorney.com

Author John Grisham: www.randomhouse.com/features/grisham/main.php