Cook released on bond after years in prison

He is scheduled for fourth murder trial in '77 slaying

By Lee Hanovck
East Texas Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

TYLER — Kerry Max Cook has raised the prospect of setting a pace with everything on it Tuesday. He talked about driving a car again as soon as he can replace his 20-year-old driver's license. He wanted to go home to his mother.

He was a free man again Tuesday afternoon after spending most of the last two decades on Texas death row. He was released on bond to await a fourth capital murder trial in the 1977 prolonged slaying of Tyler secretary Linda Jo Edwards.

The release came almost a year to the day after a Texas appeals court overturned his conviction and death sentence.

"It's an out-of-body experience," Mr. Cook told reporters as he emerged from the Smith County Jail, flanked by the lawyer and private investigator who have battled for years to prove his innocence.

"There were a lot of doubts among the family," Mr. Edwards' daughter said Monday. "Now we can begin to move on with our lives and start healing.

The jurisdiction is now awaiting an appeals court decision on whether to overturn Mr. Edwards' conviction and sentence.

In the meantime, Mr. Cook plans to travel to his home state of Arkansas and spend time with his mother, who has always maintained his innocence.

Mr. Edwards' family has been waiting for justice for more than 40 years. They hope this latest development will bring closure to a long and painful chapter in their lives.

The Dallas Morning News staff reporterPlease see JUDGE on Page 14A.
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KEY DATES IN THE KERRY MAX COOK MURDER CASE

- **June 14, 1987** — Tyler, secretary to Jane Edwards, is murdered by her roommate, Mike Coakley. She is stabbed to death and her body is later found in her apartment.
- **July 31, 1990** — Mike Coakley is arrested and charged with murder.
- **January 15, 1991** — Mike Coakley is convicted of murder and sentenced to death.
- **Feb. 22, 1994** — Mike Coakley is executed by lethal injection.

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Kerry Max Cook freed on bond in slaying

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Mr. Cook was arrested in connection with the death of Mr. Nogues. He was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death.

"There were a lot of doubts along the way. Every time the execution line was put in front of me, someone came and put it farther down the road. I'm very grateful. This is very — a long time coming."

— Kerry Max Cook

"Mr. Cook told investigators that he had never been to the prison where his father was incarcerated. He claimed he had never met his father and did not know why he was being held captive."

— Police spokesman

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— Ann Cook, mother of Kerry Max Cook.