

# Request denied: Death penalty case goes to trial

## Judge says no to excluding grisly evidence in Seaside toddler murder

By Kyle Spurr  
EO Media Group

An effort to dismiss one of the worst child-abuse cases in Clatsop County was denied by a Circuit Court judge.

Judge Paula Brownhill ruled against the defense lawyers for Randy Roden, the live-in boyfriend accused of murdering his girlfriend's 2-year-old daughter and abusing her two sons in their Seaside apartment.

During a two-day hearing in April, defense lawyers Thomas Huseby and Robert Axford argued for the case to be dismissed, or at least to have evidence excluded, such as the adult-sized bite marks found on the three children, the blood spatter in the apartment and the use of the term "torture."

Judge Brownhill denied the defense lawyers' requests this week in a written opinion. She did defer her ruling on the bite mark evidence and asked for a private hearing before testimony is given at trial.

Overall, Chief Deputy District Attorney Ron Brown said he is pleased with the judge's ruling to move the case forward to trial in September, and to allow the prosecution to present the gruesome evidence.

"It's all systems go in September," Brown said.

**Traumatized children**

Roden, 28, who is facing the death penalty if convicted, is already serving an eight-year prison sentence for violating probation from a previous domestic violence conviction.

He is accused of torturing and murdering Evangelina Wing in December 2014. An autopsy found the toddler apparently died of battered child syndrome with blunt force trauma to her head.

Roden is also accused of abusing the two brothers, Patrick Wing, now 3, and Peydon Kahclamat-Harding, now 7. The boys are living with family in California.

Doctors describe the children's injuries as torture. A pediatric doctor testified in April



EO MEDIA/FILE PHOTO

Defense attorney Conor Huseby leads Randy Roden away after a hearing at Clatsop County Courthouse.

that Peydon is one of the most traumatized children she had ever seen.

Prosecutors believe Evangelina Wing and her brothers were tortured, burned, bitten and caged in the Seaside apartment their mother, Dorothy Wing, shared with Roden.

Wing, 26, pleaded guilty in January to first-degree man-

slaughter and two counts of first-degree criminal mistreatment. She was sentenced to more than 15 years in prison, contingent on her truthfully testifying at Roden's trial.

**Attempts to dismiss**

Roden's defense lawyers attempted to dismiss the case by claiming doctors never

tested the children's tissue for a dangerous flesh-eating virus known as methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus infection. The defense has an expert — Janice Ophoven, a pediatric forensic pathologist — who claims the toddler likely died from complications of the infection, rather than from blunt-force trauma.

The two brothers also showed signs of the infection, she said.

"(The doctors) acted in good faith," Brownhill concluded. "Moreover, it was not apparent in December 2014 that testing more tissue for MRSA would produce evidence favorable to the defendant."

The defense lawyers tried to claim Roden does not qualify for the death penalty because he is intellectually disabled. Brownhill denied their request, concluding that Roden illustrated a history of bad behavior, not intellectual disabilities.

Throughout his school years in Georgia, Roden threaten to kill himself, threatened to kill teachers and other students, hit and slapped other students, threw things in class and used foul and vulgar language.

"He was in special education services in school because of his behavior, not his intellect," Brownhill wrote. "He earned good grades when he wanted to play football. His poor grades were due in large part to absenteeism and his refusal to work."

# Mother, daughter saved from rough Seaside surf

Just after 4 p.m., Tuesday, June 14, waves at Seaside beaches were high. "It was a mess, we were having squalls at the time," City Manager Mark Winstanley said. "The tide was going out and going out hard."

When a mother and daughter drifted too far into the water off the beach near Avenue S, Seaside Fire and Rescue was called. The pair had not been seen for several minutes. Without a distinct reference point, lifeguards Shara Ford, Sam Whisler, Ben Hamar and David Rankin entered the ocean at the last point the victims were seen. Contact was made three blocks south on the outside breakers.

The mother and daughter, who were visiting extended family from Utah, were safely returned and transferred to an ambulance for treatment. Both had mild hypothermia. One was transported to an area hospital for further evaluation, according to David Rankin, division operations chief of Seaside Fire Department.

"Our fire department continues to have very dedicated lifeguards and firefighters — many of whom are volunteers — who have put in a lot of time over the last couple of years training for ocean



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Seaside lifeguards and firefighters came to the aid of two family members caught in the surf.**

rescues in addition to all the other fire, rescue, and emergency medical training we are required to do," Rankin said.

The department has not received updates since the incident, he added.

"It was a cooperative effort between the lifeguards and the rest of the fire department, in addition to Medix Ambulance in responding to the incident and getting both victims out of the water and to the ambulance safely," Rankin said. "Ocean rescues are typically chaotic, fast-paced emergencies with minimal information and are manpower intensive."

By Thursday afternoon,

the Seaside Fire Department's Facebook page was filled with appreciation. "You guys rock," said Seaside High School grad Sharon Mowick. "Thank you for all your service."

Others echoed the sentiments.

"It's difficult to find people once they've been washed off the beach," Winstanley said Thursday. "If you see lifeguards, you might say thank-you to them. Their jobs are not just picking up trash. Every summer they end up doing beach rescues, and this is one where people would probably have lost their lives."

**CORRECTION:** In the Seaside High School Class of 2016 graduation section, information regarding graduating senior Michael Oberembt was incorrect. The corrected entry is below .



## MICHAEL OBEREMBT

**Parents or Guardian:** Andrew and Trixi Oberembt

**College Plans:** Attend Clatsop Community College

**Career Plans:** Work in computer repair or computer programming

**Pacifica Project:** Seaside Chamber

**Ambassadors/Honors/Awards/Scholarships:** Student of the Month

# Longtime officer named Seaside police lieutenant

## Bruce Holt takes second in command

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Lt. Bruce Holt was named Seaside police lieutenant at the June 13 City Council meeting. Holt fills vacancies created by the shooting death of Jason Goodding in February and the retirement of Lt. Steve Barnett.

"Tonight I have the honor and privilege to announce Sgt. Bruce Holt is now going to be lieutenant," Seaside Police Chief Dave Ham told the council.

Holt, 58, a 33-year department veteran, was promoted to sergeant in 1989. In years since, he earned detective certifications and taught firearms and emergency vehicle operations. "He's spent numerous hours and a lot of years with law enforcement training," Ham said. "He's a really good asset for the position of lieutenant."

Ham said after the loss of Goodding and the departure of Barnett, Holt "did not skip a beat. He's been playing the second-in-command leadership role even before I asked him. He's a morale builder and a good fit for our department. I'm looking forward to his partnership and teamwork."

Holt said he appreciated the continued opportunity to serve the city and those who visit. "The bottom line is to keep our troops safe, and to encourage the public to be safe in their endeavors in the community they live and visit," Holt said.

Holt's wife of almost 36 years, Dana, was in the audience along with friends and family members. Also in attendance were Cannon Beach police officers Seth Collins and James Jordan.

"You know it's great to see other police people supporting you," Mayor Don Larson said before the council unanimously approved Holt's promotion. "Thank you, Chief, for your choice."



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Lt. Bruce Holt at the Seaside City Council.**

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# Gazette wins regional Society of Professional Journalists award

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The Cannon Beach Gazette and The Daily Astorian, sister publications to the Seaside Signal, combined to win eight awards in the Region 10 Society of Professional Journalists contest. The Gazette won an award for third place, non-weekly publication.

The contest is the largest of its kind in the nation, with 2,300 entrants and 150 categories. "The contest covers some of the least populated areas of the United States, some of its most densely populated, and everything in between, including Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon," according to the group's web-

site. The Portland Business Journal won first place in the category, followed by Seattle's Real Change.

The Daily Astorian competed in the medium category against daily print and online publications with a staff of 11 to 25. The Astorian has 11 regular full-time newsroom staffers.

In the daily category:

**General Excellence:** Second place, staff

**Arts & Entertainment:** First place, Translating nature into art, Rebecca Sedlak

**Arts & Entertainment:** Second place, Goonies fans turn out for bonfire, Erick Bengel

**Business Reporting:** Sec-

ond place, Cowan Dairy: A family affair, Edward Stratton

**Column:** Second place, In One Ear, Elleda Wilson

**Editorial & Commentary:** Third place, Daily Astorian editorials, Steve Forrester

**Best Photo Portfolio:** First place, Joshua Bessex Portfolio

In the nondaily category:

**General Excellence:** Third place, Cannon Beach Gazette



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