

Salem taxi driver shot in back of head, autopsy shows

The Associated Press

SALEM — The co-workers Michelle Howard had known only for a short time could hear her screams. But they were helpless to stop the taxi driver from being shot to death, allegedly by a fare she had picked up before dawn.

Howard, 36, was shot once in the back of the head before her cab crashed into a tree in a rural area north of Salem, according to autopsy results Monday.

Howard, an adjunct economics professor for Willamette University's graduate school and a part-time writing instructor at Chemeketa Community College, was found dead inside the cab. Either the gunshot or the struggle with her attacker apparently caused Howard's taxi to run off the road, said Dr. Nikolas Hartshorne, a deputy state medical examiner.

The man accused of abducting and killing her, 29-year-old Daniel Wayne Kirkland of Keizer, was arrested while running along a country road nearby.

Howard, who had worked for Yellow Cab Co. for just two weeks, started her shift at 4 a.m. and was on her first fare of the day — a man who asked to be driven from Salem to Keizer.

"The person did not ask for her by name or number," said Yellow Cab Co. president Dan Harbaugh. "She was sent there totally at random. It could have just as well have been a man driver."

Howard's husband, Eric Elrod, said he and his wife had talked about the danger, but the work was important to her. She was an author who borrowed from life experiences for the books she wrote and the classes she taught.

"Unfortunately, my wife picked up one of those bad people," Elrod said.

Dispatchers from the cab company called deputies after hearing Howard screaming into the car's radio. That was about 5:15 a.m.

"They could hear her screaming. They weren't sure what she was screaming, but it was frightening," said Marion County sheriff's Deputy Randy Corey. "They tried reaching the cab and couldn't, so they called for help."

Monday, employees at the cab company were still stunned by the shooting. Nothing similar has happened in the company's 44 years in business. Howard was one of seven woman drivers out of about 50 employees. Two quit after her death, Harbaugh said.

"We're being a lot more cautious, of course," said company co-owner Gary Anderson. "Everybody is in a state of shock. We are all numbed by this experience."

Harbaugh said he planned to

meet with employees to talk about safety issues and to call taxi companies nationwide for ideas.

Kirkland, a convicted thief, was to be arraigned today on one count of intentional murder, but additional charges were possible, Deputy District Attorney Courtland Geyer said.

The case would be submitted to a grand jury, probably within the next week, Geyer said.

Kirkland was sentenced in September 1997 to 18 months' probation for felony theft involving items taken from a Salem furniture store. The probation later was extended to September 2001, so Kirkland could continue keep paying restitution, according to parole and probation records. He also was attending drug treatment programs for a methamphetamine addiction, corrections officials said.

Kirkland had no history of vio-

lent behavior and was reporting as required by the terms of his probation, according to Mike Wilkerson, a field commander in charge of parole and probation in Marion County. "We were astounded" to hear of Sunday's arrest, Wilkerson said.

A Portland taxi company, New Rose City Cab Co., was working Monday to organize a procession of cabs to visit Salem for Howard's funeral. No services had been scheduled as of Monday.

Howard has a teenage son who lives out of state with his father.

Howard, who held a master's degree in economics, got the job driving a cab to pay off bills before moving to Portland or Seattle to look for a newspaper job. She was a business columnist for the Valley Business Journal, which was published in Salem until recently.

Asian countries having more trouble recovering, conference hears

By Jasmina Kuzmanovic

The Associated Press

SINGAPORE — Warning of the risks of global recession, participants in the private East Asia Economic Summit adopted a plan Tuesday for economic growth and reform of the world financial system.

The meeting of economists, businessmen and government officials asked the West to make significant cuts in interest rates and urged Japan to expand its money supply.

The plan calls on members of the Group of Seven major industrial nations to establish a new system for the monitoring, disclosure

and regulation of highly leveraged short-term financial flows as well as derivative transactions.

Participants at the summit organized by the World Economic Forum, a private agency based in Switzerland, said they were "deeply concerned about the drift of the world economy and financial markets, and the growing risk of global recession."

The 15-point plan was put together by forum officials in consultation with speakers at the conference and other participants, and incorporates many of the themes brought up during the first two days of the conference, a spokeswoman said.

"Japan, as Asia's major high-income economy, with a GNP twice as large as all of the rest of Asia combined, has a special responsibility to help the region emerge from its current deep recession," forum officials said in a statement.

Expressing their support for Japan's plan to provide \$30 billion in assistance to crisis-stricken East Asia, the participants said Japan should be prepared to increase that sum, "perhaps significantly."

Europe, Canada and the United States should adopt significant tax cuts, and expand the provision of official loans and credit guarantees to the emerging markets in crisis, especially to cover necessities

like food, energy and medical supplies, they added.

The plan also called on East Asian countries to remain committed to further openness to foreign direct investment.

Commenting on what kind of new rules are sought for financial markets, the forum's managing director, Claude Smadja, said the aim was to curb "elements like volatile short-term financial flows and off-balance-sheet transactions."

These elements, Smadja said, "generate a lack of transparency and aggravate volatility of the financial market. ... It's like a time bomb waiting to explode."

Many at the gloomy conference have complained of a lack of leadership in dealing with economic crisis, and of slow recovery, delayed by political instability.

"In a severe crisis, countries, like individuals, become preoccupied with survival and become more self-centered and selfish," George Yeo, Singapore's second minister for trade and industry, told the meeting.

Thailand's deputy prime minister, Supachai Panitchpakdi, said the protectionist trend, coupled with a contraction of export markets as economies slow down worldwide, could hamstring the Asian recovery.



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