

Guilty plea in Cannon Beach child murder case

Smith faces life in prison, but avoids death penalty

By Kyle Spurr
EO Media Group

Jessica Smith will face life in prison after she pleaded guilty Wednesday, Aug. 13, to drowning her toddler daughter and slashing her teenager in a Cannon Beach resort in July 2014.

Smith, 42, of Vancouver, Washington, entered Alford pleas to aggravated murder and attempted aggravated murder following two days of settlement talks in Circuit Court. An Alford plea is a guilty plea from a defendant who proclaims their innocence, but admits the prosecution has enough evidence to prove they are guilty.

Smith remained seated in court, kept her head down and spoke quietly as she answered for her crimes. In a written plea petition, she accepted the evidence against her, "wishing to avoid additional stress and harm" to her surviving daughter, Alana Smith, her family and herself.

Last week, Judge Cindee Matyas allowed a video confession to be played at trial. The video was seen as a final blow to Smith's defense.

In the recording, Smith admits to drowning her 2-year-old daughter, Isabella Smith. "The intention was to drown



DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

Jessica Smith pleaded guilty Wednesday, Aug. 13, in Clatsop County Circuit Court to aggravated murder and attempted aggravated murder of her children.

her and end her misery," she said.

Smith, who could have faced the death penalty, will serve a minimum of 40 years in prison, according to the plea agreement. A sentencing hearing is scheduled in Circuit Court next week.

Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis said

avoiding trial will spare Smith's family, especially her surviving daughter.

Alana Smith and Smith's ex-husband, Gregory Smith, are invited to speak at the sentencing hearing.

The morning after Smith murdered Isabella and wounded Alana, she abandoned the hotel room. House-

keeping staff could hear Alana Smith slipping and falling, and called 911 to report a disoriented female.

Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn and Cannon Beach Assistant Fire Chief Frank Swedenborg were the first to respond. They saw the two girls laying on the bed. Isabella appeared

lifeless and posed, and Alana had been bleeding profusely from cuts on her neck and wrists.

After a three-day search, a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter crew spotted Smith near her gold 2007 Chevy Suburban on a heavily forested logging road about 15 miles east of Cannon Beach.

A Clatsop County Sheriff's Office detective and FBI special agent drove an SUV down forest roads to arrest Smith.

Alana Smith, now 15, told investigators her mother helped her cut her own throat and drowned her sister because they did not want to live with her father. Alana is now living with family in Washington state.

Jessica and Gregory Smith separated in April 2014. The girls' father sought a custody evaluation less than two weeks before the murder. Smith was supposed to return the children to her ex-husband the day they were discovered in the hotel room.

In the video interview taken at the Seaside Police Department the day she was arrested, Smith said she and Alana were terrified of her ex-husband. Instead of bringing the children back, Smith made specific plans to drug her daughters and used razor blades to cut Alana's throat and wrists.

Smith's defense lawyer William Falls and Lynne Morgan, who previously described her as having a mental breakdown, said Wednesday they were confident in her physical and mental health.

"We believe she is competent, and that she understands what she is doing at this point," Falls said.

Judge Matyas determined in June that Smith was mentally competent had the case gone to trial.

CANNON BEACH POLICE LOG

There were multiple instances of camping within city limits and property lost or found.

Aug. 7

12:20 a.m., Hemlock and Chena Street: Driving under the influence of intoxication: Male subject arrested for DUII. After further investigation, the subject provided two breath samples that determined his BAC at 0.16 percent. He was booked, cited and released to a sober family member.

12:48 a.m., 500 Block South Hemlock: Assisted Fire Department with medical call. Female having chest pains.

4:40 p.m., 100 Block N Hemlock: Shoplift of clothing from store.

9:04 p.m., Hemlock/Forest Lawn: Unknown subject had placed a third sign on the street sign. Violation of city code.

Aug. 9

3:15 p.m., 100 Block East Gower: 7-year-old became separated from

family. Contact was made with the father who came to the Police Department and was reunited with son.

3:32 p.m., Semaphore 5/Beach: Assisted Cannon Beach Lifeguards and Cannon Beach Fire Department with water rescue.

4:36 p.m., 100 Block East Washington Street: Subjects contacted for suspicious behavior. Verbally trespassed from Community Church property. Subjects advised that they could contact the pastor, via

phone, when he returned, to see about clearing the trespass.

Aug. 11

7:11 a.m., 3400 Block South Hemlock: Officer received a report of stolen American, state of Oregon and Canada flags.

11:01 p.m., East Second Street: Courtesy ride given to intoxicated male from the Sewer Ponds to Tolovana Inn.

Aug. 12

10:35 p.m., Highway 101 Milepost

26: Traffic stop. Subject arrested for criminal driving with a suspended license.

Aug. 13

5:21 p.m., Beach/Larch: Complaint of unwanted subjects wandering the hotel property and sleeping on the beach. Officers arrived. Subjects were trespassed from the hotel property and warned for sleeping on the beach.

6:23 p.m., Shannon Lane/Arch Cape: Assist with missing child.

Housing Authority will hold its annual meeting

The annual and regular board meeting of the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority will be held Sept. 1 at 10 a.m. at the NOHA office, 147 S. Main Ave., Warrenton. For agenda items, call NOHA at 503-861-0119, ext. 112.

WALTER E. NELSON CO.
More than just paints, stains and janitorial supplies!

Pool, Spa & Fountain

Packing Materials



Grill Cleaners, Carpet & Upholstery Cleaners and MORE!



Paints, Stains & Supplies



Benjamin Moore®

2240 Commercial Street, Astoria
503.325.6362
www.WalterENelson.com
Monday-Friday 8 am to 5 pm

Making Sweet Memories for Over 50 Years

Freshest Homemade:
Saltwater Taffy
Chocolates
Caramel Corn
Caramel Apples
& MORE!!
Wedding Treats & Gift Baskets Available!

TWO LOCATIONS
Downtown Cannon Beach & Seaside Outlet Mall

THE ONLY TAFFY MADE IN CANNON BEACH!

Making Sweet Memories Since 1969

Bruce's Candy Kitchen

www.brucescandy.com • 503-436-2641 • 503-738-7828

Find us on Facebook

LOTS OF PLACES YOU CAN PICK UP A COMPLIMENTARY COPY OF THE CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

CANNON BEACH
Cannon Beach Bakery
Cannon Beach Book Company
Cannon Beach Beach Store
Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce
Cannon Beach City Hall
Cannon Beach Conference Center
Cannon Beach Family Market
Cannon Beach Historical Center
Cannon Beach Hotel
Cannon Beach Liquor Store
Cannon Beach Property Management
Cannon Beach RV Resort
Cannon Beach Vacation Rentals
Cascade Sotheby's Realty
Duane Johnson Real Estate
Ecola Creek Lodge
EVOO
Hallmark Inns & Resorts
Inn at Cannon Beach
Inn at Haystack Rock
Mariner Market
Martin Hospitality
Mo's Restaurant

SEASIDE
Picnic Basket
Pig 'N Pancake
Purple Moon/Morris' Fireside Restaurant
RE/MAX Coastal Advantage
Sea Ranch RV Park
Sea Sprite at Haystack Rock
Sea Sprite on the Estuary
Surfcrest Market
Sweet Basil's Cafe & The Wine Bar
The Land's End Motel
The Ocean Lodge
The Stephanie Inn
The Waves Motel
Tolovana Inn
US Bank/La Luna Loca
Windermere Stellar Real Estate

GEARHART
Windermere Stellar Real Estate

4,000 COPIES DISTRIBUTED EACH MONTH