

Sex change operation leads to investigation

Felicia Skriver
News Editor

Two thousand dollars can either be a wealth of money or a very small amount of pocket cash; it all depends on the person receiving it. But is it worth murder? Most would say no but Susan Ellen Campbell, 54, of Gladstone thought it was worth it when she allegedly agreed to kill former Gladstone Police Sgt. Lynn Benton's wife, Deborah Higbee Benton for him. According to the Oregon City Police Department Campbell is being accused of attempted aggravated murder.

Benton underwent a female-to-male sex change in late 2009. The couple were married a year later in 2010, according to Oregon City Police Detective Brad Edwards who testified at the court hearing, the couple's relationship was strained after the operation. In fact Benton moved out of the house they owned together a month before the killing had happened.

According to an indictment filed earlier this month, the attempts on Higbee Benton's life started as early as January 2010; however it was on May

28, 2011, that Higbee Benton was found dead in her salon.

She had been beaten, strangled and shot in the back. Six days later the police arrested Campbell for the participation in a murder-for-hire plot to kill Higbee Benton. Campbell implicated Benton in the murder shortly after she had been arrested but then refused to cooperate with the police any further after that.

Campbell, who was a longtime friend of Benton's then told the investigators that he had solicited her to kill his wife, after she had realized the death penalty was on the table. Friday, Nov. 9 she had agreed to testify against Benton, for the lesser charge of attempted aggravated murder.

"It's pretty rare to have a police officer involved in criminal activity anyways," said Lieutenant Jim Band of the Oregon City Police Department, in a phone interview. "A case this serious is certainly nothing that we've ever been apart of."

After 25 years of service to the Gladstone Police Department, Benton was fired last December for unrelated matters.

Campbell's son Jason Jay Jaynes was also an accomplice to the conspired murder,

according to the police. Shortly after the murder took place in 2010, Jaynes fled to Astoria according. He was pulled over for a traffic violation and then taken in to custody on charges of attempted aggravated murder and conspiracy.

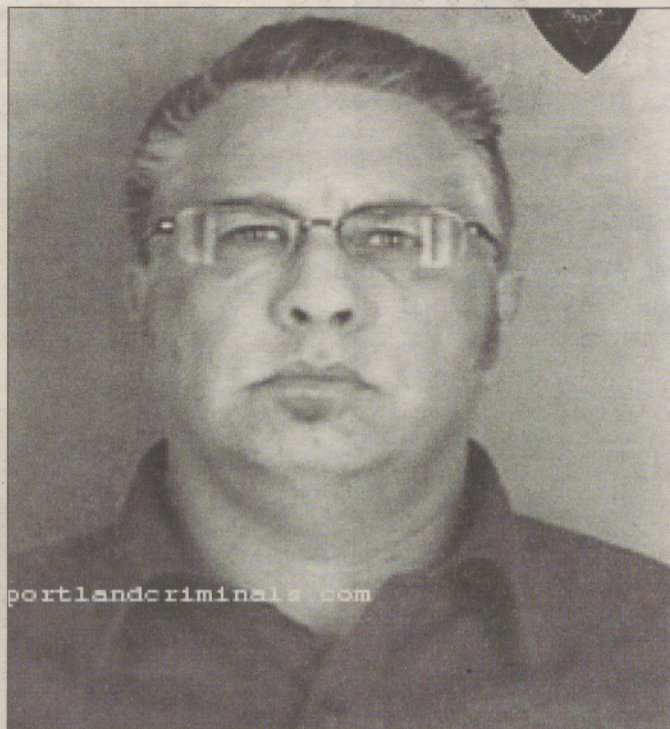
In an interview with OCPD, Benton confessed to getting physical with his wife on two separate occasions. During one instance, he said he choked her and pinned her up against the wall, according to Edwards' statement at the hearing.

Benton is currently being charged with aggravated murder and conspiracy to commit aggravated murder and is being held in a segregated corridor because of the fact he was once a police officer.

However some believe that the ex-cop shouldn't get any kind of special treatment.

"I think he should go away for about 15-20 years. No pension, no nothing," said Vikki Haggerty, 33, a graduate of Clackamas. "Just like everybody else. No special treatments. Nothing."

A crime of this magnitude has shocked the community. It may be years before every one forgets about this unfortunate tale of love gone wrong.



Lynn Benton (top) and Susan Campbell (left) are being charged with the murder of Deborah Higbee Benton. The attempts on Higbee Benton's life started two years before the actual murder. According to Brad Edwards of the OCPD, Campbell shot Higbee Benton in the back and then called Benton frantically because Higbee Benton did not die from the wound. Campbell's son Jay Jaynes then showed up to help finish the job according to police.

CAMPBELL

Campus forum focuses on safety related issues

Joshua Dillen
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Stolen master keys to college buildings, the safety of this campus and emergency protocol were a few of the topics at last Thursday's Campus Safety Forum in McLoughlin Auditorium. A crowd of about 25 had the chance to weigh in and question Bob Cochran, Dean of Campus Services, and other administrators about these and other concerns that have been raised here since the beginning of fall term.

A serious and embarrassing issue that he addressed was the theft of an undetermined number of master keys at an unknown time. It is assumed the keys made

it into the hands of thieves who used them to enter the automotive shop and steal several valuable items along with the ignition keys to the Campus Safety Jeep on Oct. 28, resulting in its theft as well. Its keys were at the shop so the vehicle could be serviced the following Monday. The Jeep was recovered, but according to Cochran, this and other incidents related to the stolen master keys are still unsolved.

"We've had several offices that have been entered without forced entry with items taken. So last week we said we just got to just start re-keying the buildings," Cochran said.

Cochran assured the audience that these thefts are being taken seriously. Mike Pfaffle, a security technician with Campus Services was in the process of changing the locks to the outside doors near

the auditorium in McLoughlin during and after the meeting.

The time and place that the undetermined number of master keys was stolen remains unknown. Cochran advised staff in the audience that at all times personal items should not be left behind locked doors at any time regardless of the current situation. He and Janet Paulson, public information officer for the college commented about securing personal belongings.

"Someone lost a Larry Bird signed basketball which is unfortunate. But, you know, that's a very personal item," said Cochran. "We have 30 or 40 people at any one time that have a key, not counting the other keys that are out there that we cannot account for. Just remember that when you think about your office and what's in there."

"It's your workplace not your home," said Paulson.

Kelly White, an administrative assistant with the Arts and Sciences department, had questions relating to the absence of a Campus Safety Director at the college.

"I just want to address the elephant in the room and Kurt Nelson is no longer with the college," White said. "And I believe his position oversaw all of this. What is the college doing to replace that person?"

Cochran explained that the position is open and posted on the college website. The application deadline is Dec. 14. Then there will be about three to four weeks of evaluations and interviews and

it will be potentially filled by the end of January or the beginning of February, he said. The full time administrative position pays a yearly salary of \$67,471-\$89,862.

Cochran also said the department was consulting Captain Kevin Lang of the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office while the former director's position is not filled. White had other serious concerns.

"Financially how is the college ready to implement things that need to be corrected and changed?" she said. "Because to me, I feel this is an unsafe place to come to work."

Cochran's reply was brief. "That's a good concern. Thank you," he said.



Bob Cochran, Dean of Campus Services, demonstrates the new barricades that have been designed to give information in the event of a campus closure. They will be placed at the entrances to the campus to prevent motor vehicle entry.

Joshua Dillen The Clackamas Print

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