

Forensic scientist sentenced to prison

U.S. District Judge Anna J. Brown sentenced former Oregon State Police Forensic Scientist Nika Larsen, 36, of Bend, to 36 months in federal prison on December 12, for obtaining controlled substances by misrepresentation, fraud and deception. Following her prison sentence, Larsen will be on one year of supervised release that will include 250 hours of community service.

“An effective criminal justice system requires the highest level of personal integrity from everyone working within the system,” said Billy J. Williams, United States Attorney for the District of Oregon. “If a single link in this chain is compromised, the equitable administration of justice is at risk. Ms. Larsen’s sentence reflects the severity of her crimes and demonstrates our law enforcement community’s commitment to policing its own and protecting the integrity of the justice system.”

In August 2016, Larsen plead guilty to two counts of obtaining controlled substances by misrepresentation, fraud and abuse by using her position as a state forensic scientist to steal controlled substances from evidence items submitted by law enforcement agencies to the Oregon State Police Crime Lab for analysis and testing. Between January 2013 and August 2015, Larsen was found to have stolen over 700 controlled substances in pill form from over 50 separate evidence items. The stolen pills included Morphine, Hydrocodone, Diazepam, Methamphetamine (pill form), Oxycodone and Methadone. Larsen’s offenses occurred primarily in

Umatilla and Deschutes counties at the Oregon State Police Crime Labs in Pendleton and Bend.

The case was investigated by the Oregon State Police and the Oregon Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Division. The case was prosecuted by Pamala R. Holsinger, Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Oregon, and Special Assistant United States Attorney Stephen H. Gunnels from the Deschutes County District Attorney’s Office. Multnomah County Chief Deputy District Attorney Donald N. Rees served as Special Deputy District Attorney for Umatilla County during the case and also represented the Oregon District Attorney’s Association (ODAA).

LETTERS

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To the Editor:

Craig Rullman’s column “To Infinity” about John Glenn was a wonderful tribute to the man and all those who have served our country. Thank you so much for sharing Glenn’s 1974 speech. Those were stirring words and Rullman’s summation that it is nice to just sit back and enjoy the story of a “remarkable and selfless man” is something we all need.

Let’s start thinking and talking about our heroes and stop trying to tear down everyone with a little different opinion.

Jean Nave

To the Editor:

I thoroughly enjoyed reading Craig Rullman’s tribute to the late John Glenn in his column “The Bunkhouse Chronicle,” December 14 issue of *The Nugget*. Much of what Rullman had to say about Glenn I already knew, but not everything, and I’m grateful for the additional information about this extraordinary man.

Like many of us, I suspect, I wasn’t aware

of who John Glenn was before the early days of the space program. But when NASA announced their selection of the original seven Mercury astronauts, I quickly boned up on who these new national heroes were. Reflecting back to that time of my life, I can see more clearly that my intense interest in the space program probably bordered on the unreasonable.

Walter Cronkite and I never missed a Mercury launch. I used to be able to recite the names of the Mercury astronauts (I can still do that), the order of when each flew in space, the dates of their launch, and how many orbits of the earth each one logged (two of the flights were sub-orbital).

I continued to follow the manned space program through the Gemini and Apollo programs, but never as passionately as I did during those magical days of Project Mercury.

Thank you, Craig, for the stroll down memory lane.

One final thought: I’m sure the other six Mercury astronauts were just as courageous, with the same love of country, as Glenn displayed. But, as Rullman pointed out, Glenn seemed to be able to apply that can-do attitude to many other aspects of his life in such a remarkable way that few of us will ever match.

Godspeed, John Glenn.
Ron Thorkildson



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