

Three years later, a murder victim’s parents are still hoping for answers

Beach was left near the dunes

By ALYSSA EVANS
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH, Wash. — More than three years have passed since the murder of Jeffrey Beach.

His parents, Keith and Laurie Beach, have been looking for answers ever since. “When you lose a child or a loved one, you don’t just pick up and go on,” Laurie Beach said. “The people who know what happened don’t realize the hell we’ve lived the last three years.”



Jeffrey Beach

Beach, 36, was killed on July 3, 2015, while in town for a softball tournament. He was reportedly assaulted twice and left near the dunes by 120th Place. He died of a traumatic injury to his brain.

There are reports of Beach getting into a fight the night of his death. His parents say this was somewhat unusual and surprising because their son was known as a peacemaker among his family and friends.

“He was never in a fight, so when we hear stories that there was a confrontation on the beach, it’s not consistent at all with who he was,” Keith Beach said.

Pacific County Sheriff’s Office Detective Ryan Tully was on vacation at the time of the murder, so the case was originally assigned to Deputy Sean Eastham, who works the night shift.

On July 31, 2015, Tully told Keith Beach the case had been reassigned to him.

“At that point we lost all connection because the detective told me that we couldn’t talk with him, that we had to go directly to the sheriff,” Keith Beach said.

Since the case’s reassignment, Keith and Laurie Beach typically have to reach out to Sheriff Scott Johnson multiple times before receiving a response, Keith Beach said. Johnson did not respond to interview requests.

Shortly after the murder, Keith Beach reached out to the state attorney general’s office to learn if there are resources to help small counties solve cases. He learned that the office helps with the prosecution, not investigation, of cases because counties may have interlocal agreements with surrounding counties. Johnson has told Keith Beach numerous times that the sheriff’s office has the case handled and doesn’t need to bring in support from other agencies, Keith Beach said.

“We’re left in limbo,” Keith Beach said. “We understand that Pacific County is a small county with limited resources to investigate a case like this. The sheriff has reminded me many times over the past three years of budget and manpower restraints that make it more difficult to get things done in a case like this.”

The sheriff’s office still considers the case “active,” although it’s not clear what that means. The parents aren’t aware of any plans to change the status of their son’s case. They haven’t received any information about the autopsy and toxicology reports.

Accountability
Beach’s parents want to make the people who hurt their son accountable and bring clo-



Keith and Debbie Beach came to town in 2016 to raise awareness of their son’s death in July 2015, and also to support a softball team made up of his friends, who came to play in his memory.



Several of Jeffrey Beach’s friends formed a co-ed team called ‘4 Beach,’ and returned to Long Beach to play in a tournament in 2016 after his killing as a way to cope with the death and honor their friend.



Investigators say Jeffrey Beach, 36, was assaulted on a dune trail somewhere near 120th Place during the Fourth of July weekend in 2015. He later died from his injuries.



Tracy Benecke, a longtime friend of Jeffrey Beach, moves in to hug Beach’s father, Keith Beach, pictured at left, after a comeback win during a softball tournament in Long Beach in 2016.

sure for their family by understanding what happened.

“Every day the case remains unsolved, we’re still reminded that we’re victims as well,” Keith Beach said. “I think that gets lost in the shuffle.”

Multiple people have told the parents they thought Beach’s case was solved, Keith Beach said.

The sheriff’s office has questioned people but never publicly named any suspects or made arrests. Some witnesses were never contacted for follow-up questioning, according to Keith Beach.

“Our family was quite involved in everything, so to be in a situation where we don’t know what happened is frustrating,” Laurie Beach said. “We can’t get closure because of our lack of having information.”

A reward for information on Beach’s murder rose to \$36,000 in June after Beacon Plumbing owner Bill Cahill contributed an additional \$25,000 to an existing \$10,000 reward from the parents and \$1,000 from Crime Stoppers.

“We were hoping that somebody would step forward and be able to give the sheriff’s office enough to go on so we could change the status of the case, but so far that hasn’t happened,” Keith Beach said.

Not the first
The loss of their son isn’t the first Keith and Laurie Beach

have had to face. They lost their 17-year-old daughter, Jennifer, in 1991 in automobile accident. The family created the Jennifer Beach Foundation in 2001. The foundation serves victims of child abuse and domestic violence in honor of Jennifer, who wrote a poem about an abused child she met and wanted to help.

“When we lost our daughter, we still had a family,” Keith Beach said.

“We want to do whatever we can, which is very limited, in honor of Jeff to make sure that, No. 1, we do whatever we can to help ensure that the hurtful people are caught. But two, that we don’t suffer in this nowhere-land forever, because I don’t think that’s what he would want.”

Jeff Beach loved baseball and helping others.

“He was the kind of person who would give you stuff whether he needed it or not,” his father said. “If he could help somebody, he would, even if it was detrimental to his own well-being.”

One of Beach’s friends named her daughter after him. Another had her baby’s photos taken with his baseball glove.

During a trip to San Francisco in 2014, Beach took a photo gesturing at the intersection of Beach and Mason, in honor of his friend, Mason. The friend later took a trip to San Francisco to replicate the photo in Jeff’s honor, then combined the two photos and showed them to Keith and Laurie Beach.

Jeff Beach, who was never a runner, helped a friend train for a marathon, so she wouldn’t be running alone at night. He helped opposing players get back on their feet during games. He played catch with kids at the RV park where he stayed during his trip to Long Beach.

“Jeff was not the one who told us a lot of this,” Laurie Beach said. “When I would find someone who would tell me, ‘Did you know Jeff had done that?’ and I would mention it to Jeff, he would just shrug his shoulders.”

Beach’s family and friends traveled to Long Beach a year after his death for a softball game in his honor. After every game, Jeff’s teammates honor him with a cheer.

“I think Jeff would want us to be in a place where we didn’t have so many unknowns right now,” Keith Beach said. “In hopes of finding closure, we hope that the sheriff’s office and the prosecutor’s office would use all the tools available to them, which we don’t believe is being done.”

Measure 104 would make state fee hikes harder

Supermajority would have to approve

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — If you drive, hunt, or run a business in Oregon, you pay a fee to the state for that privilege.

A measure on the statewide ballot in November could make it harder for the Legislature to increase those fees.

Oregon imposes thousands of fees on everything from wastewater permits to overnight camping in state parks, and is expected to round up about \$1.5 billion worth of them in the two-year budget.

Many fees are tied to the state’s commodity commissions, which promote and regulate certain crops like blueberries and hazelnuts, and licensing boards, which oversee professions from teaching to tattooing.

Creating or increasing fees now only takes a majority of legislators to say “yes.”

Supporters of Measure 104 say they want the state’s constitution to require a greater number of lawmakers to approve fee changes.

If the measure passes, three-fifths, or a supermajority, of lawmakers in the state House and Senate would have to vote “yes” to pass fee changes.

That matters because the current makeup of the Legislature — where Democrats are one seat shy of a supermajority in each chamber — means that bills subject to a three-fifths voting requirement have to get some Republican support to pass.

Supporters point to recent efforts by Democratic lawmakers to create a carbon pricing program as justification for changing the constitution.

They say such legislation raises revenue but isn’t technically considered a tax, which requires 60 percent approval by lawmakers in the House and Senate.

“By calling it a fee instead of a tax, they get around a three-fifths majority,” said Paul Rainey, who manages the Yes on 104 campaign.

Measure 104 would also impose stricter voting requirements on bills that change tax credits, exemptions and deductions.

The campaign for the ballot measure has received significant backing from the real estate industry, which is eager to protect a tax deduction on mortgage interest that saves Oregonians about \$500 million on their taxes a year.

And had Measure 104’s provisions been in place earlier this year, certain Ore-

gon business owners may have gotten a bigger tax break in the wake of last year’s recent federal tax overhaul.

A majority of lawmakers voted to disallow a 20 percent income tax deduction for qualifying business owners on the state level, sparking a lawsuit from state Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, and state Sen. Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass.

Anthony Smith, state director at the Oregon chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business, said that a non-controversial fee increase likely would pass even with a supermajority requirement.

And Smith thinks such a requirement will require legislators to work together to reach a consensus on the more controversial fees, which he would see as a positive change.

“More debate, more consensus, more coalition building is probably a good thing for the state,” Smith said.

Meanwhile, state Sen. Mark Hass, chairman of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee, opposes the measure because he thinks tax policy shouldn’t be written into the constitution.

He said including fees in its provisions could affect the overall budget process. Budget bills often include fee increases.

“I think it’s not out of the question, it could have an effect,” Hass said. “Now you’re giving decision-making on day-to-day operations to a small group of people, 12 to 13 people, on a fee, whether it’s necessary to a particular group or to run a state agency.”

Hass, a Democrat from Beaverton in the Legislature since 2001, said fees have gotten more controversial with the rise of the fiscally conservative Tea Party.

“There’s just certain people who will vote against all fees, no matter what,” Hass said, “Even if the constituent group requested the fee increase, they’ll still vote against it.”

Revenue to fund state operations is harder to come by, which means the state has been more dependent sources such as fees, said Legislative Fiscal Officer Ken Rocco.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, for example, got about 29 percent of its revenues from license fees in the 2015-17 budget.

“I think what people are more apt to question is, how often do you raise fees?” Rocco said. “And how big is the increase? And how is it justifiable, what are you doing differently that would require you to generate more money from fees?”

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group and Salem Reporter.

Roger4Astoria.com
Roger Rocka
City Council, Ward 1

WANTED
Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber
Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA
Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500

NEED A LIFT?
Power Lift/Recliner
Sized for both Men & Women
Choice of Fabric Colors
Star Furniture
“Your local quality furniture resource”
130 S Holladay Drive Seaside, Oregon
503.738.8999
starfurnitureseaside.com

BRUCE JONES FOR MAYOR
BRUCEJONESFORMAYOR.COM

VOLUNTEER PICK OF THE WEEK

Lucky
11 year old Pit Terrier
Want to be lucky in love? This sweet girl has what it takes to be your dear companion.
Sponsored by Bayshore Animal Hospital
CLATSOP COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER
1315 SE 19th St., Warrenton • 861- PETS
www.dogsncats.org Noon to 4pm, Tues-Sat

3 Leg Torso & North Coast Symphonic Band Dances of Enchantment
Sunday, October 28th, 2018 at 2:00PM
Doors open at 1:30PM

Liberty Theater • 1203 Commercial, Astoria
\$15 Adults, \$7 Students, Children 12 & Under: Free