

Expecting a trial, he exits a free man

By Michael P. Rellahan

West Chester- Keith Crampton arrived for his murder trial in Chester County Common Pleas Court Monday, ready to face the possibility of life in prison. But instead, Crampton, a 21-year-old New Garden mushroom worker, went home a free man. Crampton and his family learned for the first time Monday that Judge Lawrence Wood had granted his attorney's motion to dismiss charges against him and to suppress a statement he gave to state police confessing his part in the death of Nicholas Santoya, a friend and fellow worker.

Police said that Crampton had told them he watched as a tall Latino man known only as "El Guero" and a second man he knew as "John Glass" beat Santoya in the head with a baseball bat, then buried his body in a wooded area of London Grove. But last month Wood ruled that the prosecution had insufficient evidence to charge Crampton as an accomplice in Santoya's killing and had acted improperly in questioning him without reading him his Miranda rights shortly after the murder was discovered.

"I'm happy, but I wasn't surprised," said a somewhat subdued Crampton outside Wood's courtroom Monday. "I'm satisfied with what the verdict is. They never had any evidence against me. "it was something I didn't do," He said.

His attorney A. Charles Peruto Jr., of Philadelphia, had neglected to tell him on his trial, set to begin Monday, had been called off and the charges against him dismissed. He and his family had arrived at the court house expecting to go to trial and ready to begin selecting a jury, he said.