

Judge: Houfmuse to remain in custody

Judge not convinced of self-defense or presumption of guilt

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

The case of a Hermiston man charged with murder will go to trial in October after hearings last week revealed new information in the case — but not enough for the judge to agree to his release.

Tyree Houfmuse, 35, will remain in the Umatilla County Jail on charges of murder, manslaughter and felon in possession of a firearm. He has been in jail since June 2017 for the murder of James Cragun last Memorial Day weekend. Houfmuse's trial is set to begin October 29.

Over multiple days, Judge Eva Temple heard arguments for Houfmuse's release after his attorney, Kara Davis, argued he had acted in self-defense.

District Attorney Dan Primus tried to convince the judge that there is enough presumption that Houfmuse is guilty of murder that Temple should order him to stay in jail with no bail.

Temple did not grant either side's request, and reduced Houf-



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Tyree Houfmuse is led into the courtroom of Umatilla County Circuit Court Judge Eva Temple for a pre-trial hearing on March 27, 2018, at the Stafford Hansell Government Center in Hermiston.

muse's bail from \$1 million to \$250,000. She stated that there was not enough evidence to rule out self-defense, and that she did not see a strong presumption of guilt, either.

"There is a lot of contradictory

evidence in this case," Temple said after hearing both arguments. She said that according to Cragun's autopsy, he had several injuries that have not been discussed elsewhere in the case, such as lacerations above his eye and bruised knees.

She also noted that the primary contributor of DNA on the gun was Cragun's. Houfmuse's DNA has not been found on the weapon. Primus said the state cannot explain the lack of Houfmuse's DNA on the gun.

Over the two days of hearings, Temple heard more than eight hours of video interviews with Houfmuse and several witnesses, including a woman both Houfmuse and Cragun had dated, and two women who were present when Cragun was shot.

Houfmuse and the witnesses described the night Cragun died. They said Cragun drove up to the apartment Houfmuse and the woman were going into. Cragun got out of the car, jumped over a hedge and started moving toward Houfmuse.

Cragun had been convicted of assaulting the woman two years prior, and she had a restraining order against him. The *East Oregonian* does not name victims of domestic violence. Detectives also found text messages on the wom-

an's phone, from Cragun, threatening Houfmuse's life and hers.

"If that doesn't frighten you and put you in fear of felonious assault, what does?" Davis asked.

Houfmuse said Cragun came running toward him and took a gun out of a bag. Houfmuse said he grabbed Cragun's hands and twisted the gun, and the gun went off.

Primus said the autopsy shows the entry point of the bullet to be on Cragun's upper left back area — which he said makes it impossible for the gun to have been twisted as Houfmuse claims.

But Davis argued that Houfmuse had ample reason to fear for his life.

"The state's argument is that my client is paranoid at the threats Cragun was making," she said. "That is textbook self-defense."

Davis also said that the state had waited several months to request lab testing for physical evidence in the case, which she said led to a delay of six months. The trial was originally scheduled to start in April.

"He's been in jail almost a year now," she said. "We have a trial date in six months because the state didn't do their job."

Temple also heard an audio interview with Cameron Teem, a man who had shared a jail cell with

Houfmuse at the Umatilla County Jail, and who gave an officer a detailed account of what Houfmuse told him had happened the night Cragun died.

In the interview, Teem offers several specific details that Houfmuse told him about the incident. He said that Houfmuse admitted to him that he did have the gun with him the night Cragun died, and was carrying it in his backpack. He states that when Cragun came rushing toward him, he swung the backpack around to his front and pulled the gun out of it.

Teem also stated that Houfmuse said he egged Cragun on in his threatening statements, and intended to set him up to come there that night.

Temple said at this point, she does not know that Houfmuse brought the gun with him, and that she was baffled by the lack of his DNA on the weapon. She stated that at this point, there was not enough evidence to indicate that the shooting was set up by Houfmuse.

She said she would continue to hold Houfmuse in jail before he goes to trial.

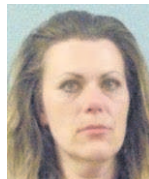
"Obviously there is a lot more evidence in this case than what's been presented," Temple said. "It appears this is not the case I thought it was."

Crash into building leads to arrest of burglary suspect

By PHIL WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

The crash of a vehicle fleeing law enforcement Sunday in Hermiston led to one arrest for burglary and other charges, but two suspects remain at large.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office in a written statement reported deputy Nathan Rankin at 11:22 a.m. Sunday was driving his patrol vehicle north on Northeast 10th Street near Sandstone Middle School, Hermiston, when he saw a newer model, gray Toyota Corolla leaving the driveway of the residence at 395 N.E. 10th St. Three people were in the car, and Rankin recognized the vehicle belonged to Amanda Lynn Clawson, 35, of Hermiston.



Amanda Clawson

Circuit Court records show Rankin on March 28 gave Clawson a ticket for driving uninsured.

As Rankin passed by, the car turned south onto Northeast 10th, accelerated and whirled west onto East Ridgeway Avenue. Rankin activated his car's overhead lights and turned around to follow. The Toyota sped through residential areas and eventually drove onto Diagonal Road and then East Main Street. The sheriff's office stated Rankin turned off his siren and ended the pursuit out of concerns for public safety.

The deputy saw the vehicle speed west on East Main Street and crash into a building at 495 E. Main St. Rankin neared the crash and saw two males and a female run from the scene, and he captured Clawson.

"Clawson admitted she was driving the vehicle," according to the sheriff's office, and she said she tried to elude Rankin because one of her passengers told her he



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY KARI GOODHEART

A car sticks out of a stairwell at 495 E. Main Street, Hermiston, after a chase on Sunday.

had a warrant. She would not identify her two passengers.

Clawson told Rankin she had methamphetamine in her purse and firearms inside her vehicle. Rankin searched the car and found approximately 1/8th ounce of possi-

ble meth and several ounces of marijuana. He also saw two handguns, a large metal safe, jewelry and paperwork with the name "Maret," which is the name of the family that lives at 395 N.E. 10th St.

Oregon State Police trooper Dain Gardner assisted Rankin. He went to the Maret residence, discovered the back door was damaged and contacted the family, who confirmed their residence was burglarized.

"They went to the crash scene and identified their stolen property in Clawson's vehicle," the sheriff's office reported.

Rankin also found what appeared to be a hand grenade in the car. The sheriff's office called the Oregon State Police Explosives Unit, whose members determined it "to be a non-explosive, fake device." The sheriff's office did not yet know if the item came from the Maret home or was in the car already.

The sheriff's office booked Clawson in the county jail, Pendleton, on the following: misdemeanor and felony attempt to flee, first-degree trespass, possession of burglary tools, two counts of first-degree theft, possession and delivery of meth and possession of a hoax destructive device.

The sheriff's office reported the two other suspects remain at large, and the investigation is continuing.

Pendleton boy, 12, killed in I-82 crash near Umatilla

HERMISTON HERALD

Nathan Salazar of Pendleton died May 8 in a crash near Umatilla. He was 12.

Oregon State Police reported the stormy weather at the time could be a contributing factor.

State police, Umatilla County Fire District 1 and other agencies at about 7:15 p.m. responded to a single-vehicle crash on Interstate 82 outside Umatilla.

The preliminary investigation indicated Raymond Ramone Dick Shippen-tower, 32, of Pendleton, was driving a silver Mazda MPV westbound on the highway. The minivan veered off the road and rolled over in the median.

Nathan was a passenger in the vehicle. He died from injuries at the scene.

The other passengers were Christina Marie Leyva, 38, of Pendleton, and a

3-year-old girl. They and the driver suffered minor or non-life threatening injuries, according to state police.

Police and road crews restricted I-82 to one lane for three-and-a-half hours during the investigation.

Nathan was a student at Washington Elementary School in Pendleton, where staff sent a letter to parents identifying Nathan and telling parents how their children could react to grief.

Stanfield plant catches fire again

HERMISTON HERALD

Umatilla County Fire District 1 responded to the 3D Idapro Solutions dehydration plant in Stanfield for the fifth time in about a year on May 8.

At 10:30 p.m., Umatilla County Fire District 1 sent a full response to the plant at 405 Hoosier Lane, Stanfield, according to Battalion Chief JW Roberts.

The plant has had at least five fires in recent memory, Roberts said, and each one has required a "full, real-deal response" as smoke from the bag house fills the building. Damage to the building was limited, he said.

The district later posted on Facebook that the fire district has not legally been able to conduct a fire code

inspection in the part of the plant where the fires keep occurring because it is still considered to be a "new building under construction" under the law.

The district stated that it is cooperating with an investigation by the Oregon OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) that started after the last fire.

At about 11 p.m. that same night, a small barn caught fire at 1299 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston.

Roberts said all available personnel and a few from other agencies responded.

Roberts said the barn housed chickens and stored hay, and no one was injured in either fire.

All told, Umatilla County Fire District 1 responded

to 20 incidents between 8 a.m. May 8 and 8 a.m. May 9, Roberts said, which was above the average of 12 or so.



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