

Killer maintains innocence

By Claire Withycombe
The Bulletin

SALEM (AP) — A former Sisters man appeared before the State Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision for a review of his life sentence for the 1978 murder of a jogger in Camp Sherman.

Roger Dale Beck, 65, was convicted in 1993 of two counts of aggravated murder and three counts of murder for the death of 35-year-old Kaye Jean Turner, of Eugene. He was sentenced to life in prison with a 20-year minimum, court records show.

Beck went before the parole board for the second time Wednesday to argue his sentence should include the possibility of parole.

Another man, John Ackroyd, 65, was separately tried and convicted for the murder in Jefferson County in 1993. Both men are serving their sentences at the Oregon State Penitentiary, a maximum-security prison in Salem.

The case lingered for 15 years without resolution, lacking sufficient evidence to even determine the cause of Turner's Christmas Eve death, according to a 1994 article from *The Register-Guard* in Eugene.

When Ackroyd's 13-year-old step-daughter, Rachanda Pickle, disappeared under suspicious circumstances in 1990, *The Register-Guard* reported, investigators reconsidered the Turner case.

The Pickle case remains open, according to the Oregon eCourt Case Information system.

Twenty-two years after his conviction, Beck maintains his innocence, saying he was hunting deer and drinking with Ackroyd that Christmas Eve. He and his then-wife parted ways with Ackroyd after drinking at the bar.

He said Wednesday that the blood people reported seeing on him was that of the deer he'd skinned. He told the board that the four people who testified against him in trial, including his ex-wife and daughter, were lying. He also said he was threatened by Jefferson County Sheriff's detectives.

Board members questioned Beck about his account of events, asking why they should believe Ackroyd's claim — stated in a letter to the parole board — that Beck is innocent. Ackroyd did not testify in either his or Beck's trials.

In hearings such as Beck's, parole board members consider whether the person before them is capable of being rehabilitated within a reasonable amount of time.

If they determine the inmate is eligible, he or she must go through additional proceedings to determine a date of release and verify he or she has been rehabilitated.

Beck, a self-described alcoholic, told the board he's been participating for

a few years in Alcoholics Anonymous and works in the prison laundry.

He calls the work his therapy, but board members cited Beck's prior convictions for domestic violence offenses, apparent lack of understanding of the 12 steps of AA, and ready admission that he beat his ex-wife. Beck has had no disciplinary sanctions during his time at the prison, said Walter Ledesma, Beck's attorney.

Board member Sid Thompson noted that many people who are released from prison commit domestic violence offenses, calling the trend a "big problem."

Jefferson County District Attorney Steve Leriche participated in the hearing via telephone. He expressed concerns about Beck's ability to be rehabilitated.

"It would seem that nothing has substantially changed," Leriche said, noting he wasn't a member of the DA's office during the trial, but that he'd reviewed the case files.

Board members agreed to give Ledesma 30 days to review additional letters the parole board received Tuesday.

At that point, the board will deliberate on whether it deems Beck eligible for parole. Beck first became eligible for parole in 2013, but the board decided he was unable to be rehabilitated in a reasonable amount of time.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Melissa Hart will recount owl rehab work in a book talk.

Melissa Hart, owl rescuer, tells her tale

Melissa Hart will read from and sign her book "Wild Within: How Rescuing Owls Inspired a Family" on Friday, July 17 at 6:30 p.m. at Paulina Springs Books in Sisters.

Hart was a depressed, recently separated transplant to Eugene when she met Jonathan, a volunteer at Cascades Raptor rehabilitation center, who was equally unlucky in love. What follows is the harrowing story of would-be adoptive parents and the redemptive powers of

dedication to a cause, laid out in brutally honest detail.

The book follows the couple as they embark on a long, painful process to adopt a child and, at the same time, take on training Archimedes, an owl known as a "difficult bird."

Refreshments will be served. The \$5 admission will be refunded upon purchase of the featured book. Paulina Springs is located at 252 W. Hood Ave. For more information call 541-549-0866.

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