

Ilwaco man sentenced to 17 years for stabbings

Mental illness, drug use were factors in crime

By **NATALIE ST. JOHN**
Chinook Observer

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — The Ilwaco resident who stabbed three men in April will spend 17 years in state prison.

At a hearing last week in Pacific County Superior Court, Mitchell Marteeny, 51, pleaded guilty to two counts of first-degree assault with a deadly weapon and one count of second-degree assault with a deadly weapon.

The plea came after Marteeny spent several weeks undergoing treatment and evaluation for his mental illness. During the hearing, Marteeny was polite and responsive, but signs of the delusions that led him to attack his neighbors still lingered.

Marteeny was arrested in an Ilwaco apartment complex in April after he attempted to set his neighbor's car on fire, then stabbed him. He also stabbed two men who tried to intervene. All of the men recovered from their injuries, but police said Marteeny could easily have killed them.

Marteeny attacked the men because he believed his neighbor was holding women hostage and raping them. Police paid numerous visits to Marteeny's residence in the months before the stabbing. They never found any evidence that the neighbors were breaking the law, but Marteeny's behavior continued to escalate.

In early June, the court ordered Marteeny to spend up to 90 days at Yakima Competency Restoration Center. The state-run facility serves mentally ill defendants who are not able to understand the nature of the court proceedings or to participate in their own



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An Ilwaco man involved in stabbings last April was sentenced to 17 years in prison.

defense. Residents are treated with medications and classes, then re-evaluated.

When Marteeny arrived in late June, he was cooperative, but still insisted he was a victim rather than the perpetrator in the case and described having auditory hallucinations.

A psychiatrist re-evaluated Marteeny in late August after he reported no longer believing he was a victim.

Marteeny told the psychiatrist his depression and other mental health problems intensified after his wife's death, about one-and-a-half years before the stabbing. He acknowledged using large amounts of hallucinogens in his youth, and going through periods of intense methamphetamine use over the past 30 years. He said his meth consumption around the time of

the attack contributed to his worsening mental health.

The psychiatrist concluded Marteeny suffered from paranoid beliefs, "odd social behaviors" and other symptoms possibly caused by schizophrenia or another type of delusion-inducing disorder. However, he said, it appeared that Marteeny's symptoms clearly worsened when he smoked meth and seemed to diminish when he was sober. He determined Marteeny was able to participate in his legal case.

In court, Marteeny sat passively in his chair as his attorney, Harold Karlsvik, discussed his client's progress under treatment.

"Mr. Marteeny is a changed person to the person I was originally assigned to," Karlsvik said. "He is thinking rationally about this case."

Marteeny appeared confident and lucid as he answered Superior Court Judge Doug Goelz's questions. However,

the defendant did not express remorse when Goelz asked if he wanted to say anything.

"I plead for mercy," Marteeny replied, smiling.

"I read your file before court this morning and I can't put the two together," Goelz told Marteeny. "I can't put the chaos and evil that was in your mind on the day of the offenses and the person I see in court."

Marteeny revealed that he was still not totally in touch with reality when he told Goelz his attack "was self-defense." Goelz told him it was important for him to take responsibility for his actions.

"I am," Marteeny said. Goelz said he believed Marteeny understood the seriousness of his crimes, but still deserved a tough punishment.

"I think the 204 (months), along with your age make that a very serious sentence for you. I think it's appropriate," Goelz said.

Oregon clears backlog of more than 5,000 rape kits

Testing has led to convictions

By **CONRAD WILSON**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon has cleared its backlog of more than 5,000 rape kits, state police announced.

In 2015, Oregon State Police released an audit that found 4,700 rape kits had not been tested. The Portland Police Bureau possessed more than half of them.

That same year, the Multnomah County district attorney received a \$2 million grant to test rape kits in Marion, Multnomah and Lane counties. Kits from 2014 and earlier were tested at a forensic lab in Utah.

In 2016, the Legislature passed "Melissa's Law" — named for Melissa Bitler, a 14-year-old who was raped and murdered in 2001 — and helped expose the backlog of thousands of tests.

The legislation required law enforcement agencies to develop their own policies for how to process untested sexual assault kits.

It also added staff and resources at the state crime lab to process the kits.

"Statewide we're at full submission," said Amity Girt, Multnomah County deputy district attorney who oversees sex crimes convictions. "Everyone hopes that there won't be another backlog."

By testing backlogged kits for DNA, prosecutors in Multnomah County

won four convictions. Testing also has resulted in two additional indictments. Prosecutors in Lane County also won a conviction related to the testing.

"We would anticipate there would be future indictments," Girt said. "It's going to continue to be a process."

Kits sent to Utah were mostly tested for male DNA on evidence, including underwear. Results ranged from no DNA to strong samples.

"Say they do get good results, that data goes to the OSP Forensic Laboratory," Susan Hormann, a former DNA supervisor at OSP's lab who was hired by Multnomah County to help clear the backlog, said in an interview last year.

From there, the data was entered into the FBI's national DNA database.

"They're able to search this evidence profile that we have from this sexual assault kit against all the offenders across the United States and all the evidence profiles across the United States," Hormann said.

The hope is that the new evidence matches evidence from another case or a known offender.

Though thousands of kits have been tested in Oregon, most didn't provide useful information or include any DNA evidence.

Still, others have resulted in several hundred new entries into the FBI's DNA database and more than 100 matches to evidence in other cases or to other known offenders.

Feds say heroin, fentanyl remain biggest drug threat

Overdoses at record high

By **MICHAEL BALSAMO**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Drug overdose deaths hit the highest level ever recorded in the United States last year, with an estimated 200 people dying per day, according to a report by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Most of that was the result of a record number of opioid-related deaths.

Preliminary figures show more than 72,000 people died in 2017 from drug overdoses across the country. About a week ago, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said overdose deaths, while still slowly rising, were beginning to level off, citing figures from late last year and early this year.

The DEA's National Drug Threat Assessment, which was released today, shows that heroin, fentanyl and other opioids continue to be the highest drug threat in the nation.

But federal officials are concerned that methamphetamine and cocaine are being seen at much higher levels in areas that haven't historically been hotspots for those drugs.

The DEA is also worried that people are exploiting marijuana legalization to traffic cannabis into the illicit market or to states that don't have medicinal or recreational-use marijuana laws, according to the report.

The preliminary data also showed 49,060 people died from opioid-related overdose deaths, a rise from the reported 42,249 opioid overdose deaths in 2016.



AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin
Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar speaks on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., in June.

President Donald Trump has declared the U.S. opioid crisis as a "public health emergency" and just last week pledged to put an "extremely big dent" in the scourge of drug addiction.

Fatal heroin overdoses rose nationwide between 2015 and 2016, with a nearly 25 percent increase in the Northeast and more than 22 percent in the South. Most of the heroin sold in the U.S. is being trafficked from Mexico, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers seize the most amount of heroin along the Mexico border, near San Diego, California, the report said.

Fentanyl and other related opioids, which tend to be cheaper and much more potent than heroin, remain one of the biggest concerns for federal drug agents.

The DEA has said China is a main source of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids that have been flooding the U.S.

market. China has pushed back against the characterization, and U.S. officials have stressed they work closely with their Chinese counterparts as they try to stem the flow of drugs.

Legislation that Trump signed last week will add treatment options and force the U.S. Postal Service to screen overseas packages for fentanyl.

Azar said in a speech last week that toward the end of 2017 and through the beginning of this year the number of drug overdose deaths "has begun to plateau." However, he was not indicating that deaths were going down, but that they appear to be rising at a slower rate than previously seen.

Last month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released preliminary figures that appear to show a slowdown in overdose deaths from December to March. In that period, the figures show that the pace of the increase over the previous 12 months has slowed from 10 percent to 3 percent, according to the preliminary CDC figures.

Even if a slowdown is underway, no one is questioning the fact that the nation is dealing with the deadliest drug overdose epidemic in its history. While prescription opioid and heroin deaths appear to be leveling off, deaths involving fentanyl, cocaine and meth-

amphetamines are on the rise, according to CDC data.

The DEA's report also noted that methamphetamine is making its way into communities where the drug normally wasn't heavily used, the report said. Chronic use of meth, a highly addictive stimulant, can cause paranoia, visual and auditory hallucinations and delusions, studies have shown.

As the government enacted laws that limited access to cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine — the ingredient used to cook meth with other household chemicals — or required the medications to be placed behind pharmacy counters, officials discovered the number of meth labs began to drop.

But the DEA has found the gap is being filled by Mexican and Latin American drug cartels that had primarily dabbled in heroin and cocaine trafficking. A saturated market on the West Coast is now driving the cartels to peddle methamphetamine into the Northeast, using the same routes they use for heroin and other drugs.

Officials also warn that because of more cocaine production in South American countries, including Colombia, they expect to see larger shipments at the Mexican border.

Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldívar contributed to this report.

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