

Voices From the Crowd: Parole Board Decision Makes No Sense

By Randy Sanders

On June 7th, the Oregon Parole board will allow inmate #7430532, Sidney Dean Porter a convicted cop-killer, to walk a free man. He served just 20-years of a life sentence after beating to his death Officer Frank Ward -- a John Day Police officer -- with a piece of firewood, after the officer responded to a call that Porter was beating his wife.

My initial reaction was: why would a person with a history of documented violent attacks on many people in local taverns, who is beating his wife and goes on to beat to death a police officer, even allowed to be a candidate for parole in the first place?

Just twenty years served for violently busting open the head of a policeman with a hunk of firewood, even after the officer's body fell limp against the wood stove. Officer Frank Ward was doing the honorable and dangerous job of responding to a call, aiding a woman in extreme distress and the murderer gets just 20 years. Really? Not much time when you consider how long that is; 20 years ago NAFTA was signed, Michael Jackson was the "King of Pop" and the United States Navy allowed women to serve on combat ships. 20 years... really?

Given that the Board of Parole's website describes that it's decisions are based on "...applicable laws, victims' interests, public safety and the recognized principles of offender behavioral change," it seems rather dubi-

ous that they would arrive at their decision based on evaluating psychologist's opinion of Porter: "Mr. Porter seems to present the classic example of a person who ought not to be released on parole." But here was the board's final statement: "Based on the information the board is considering, including the doctor's report and diagnosis, the board has concluded you do have an emotional disturbance, but it is not so severe as to constitute a danger to the health and safety of the community," Ummm, wouldn't the "doctor's report" fall under the "victim's interests" and "public safety" part of your description?

So when the Oregon Department of Justice sent a worthy representative to the hearing to represent you, me and the rest of Oregon's tax-paying citizens, how exactly did they defend our public safety? Well, Kristin Wings-Yanez, Amber Kaatz and Candice Wheeler -- the three member parole board -- never bothered to invite them. Yes, that's right, The Oregon Board of Parole never bothered to announce to the Oregon Department of Justice there was to be a hearing on this cop-killer's parole. To add insult to injury, one of those parole board members said directly to Sidney Dean Porter, "... you whole-heartedly did not mean for this to happen." Really? I must say, I am impressed with their talent and ability to become 'one in mind and spirit' with a cop-killer; perhaps they might share with us mere mortals, those fiercely guarded secrets

of their mind-reading sensibilities?

The sad news is, at this point every police association in Oregon and even a few federal ones, plus countless citizens and even the Oregon House Judicial Committee have weighed in and it's now a moot point. Come Friday, June 7th, Sidney Dean Porter gets to leave prison and go to work on a relatives ranch, out in the fresh Oregon air, with nature and horses and other cool stuff, while we here in Columbia County can only hope and pray the Oregon Parole Board doesn't rear its ugly head -- if and when -- that time arrives for the killer of our dear Rainier Police Chief, Ralph Painter.

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(24 issues) \$35

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.

Vernonia's Voice, LLC
PO Box 55
Vernonia, OR 97064
503-367-0098

www.VernoniasVoice.com



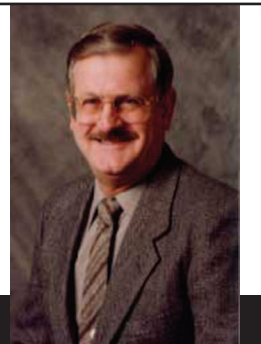
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