

COURT OF APPEALS
The Supreme Court of Ohio

FILED

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CLERK OF COURT
SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

FILED
ROSS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS
CLERK OF COURTS
BY D. HINTON

State of Ohio

Case No. 2018-0656

v.

ENTRY

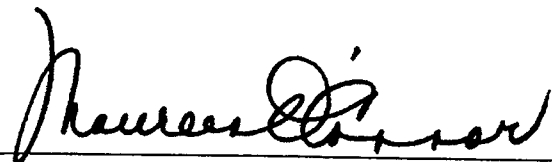
Paul E. Rinehart

Upon consideration of the jurisdictional memoranda filed in this case, the court declines to accept jurisdiction of the appeal pursuant to S.Ct.Prac.R. 7.08(B)(4).

It is further ordered that appellant's motion for relief or order pursuant to Ohio S.Ct. Prac. R. 4.01 is denied.

It is further ordered that appellee's motion to strike motion for relief or order pursuant to Rule 4.01 is denied.

(Ross County Court of Appeals; No. 17CA3606)



Maureen O'Connor
Chief Justice

The Official Case Announcement can be found at <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/ROD/docs/>

Appendix
A

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO
FOURTH APPELLATE DISTRICT
ROSS COUNTY

2018 MAR 29 PM 2:33

STATE OF OHIO,

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

PAUL E. RINEHART,

Defendant-Appellant.

FILED
ROSS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS
Case No. 10-04-00000
TY D. HINTON

DECISION AND
JUDGMENT ENTRY

APPEARANCES:

Paul E. Rinehart, London, Ohio, pro se.

Matthew S. Schmidt, Ross County Prosecuting Attorney, Pamela C. Wells, Ross County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Chillicothe, Ohio, for appellee.

Harsha, J.

{11} Paul E. Rinehart appeals the trial court's denial of his motion to correct an illegal sentence. Rinehart contends that his 2007 sentence is void because the trial court made judicial fact findings in violation of *State v. Foster, infra*.

{12} We reject Rinehart's contention because even if his argument had merit, his sentence would be "voidable," not "void." Therefore he should have made his challenge within the time period governing postconviction petitions or he must demonstrate the existence of facts necessary for the trial court to exercise jurisdiction over the merits of his untimely claim. His petition failed to do either. Consequently, we affirm the judgment of the trial court as modified to reflect the dismissal of his petition.

I. FACTS

{13} After a jury convicted Rinehart in 2007, the trial court sentenced him to a term of life with possibility of parole in 25 years for aggravated murder, three years for

Appendix
B

the gun specification, and three years for tampering with evidence, all sentences to run consecutively for a total of 31 years to life. Rinehart appealed and we affirmed the judgment. *See State v. Rinehart*, 4th Dist. Ross No. 07CA2983, 2008-Ohio-5770.

{14} In 2017 Rinehart filed a Motion to Correct an Illegal Sentence, which contended that the sentences were illegal because they “exceeded the statutorily defined penalties established in R.C. 2929.14(E)(4).” However, his memorandum in support provided no argument or factual basis for this contention. Instead Rinehart argued that his sentence was void because the trial court made judicial fact findings in violation of *State v. Foster*, 109 Ohio St.3d 1, 2006-Ohio-856, 845 N.E.2d 470. The trial court reviewed the sentences imposed, found them to be within the statutory ranges allowed, and overruled Rinehart's motion.

II. ASSIGNMENT OF ERROR

{15} Rinehart assigns the following error for our review:

THE TRIAL COURT ERRORED [SIC] OVERRULING APPELLANT'S MOTION TO CORRECT AN ILLEGAL SENTENCE WHEN THE SENTENCE IS VOID.

III. LAW AND ANALYSIS

A. Standard of Review

{16} Rinehart challenged his felony sentence on the ground that it was void because it violated *Foster* (addressing Sixth Amendment protections), and he sought a new sentence. Courts may recast irregular motions into whatever category they deem necessary to identify and establish the criteria by which they should judge the motion. *State v. Burkes*, 4th Dist. Scioto No. 13CA3582, 2014-Ohio-3311, ¶ 11, citing *State v. Schlee*, 117 Ohio St.3d 153, 2008-Ohio-545, 882 N.E.2d 431, ¶ 12. In *State v. Reynolds*, 79 Ohio St.3d 158, 160, 773 N.E.2d 1131 (1997), the Supreme Court of Ohio

held that a motion styled as a “Motion to Correct or Vacate Sentence” met the definition of a petition for postconviction relief pursuant to R.C. 2953.21(A)(1) because it was “(1) filed subsequent to [the defendant’s] direct appeal, (2) claimed a denial of constitutional rights, (3) sought to render the judgment void, and (4) asked for vacation of the judgment and sentence.” *See also Schlee* at ¶ 12. For purposes of determining the standard of review for his appeal, we deem Rinehart’s motion a postconviction relief petition because it fits within the outline in *Reynolds*.

{¶17} Generally we review decisions granting or denying a postconviction relief petition filed pursuant to R.C. 2953.21 under an abuse of discretion standard. *State v. Gondor*, 112 Ohio St.3d 377, 2006–Ohio–6679, 860 N.E.2d 77, ¶ 58. In *Gondor* the Court recognized that the differences between a direct appeal and an appeal from a postconviction relief petition warranted different appellate standards of review. *Id.* at ¶53-54. The Court stated, “A postconviction claim is not an ordinary appeal: ‘A postconviction proceeding is not an appeal of a criminal conviction, but, rather, a collateral civil attack on the judgment.’ ” *Id.* at ¶ 48, quoting *State v. Steffen*, 70 Ohio St.3d 399, 410, 639 N.E.2d 67 (1994). The holding in *Gondor* appears to broadly apply to all appellate postconviction petition review: “We hold that a trial court’s decision granting or denying a postconviction petition filed pursuant to R.C. 2953.21 should be upheld absent an abuse of discretion; a reviewing court should not overrule the trial court’s finding on a petition for postconviction relief that is supported by competent and credible evidence.” *Id.* at ¶ 58.

{¶18} There is nothing in the language of R.C. 2953.08 or *State v. Marcum*, 146 Ohio St.3d 516, 2016-Ohio-1002, 59 N.E.3d 1231 that extends the standard of review

set forth in R.C. 2953.08 to postconviction relief sentencing challenges brought under R.C. 2953.21, et seq. However, since *Marcum* we have applied the standard of review in R.C. 2953.08(G)(2) to reviews of postconviction relief petitions and other irregular postconviction motions challenging felony sentences even though they are not governed by R.C. 2953.08 and fall outside the context of a direct appeal. See *State v. Pulliam*, 4th Dist. Scioto No. 16CA3759, 2017-Ohio-127, ¶16; *State v. Berecz*, 4th Dist. Washington No. 16CA15, 2017-Ohio-266, ¶11; *State v. Hamilton*, 4th Dist. Hocking No. 16CA17, 2017-Ohio-1294, ¶9; *State v. Brigner*, 4th Dist. Athens No. 17CA3, 2017-Ohio-5538, ¶7; *State v. Craft*, 4th Dist. Vinton No. 16CA704, 2017-Ohio-9359.

{¶19} Other appellate districts have continued to apply an abuse of discretion standard to felony sentencing challenges brought under the postconviction relief statute or have declined to extend the *Marcum* standard of review beyond its statutory scope. See *State v. Berryman*, 2nd Dist. Montgomery No. 26852, 2016-Ohio-3353, ¶13-15 (postconviction felony sentence challenge was reviewed under an abuse of discretion standard); *State v. Jones*, 10th Dist. Franklin Nos. 17AP-25 to 17AP-27, 17AP-29, 2017-Ohio-5533, ¶5 (motion to correct felony sentence as contrary to law was treated as a petition for postconviction relief and appellate court applied an abuse of discretion standard of review); *State v. Lawwill*, 12th Dist. Warren No. CA2017-03-027, 2017-Ohio-8432, ¶16 (motion to correct an illegal felony sentence treated as a postconviction relief petition and reviewed under the abuse of discretion standard); *State v. Hale*, 8th Dist. Cuyahoga No. 103654, 2016-Ohio-5837, ¶10 (postconviction relief petition that included felony sentencing challenge among other issues was reviewed under abuse of discretion standard); *State v. Thompson*, 3rd Dist. Crawford Nos. 3-16-01,3-16-12,

2016-Ohio-8401, ¶ 11, fn. 5 (declining to extend *Marcum* standard of review to appellate review of trial court's judicial release decision: "Thompson urges this court to apply the standard of review in *State v. Marcum* to the reimposition of the remainder of a defendant's original sentence under R.C. 2929.20(K) after he violates the conditions of his judicial release. * * * Because Thompson was granted judicial release, the *Marcum* standard of review is not the appropriate standard of review for the issues presented in Thompson's second and first assignments of error. Instead, R.C. 2929.20 controls and we will address his argument accordingly.").

{¶10} Therefore, upon reflection the correct standard of review for felony sentencing challenges in a postconviction relief petition – not direct appeal – is the “abuse of discretion” established in *State v. Gondor*, 112 Ohio St.3d 377, 2006–Ohio–6679, 860 N.E.2d 77, ¶ 58. “[A] trial court's decision granting or denying a postconviction petition filed pursuant to R.C. 2953.21 should be upheld absent an abuse of discretion; a reviewing court should not overrule the trial court's finding on a petition for postconviction relief that is supported by competent and credible evidence.” *State v. Gondor*, 112 Ohio St.3d 377, 2006–Ohio–6679, 860 N.E.2d 77, ¶ 58; *State v. Black*, 4th Dist. Ross No. 15CA3509, 2016-Ohio-3104, ¶ 7. “A trial court abuses its discretion when its decision is unreasonable, arbitrary, or unconscionable.” *State v. Knauff*, 4th Dist. Adams No. 13CA976, 2014–Ohio–308, ¶ 19, citing *Cullen v. State Farm Mut. Auto Ins. Co.*, 137 Ohio St.3d 373, 2013–Ohio–4733, 999 N.E.2d 614, ¶ 19.

B. *Foster* Judicial Fact Findings

{¶11} Rinehart contends that the trial court erred in overruling his motion because the trial judge at the sentencing hearing made remarks that Rinehart argues

are “judicial fact findings.” Rinehart argues that these “judicial fact findings” were made in support of maximum, consecutive sentences in violation of *Foster* and therefore his sentence is void. Rinehart does not contest the trial court’s determination that his sentences fell within the allowed statutory ranges.

{¶12} Assuming *arguendo* that the trial court comments constituted improper “judicial fact findings,” Rinehart’s sentence would not be “void” but only “voidable.” See *State v. Payne*, 114 Ohio St.3d 502, 2007-Ohio-4642, 873 N.E.2d 306, ¶ 27-30, citing *Washington v. Recuenco*, 548 U.S. 212, 126 S.Ct. 2546, 165 L.Ed.2d 466 (“sentences imposed after judicial fact-finding and falling within the statutory range are voidable” – not void – and *Foster* constitutional errors are not structural; the failure to object at trial forfeits all but plain error on direct appeal.).

{¶13} Reinhart’s felony sentencing claim, even if meritorious, would only render his sentence “voidable” rather than “void.” Therefore he should have made this challenge within the period governing postconviction relief petitions. R.C. 2953.21(A)(2) provides that a petition for postconviction relief must be filed “no later than three hundred sixty-five days after the date on which the trial transcript is filed in the court of appeals in the direct appeal of the judgment of conviction or adjudication.” Reinhart’s petition was untimely because it was filed ten years after the expiration of this 365-day period. See, e.g., *State v. Heid*, 4th Dist. Scioto No. 15CA3710, 2016-Ohio-2756, ¶ 15.

{¶14} R.C. 2953.23(A)(1) authorizes a trial court to address the merits of an untimely filed petition for postconviction relief only if: (1) the petitioner shows either that he was unavoidably prevented from discovery of the facts upon which he must rely to present the claim for relief or that the United States Supreme Court recognized a new

federal or state right that applies retroactively to him; and (2) the petitioner shows by clear and convincing evidence that no reasonable factfinder would have found him guilty but for constitutional error at trial.

{¶15} Reinhart does not contend that the United States Supreme Court recognized a new right that applied retroactively to him, nor did he prove that he was unavoidably prevent from the discovery of pertinent facts. Therefore Reinhart did not establish that the trial court had the authority to address the merits of his untimely petition for postconviction relief. In the absence of jurisdiction, the trial court should have dismissed the petition, rather than denying it on the merits. Upon authority of App.R. 12(A)(1)(a), we modify the trial court's judgment to reflect the dismissal of the petition, and we affirm the judgment of the trial court as modified. *See State v. McManaway*, 4th Dist. Hocking No. 16CA8, 2016–Ohio–7470, ¶ 19, citing *State v. Brewer*, 2d Dist. Montgomery No. 24910, 2012–Ohio–5406, ¶ 10; *State v. Griffin*, 1st Dist. Hamilton Nos. C–150258 and 150005, 2016–Ohio–782, ¶ 13.

IV. CONCLUSION

{¶16} Rinehart was not entitled to the relief requested in his motion to correct his sentence. His sentencing challenge, if meritorious, would render his sentence voidable, not void. Therefore the trial court lacked jurisdiction and should have dismissed his petition as untimely. Having overruled the assignment of error, we affirm the trial court's judgment, as modified.

JUDGMENT AFFIRMED AS MODIFIED.

JUDGMENT ENTRY

It is ordered that the JUDGMENT IS AFFIRMED AS MODIFIED and that Appellant shall pay the costs.

The Court finds there were reasonable grounds for this appeal.

It is ordered that a special mandate issue out of this Court directing the Ross County Court of Common Pleas to carry this judgment into execution.

IF A STAY OF EXECUTION OF SENTENCE AND RELEASE UPON BAIL HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY GRANTED BY THE TRIAL COURT OR THIS COURT, it is temporarily continued for a period not to exceed sixty days upon the bail previously posted. The purpose of a continued stay is to allow Appellant to file with the Supreme Court of Ohio an application for a stay during the pendency of proceedings in that court. If a stay is continued by this entry, it will terminate at the earlier of the expiration of the sixty day period, or the failure of the Appellant to file a notice of appeal with the Supreme Court of Ohio in the forty-five day appeal period pursuant to Rule II, Sec. 2 of the Rules of Practice of the Supreme Court of Ohio. Additionally, if the Supreme Court of Ohio dismisses the appeal prior to expiration of sixty days, the stay will terminate as of the date of such dismissal.

A certified copy of this entry shall constitute the mandate pursuant to Rule 27 of the Rules of Appellate Procedure.

Hoover, P.J. & McFarland, J.: Concur in Judgment and Opinion.

For the Court

BY: 
William H. Harsha, Judge

NOTICE TO COUNSEL

Pursuant to Local Rule No. 14, this document constitutes a final judgment entry and the time period for further appeal commences from the date of filing with the clerk.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, ROSS COUNTY, OHIO
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

2017 JUN 22 AM 11:35

State of Ohio,

Plaintiff

v.

Paul E. Rinehart,

Defendant

FILED
ROSS COUNTY COMMON PLEAS
Case No. 06CR489
CLERK OF COURTS
TY D. HINTON

Case# 06 CR 489

Decision & Order

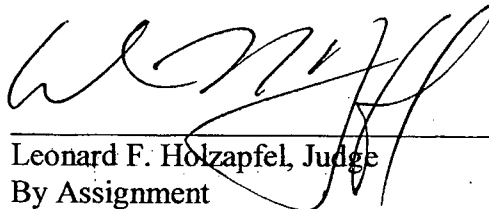
This matter came before the Court upon defendant's motion to correct an illegal sentence.

Defendant was sentenced to a total of 31 years in prison following his conviction for aggravated murder with a gun specification and tampering with evidence, a felony of the third degree. Defendant received a sentence of 25 years to life for the aggravated murder conviction, 3 years on the gun specification and 3 three years for tampering with evidence. These sentences were within the range provided by law.

The Supreme Court of Ohio in the case of State v. Foster, 109 Ohio St. 3d 1, held in its syllabus #7 that "trial courts have full discretion to impose a prison sentence within the statutory range and are no longer required to make findings or give their reasons for imposing maximum, consecutive or more than the minimum sentences."

The sentence imposed by this Court complies with the requirements of State v. Foster.

It is therefore Ordered that defendant's motion to correct an illegal sentence is overruled.


Leonard F. Holzapfel, Judge
By Assignment

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Appendix
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IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

FILED

ROSS COUNTY, OHIO

AUG 3 0 2007

WITH THE JUDGE OF
THE ROSS COUNTY
COMMON PLEAS COURT

STATE OF OHIO,

PLAINTIFF,

CASE NO. 06 CR 489

VS

JUDGE CORZINE

PAUL E. RINEHART,

JUDGMENT ENTRY OF SENTENCE

DEFENDANT.

* * * * *

On the 23rd day of August 2007, came Ross County Prosecuting Attorney, Michael Ater, on behalf of the State of Ohio, and the defendant, Paul E. Rinehart, appearing in Court and represented by his attorney, Ben Rainsberger.

Dan Silcott, trial counsel for the defendant, was in jury trial in Common Pleas Courtroom #2 and unavailable for disposition. Ben Rainsberger, also of the public defender's office, represented the defendant at disposition.

The defendant, having previously been found guilty by a jury of Count One, Aggravated Murder, Ohio Revised Code Section 2903.01, a Felony of the Special Degree with a firearm specification, and Count Two, Tampering with Evidence, Ohio

Revised Code Section 2921.12, a Felony of the Third Degree, was now given an opportunity to speak in his own behalf and to present information in mitigation.

The State was permitted to give a statement. Representatives of the victim's family were permitted to make statements. Counsel for the defendant was permitted to make a statement on behalf of the defendant and the defendant was given an opportunity to make a statement in his own behalf and to present information in mitigation.

The Court has considered the evidence and testimony adduced at trial, the written and oral victim impact statements, and written statements submitted on defendant's behalf. The court has not considered the on-line register on the Ware Funeral Home's web site. The court has further considered the file. The Court has considered the purposes and principles of felony sentencing under Ohio Revised Code Section 2929.11, the seriousness and recidivism factors contained in Ohio Revised Code Section 2929.12 and the guidance by degree of felony contained in Ohio Revised Code Section 2919.13.

The court finds defendant is not amenable to available community control sanctions and a sentence to prison is consistent with the purposes and principles of felony sentencing.

It is therefore the ORDER of the Court that as to Count

One, Aggravated Murder, Ohio Revised Code Section 2903.01 a Felony of the Special Degree, defendant serve a term of incarceration of life in an Ohio penal facility with parole eligibility after serving twenty-five (25) full years of imprisonment.

Further, for the firearm specification as to Count One, the defendant is hereby sentenced to a mandatory term of incarceration of three (3) years in an Ohio penal institution which shall be served consecutively to and prior to the prison term imposed for Aggravated Murder as to Count One and consecutively to any other prison term or mandatory prison term imposed by this entry pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Section 2929.14(E)(1)(a).

As to Count Two, Tampering with Evidence, Ohio Revised Code Section 2921.12 a Felony of the Third Degree, it is ordered defendant serve a term of incarceration of three (3) years in an Ohio penal facility to be served consecutively to Count One, Aggravated Murder, of this Indictment and the specification to Count One.

This is a total of thirty-one (31) years to life.

It is the further order of the court that the defendant is subject upon his release from prison to an optional period of up to three (3) years on Count Two, Tampering with Evidence, if the parole board in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section

2967.28(D) determines as to that count that a period of post release control is necessary for the defendant.

If defendant were to violate any post release control rule or condition, he is subject to a more restrictive rule or condition, a longer duration under supervision, or could be sent back to prison, even though he had done all of the time to which he has been sentenced. He could get up to nine months in prison for each rule violation. The total for all rule violations cannot be any more than one-half of the sentence that he has been given, unless the rule violation is for committing a new felony, in which case he could receive a prison term of the greater of one year or the time remaining on post release control in addition to any time that he received for that new felony. This term must be served consecutively to any sentence on the new felony.

The Court finding that defendant is indigent, no fine is warranted and no fine is imposed.

Costs waived.

No restitution is ordered.

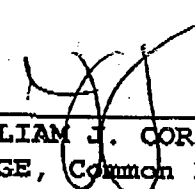
Jail Time Credit for 255 days is granted as of August 23rd, 2007, along with future custody days while defendant awaits transportation to the appropriate State institution.

Whereupon the Court advised the Defendant of his right to appeal, of the right to have counsel appointed for him, of the

right to have the record of his proceedings transcribed at no cost to him and of the right to have a notice of appeal timely filed on his behalf.

Any bond previously posted is hereby released.

ENTER: 8-19, 2007.



WILLIAM J. CORZINE
JUDGE, Common Pleas Court
Ross County, Ohio

The Clerk of this Court is hereby directed to serve a copy of this Judgement Order, and its date of Entry upon the Journal, upon all counsel of record and all parties not represented by counsel, by personal service or by U.S. Mail, and to note service on the Docket.

Judge