

Roden: 'Worse thing that ever happened is that little girl dying'

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'An extreme case'

Many involved in the Clatsop County justice system have called the death of Evangelina Wing in December 2014 one of the worst child-abuse cases they have ever seen in the county. Details of the crime scene include an apartment door stained with blood and blood spatters throughout the entire dwelling. Then there is the physical evidence. Wing's body was completely battered, the state says. An autopsy found the child apparently died from blunt-force trauma. At the time of her death she had two black eyes, a broken arm, multiple bruises over her face and chest and hemorrhaging around her head as well as what the state maintains are bite marks on her and her brothers. Her two brothers, ages 5 and 3 at the time, also suffered other injuries and bruises.

Wing's mother, Dorothy Ann Wing, and her boyfriend, Roden, were suspects almost immediately.

In January, Wing took a deal that dropped her prison sentence from life to just over 15 years. In exchange, she pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter and two counts of first-degree criminal mistreatment and agreed to give testimony about Roden on



LEFT: Randy Roden, left, listens to the prosecution deliver closing arguments during his trial on Thursday at Clatsop County Circuit Court. RIGHT: Randy Roden's defense attorney Conor Huseby delivers closing arguments on Thursday at Clatsop County Circuit Court.



Photos by Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

behalf of the prosecution.

Serial abuser

The state has painted Evangelina Wing's accused killer as a serial domestic abuser who preyed on single mothers with young children. His attorney, Huseby, has attempted to show the opposite, arguing that Roden was a caring, if careless, guardian while Evangelina's mother was an abusive parent and is

the one responsible for Evangelina's death.

The defense team argues that a serious methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infection, coupled with the mother's abuse, is what ultimately killed Evangelina.

"What happened to Eva Wing is the worst thing I've ever seen professionally," Huseby said during his closing arguments.

But, he said later, refer-

ring to witnesses he had called who testified that they had seen or heard Dorothy Wing abuse her children in the past, "Every single injury in this case is explained by Dorothy Wing's history of abusing her children."

Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown agrees that Wing is certainly partially responsible for Evangelina's death.

"She allowed her three kids to be preyed upon by the

defendant and she didn't do anything," Brown said. But, as he has throughout the trial, he dismissed the idea that an infection was to blame for Evangelina's death.

Physical trauma was the primary issue contributing to the toddler's death, Brown said several times in his closing arguments. Any infection was secondary.

The state maintains that Roden abused all three chil-

dren frequently during the time he lived with Wing in Seaside, and that Roden is the one who set out to murder the toddler, in part to cover up evidence of alleged sexual assault.

"This is an extreme case, with extreme injuries," Brown said. Addressing the jury, he said, "Don't be fooled, don't be allowed to think this was an itty bitty case. This was huge."

CREST: Warrenton Fiber, Crest have had an antagonistic relationship

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report also questioned whether CREST's actions related to the impacts of the project and salmon credits constituted public corruption or a civil rights violation.

Blitz, in an email Thursday, stressed that his report was preliminary. He said the report raised questions but did not make any conclusive findings about CREST.

"I have no reason to doubt or question Scott Lee's confidence in Denise Lofman or the value of her work as the executive of the CREST intergovernmental cooperative," the attorney wrote. "I am sure that she pursues CREST's mission with ability and dedication. Context is very important to her and Commissioner Lee's reactions to the 'report.'"

"The 'report' is preliminary. It may be prudent for all to remember it was delivered to enable the City Commission to make further scope determinations and direct my work."

CREST not interviewed

Blitz said Lofman was not interviewed for the report, which was based primarily on a review of public records. The attorney, however, did speak with John Nygaard, an attorney for Warrenton Fiber, a timber processing company that owns property near the river and wants the city to take control of the dam.

Blitz's report cast Warrenton Fiber's "cautionary statements" and "analysis and advocacy" in a credible light.

Nygaard and others have used Blitz's report as vindication, alleging CREST intentionally misled the city and attempted to defraud property owners to secure the \$1.2 million project.

Pat O'Grady, the owner of Warrenton Auto & Marine Repair, has appeared before the City Commission and the Port of Astoria Commission and claimed Blitz's report is "proof that CREST lied, cheated and tried to steal the property from the citizens for their own personal benefits."

Lofman, at a CREST council meeting Thursday, said the agency no longer has anything to do with the Eighth Street Dam. Warrenton, like other government entities in the region, is a paying member of CREST. "As you all know, we only do projects with willing, voluntary partners who are interested in working with us," Lofman said.

She described the legal issues that have arisen from Blitz's report as "alarming" before urging the CREST council to meet privately in executive session.



Alex Pajunas/The Daily Astorian

Denise Lofman, the executive director of the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, pictured here with former staffer Matt Van Ess on Gnat Creek in 2013, has received a vote of confidence from the CREST council. CREST has been criticized by Warrenton over a project to remove the Eighth Street Dam.

Port of Astoria mulls leaving CREST

Two commissioners want to exit, but director sees value

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The Port of Astoria Commission will discuss Tuesday whether to leave the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, but the Port's executive director believes it is important to maintain the relationship.

Port Commissioners Stephen Fulton and Bill Hunsinger have called for the Port to end its membership.

Fulton, a wetlands specialist for Warrenton Fiber, has clashed with CREST over the possible removal of the Eighth Street Dam in Warrenton. The company has urged the city to take control of the dam from the Skipanon Water Control District over potential flooding concerns.

Jim Knight, the Port's executive director, said that while CREST has been used sparingly, the agency has provided quality technical support when asked.

"I personally think it is important we maintain that relationship with CREST," Knight said.

Afterward, Lofman said CREST is "investigating our options."

Issues at stake

Warrenton has asked the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service to clarify a 2014 letter that gave control of the dam to the water district, which has a city ease-

ment to operate the dam. Blitz has argued that the dam is likely a federal asset tied to the city's levee system. He believes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the city should control the dam, like the levees. The water district does not consider the dam part of the city's levee system, and continues to

maintain that the dam should be removed as obsolete. The water district has removed the tide gates and barricaded a gravel road over the 53-year-old structure. Blitz initially told the City Commission in September that the city is the rightful owner of the dam, which emboldened commission-

ers to authorize the attorney to issue legal warnings to the water district to give up any interest.

But Blitz has since shifted to the idea that the dam is likely a federal asset linked to the city's levees.

While Blitz's report raised

questions about the motives of CREST and the water district, his fact-finding effort did not examine what has driven Warrenton Fiber to take such an intense interest in the dam.

Warrenton Fiber and CREST have had an antagonistic relationship.

In October 2015, Lee, as the CREST council chairman, admonished Stephen Fulton, who works for Warrenton Fiber and serves on the Port Commission, for his "non-collaborative, threatening and aggressive" conduct toward CREST staff when he represented the Port on the council. In one incident, according to Lee, Fulton threatened CREST staffer Matt Van Ess, who had tried to shake his hand at a Warrenton Planning Commission meeting. "We're coming after you, Matt," Fulton allegedly said.

Robert Mushen, who now represents the Port on the CREST council, had told Fulton last year that there was confusion at CREST about whether Fulton was representing the interests of the Port, Warrenton or Warrenton Fiber.

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Development rights

Letters and emails show Warrenton Fiber was worried the dam removal project could lead to an Endangered Species Act upgrade for the Skipanon River that could impact private property values and development rights.

In an April 2015 letter to the Bonneville Power Administration, Nygaard asked whether Warrenton Fiber should be compensated for increased salmon access through the company's property.

Nygaard wrote that Warrenton Fiber would support the project if the company received a guarantee from the Bonneville Power Administration and CREST that it would cause no loss or challenge to development rights, or that the company would be directly compensated for any development losses or increased development costs by the dam's removal.

In a March email to City Attorney Hal Snow, Nygaard urged the city to research its legal rights over the dam, including whether the dam is part of the city's levee system, the exact argument Blitz is now making on the city's behalf.

Motives

While Blitz's report raised