

POINT of view

"What are you doing about holiday shopping this year?"



"It's done. I keep it simple, stupid. I buy edibles. If you can't eat it, don't ship it."

Carol Thomas, Astoria



"Nothing yet. I don't have a plan, but I will shop. Local and not local."

Jeanine Fairchild, Astoria



"I'm way behind. This weekend. Going shopping. Finally. Locally."

Teresa Brownlie, Astoria

THE DAILY ASTORIAN // QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Grandma murderer gets 50 years

A deadly plot unfolds in Ocean Park

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
EO Media Group

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — "Was it mental illness, or greed?" One man asked another as they passed each other in Pacific County Superior Court on Monday morning.

The man who had just watched Katherine Joann Chace plead guilty to the murder of her grandmother, Paula Rice, answered without missing a beat.

"It was greed."

The victim's son, Ben Hamby, also spoke of the avarice that cost him his mother, and nearly took his brother's life, too.

"I'm completely incapable of making you see the brilliant light that was stolen from us by the defendant's misplaced greed," an emotional

Hamby said during the sentencing phase of the hearing. "My mother didn't care about money. She just wanted to make beautiful things."

Fifty years in prison

In a somber courtroom, Chace, 24, of Willow, Alaska, pleaded to first-degree murder and first degree attempted murder for shooting Rice, 64, at her Ocean Park home on November 2016. She was sentenced to spend a total of 620 months — more than 50 years — in prison. Her accomplice and boyfriend, Paul Rankin, of Wasilla, Alaska, was subsequently sentenced to about 15 years in prison. Rankin, 27, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit first-degree murder in September. Prosecutor Mark McClain agreed to recommend a relatively short sentence for Rankin in exchange for his testimony against Chace.

After the hearing, McClain said he initially considered pursuing the death penalty for Chace, but decided a very long sentence was more appropri-

ate. He spent months working with defense attorneys, a Pacific County Sheriff's Office detective and Rice's family to craft the plea deals. Ultimately, the wishes of Rice's family members "were really the drivers for this," McClain said.

A fresh start

Paula Rice was a free-spirited artist whose downfall began with an act of kindness. For most of her life, Chace did not really know Rice, who is her paternal grandmother, or her father Michael Cooper, who lived with Rice. Then the two women connected through Facebook, according to recently released documents from the murder investigation. Eventually, they began talking on the phone.

Chace confided in Rice, saying Rankin abused her. Alaska court records show that about five years ago, she filed a restraining order against him, but dropped it within a couple of weeks. Chace wanted to leave Rankin, she told Rice, but they had three young chil-

dren. Her attempts to break free of him always failed.

Rice invited Chace and her kids to move in. In March 2016, she and the kids left Alaska for Ocean Park.

In close quarters

Rice lived off of a family trust fund that provided about \$8,000 per month. This money also provided for Cooper, who has a medical condition that makes it difficult for him to work. When Chace and her children arrived, the money provided for them, too.

"The defendant had free room and board, and transportation, and insurance, and her children lacked for nothing," Hamby said.

But all her life, Chace had ricocheted between joy and sadness. She had always been impulsive, she told state psychologists; she had always been plagued by a terror that the people she loved would abandon her.

It wasn't enough. Despite Rice's generosity, Chace was soon restless, lonely and tired of being "cooped up" with her kids. As summer came on, her resentment sprang into full bloom.

Fantasies and plans

Unbeknownst to Rice and Cooper, she reconciled with Rankin, who stayed in Ilwaco during a secret April 2016 visit. After he went back to Alaska, she aired her frustrations in derisive text messages. In late August, she complained that she couldn't see a chiropractor because Rice was temporarily low on funds.

"\$8,500 a month, and they're out of money," she wrote.

Chace and Rankin began fantasizing about killing Rice and Cooper in late spring. In their florid imaginings, the murders would clear the path to Rice's trust, even though Chace was not in the will. They'd take her inheritance,



Natalie St. John/EO Media Group

Katherine Chace, seen with her defense attorney Erik Kupka Monday in Pacific County Superior Court, was sentenced to more than 50 years in prison for the 2016 murder of her grandmother, Paula Rice and the attempted murder of her father, Michael Cooper.

cash and credit cards, buy an RV, and set out for Texas. Around the time of the August text, they began planning the murders in earnest.

"I might be able to fashion a silencer. I have to look into it, tho," Rankin wrote that same evening. They planned for Rankin to fly to Washington state to help execute "The Plan." They wondered if the neighbors might be a problem. They debated about what to do with their dog.

"Leave her in the house and let (a friend) take her to the pound?" Chace suggested.

In October, they researched trust funds, commiserated about the expense of making a silencer, and urged each other to take care of last-minute details.

"Go through your half of the plan. Make sure you have everything figured out," Rankin wrote. "Everything you can think of anyways, LOL."

Preparations

Chace picked Rankin up in Seattle in early November 2016. He was not welcome in the Rice household, so he hiked into the woods in Loomis Lake State Park and

made a tent out of a blue plastic tarp and a stick.

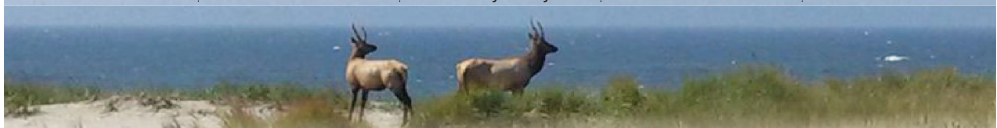
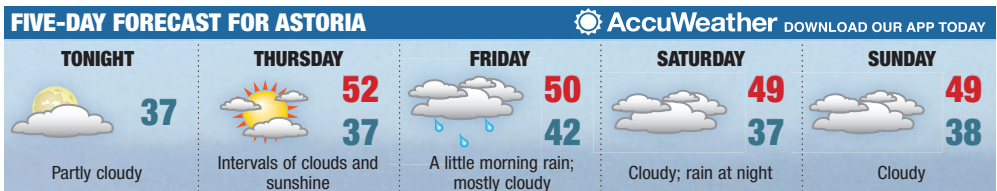
There was much work to be done. She sneaked Rankin into Rice's home "several times to learn the layout," Detective Ryan Tully wrote in his report. They debated drugging Cooper with Valium or some other sedative, and researched Rice's finances.

One day, they went to the Home Depot in Warrenton. A security camera recorded them as they purchased the PVC pipe, steel wool and other ingredients for a homemade silencer. They kept the receipt.

Execution

Originally, Rankin was to pull the trigger. As the designated night drew near, texts show that the couple seemed more concerned about whether their 2-year-old daughter had pooped out a quarter that she'd swallowed than they did about the prospect of murdering two family members.

"But then (Rankin) decided he couldn't do it himself. He told her she had to be the one to do it," Tully wrote. "He told her to take as much money and bank cards from Rice as she could get. They would then drive the Jeep to Texas."



ALMANAC

Astoria through Tuesday.

Temperatures

- High/low: 51°/35°
- Normal high/low: 49°/36°
- Record high: 61° in 2002
- Record low: 10° in 1919

Precipitation

- Tuesday: 0.00"
- Month to date: 0.93"
- Normal month to date: 4.03"
- Year to date: 77.24"
- Normal year to date: 61.40"

SUN AND MOON

Sunset tonight: 4:30 p.m.
Sunrise Thursday: 7:50 a.m.
Moonrise today: 3:06 a.m.
Moonset today: 2:24 p.m.

Phases: New, First, Full, Last

Dec 17, Dec 26, Jan 1, Jan 8

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: The Gemini Meteor Shower peaks tonight with an average of 60 meteors per hour.

Source: Jim Todd, OMS

TOMORROW'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks

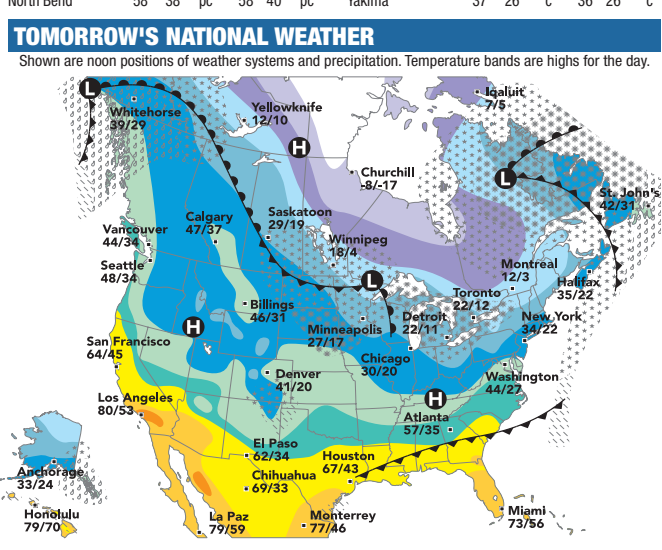
Time	High	Low
10:24 a.m.	9.3 ft.	4:11 a.m.
11:26 p.m.	7.5 ft.	5:16 p.m.

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Atlanta	49	36	s	57	35	s
Boston	30	22	pc	33	17	s
Chicago	36	18	sn	30	20	c
Denver	53	26	pc	41	20	sf
Des Moines	45	22	c	38	25	c
Detroit	26	12	sn	22	11	sf
El Paso	61	37	s	62	34	s
Fairbanks	36	17	c	20	16	pc
Honolulu	81	69	pc	79	70	pc
Indianapolis	42	21	pc	34	22	sf
Kansas City	57	26	s	41	28	c
Las Vegas	66	47	s	67	38	s
Los Angeles	80	49	s	80	53	s
Memphis	57	34	s	46	29	s
Miami	70	48	s	73	56	s
Nashville	53	32	s	44	27	pc
New Orleans	63	45	s	67	44	pc
New York	32	27	pc	34	22	sf
Oklaoma City	66	33	s	50	27	pc
Philadelphia	32	27	pc	38	22	sf
St. Louis	54	28	pc	39	26	pc
Salt Lake City	29	24	c	38	23	c
San Francisco	62	45	s	64	45	s
Seattle	47	34	pc	48	34	pc
Washington, DC	37	32	pc	44	27	pc

REGIONAL CITIES

City	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Baker City	38	20	c	37	20	pc
Bend	35	15	pc	39	23	pc
Brookings	62	45	pc	63	45	pc
Eugene	41	24	pc	43	27	pc
Ilwaco	52	39	pc	52	39	pc
Klamath Falls	46	21	pc	47	23	pc
Medford	51	30	pc	54	30	pc
Newberg	48	34	pc	48	31	pc
Newport	53	39	pc	54	39	pc
North Bend	58	38	pc	58	40	pc
Olympia	45	29	pc	45	31	pc
Pendleton	32	23	c	34	24	c
Portland	47	35	pc	47	31	pc
Roseburg	44	32	pc	47	35	pc
Salem	47	29	pc	47	29	pc
Seaside	52	36	pc	53	36	pc
Spokane	32	22	c	32	25	c
Springfield	45	27	pc	47	32	pc
Vancouver	48	31	pc	48	30	pc
Yakima	37	26	c	36	26	c



DEATHS

- Dec. 12, 2017**
- FERGUSON, John T.W. "Tim," 50, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.
- MOULTON, Curtis James, 64, of Cannon Beach, died in Cannon Beach. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.
- Dec. 8, 2017**
- JOLLIFF, Dale David, 82, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.
- Nov. 10, 2017**
- O'KELLEY, David, 57, of Tigard, formerly of Astoria, died in Tigard. Autumn Funerals, Cremation & Burial in Tigard is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

- Saturday, Dec. 16**
- CHARLES, Dr. Ellen Vera — Celebration of life at 1 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 1076 Franklin Ave., with a reception immediately following the service.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- WEDNESDAY**
- Clatsop County Board of Commissioners**, 5 p.m., work session and meeting, Judge Guy Boyington Building, 857 Commercial St.
 - Astoria School Board**, 6:15 p.m., study session, 7:30 p.m., regular meeting, Capt. Robert Gray School third-floor boardroom, 785 Alameda Ave.
 - Wickiup Water District Board**, 6:30 p.m., 92648 Svensen Mar-
- THURSDAY**
- Sunset Empire Transportation District Board**, 9 a.m., Astoria Transit Center, 900 Marine Drive.
 - Seaside Convention Center Commission**, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave.

Brownson holds meet and greet

Astoria City Councilor Tom Brownson is holding a "Meet Your Councilor" event at 9 a.m. Saturday at Three Cups Coffee, 279 W. Marine Drive. Residents are invited to discuss city issues.

LOTTERIES

- OREGON**
- Tuesday's Pick 4:**
- 1 p.m.: 2-2-3-7
 - 4 p.m.: 5-6-3-4
 - 7 p.m.: 6-4-2-4
 - 10 p.m.: 2-5-5-8
- Tuesday's Lucky Lines:** 03-08-09-15-18-22-28-32
- Estimated jackpot: \$22,000
- Tuesday's Mega Millions:** 8-23-24-25-27, Mega Ball: 9
- Estimated jackpot: \$208 million
- WASHINGTON**
- Tuesday's Daily Game:** 7-4-4
- Tuesday's Keno:** 02-05-10-13-14-18-21-25-33-36-39-54-56-59-62-71-75-78-79-80
- Tuesday's Match 4:** 03-14-17-21

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Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style. Death notices and upcoming services will be published at no charge. Notices must be submitted by 9 a.m. the day of publication.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at www.dailyastorian.com/forms/obits, by email at ewilson@dailyastorian.com, placed via the funeral home or in person at The Daily Astorian office, 949 Exchange St. in Astoria. For more information, call 503-325-3211, ext. 257.

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