

SUSAN I. BAUR
COWLITZ COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

CHIEF CIVIL DEPUTY
Ronald S. Marshall



CHIEF CRIMINAL DEPUTY
Michelle L. Shaffer

Patricia Anderson
Michael H. Evans
Amie L. Hunt
Jill Reuter
James Smith

DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS

Teresa Barnett
Tim Gojio
Michael Nguyen
Jeff Riback
Barbara Vining

Eric Bentson
Megan Hallin
Michelle Nisle
Sarah Silberger
Rebekah Ward

Deri Moore, Administrative Secretary

Angie Gogerty, Victim-Witness Coordinator

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Sue Baur or Michelle Shaffer

MAN SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS ON MANSLAUGHTER CHARGE

On June 25, 2007, Cowlitz County Superior Court Judge Jill Johanson sentenced Bradley Wayne Hamrick, Jr., 21, to 10 years in prison after the defendant pleaded guilty to a charge of Manslaughter in the Second Degree, arising out of an assault that occurred in Longview during the fall of 2006.

According to an investigation conducted by Longview Police detectives, Hamrick and the victim Russell Sprague, 28, of Longview, had been in a disagreement during the two days leading up to the assault. Sprague was watching television at a mutual friend's duplex in the 1700 block of Alabama Street. Hamrick walked into the home and raised his arm as if to punch Sprague, who was seated on a couch. Sprague defended himself by swiping at Hamrick with a folding knife, scratching Hamrick's ribcage. Witnesses at the scene originally told the detectives that Hamrick then left the duplex, picked up an axe handle in the yard, went back inside and struck Sprague in the head with the axe handle. Sprague fell to the ground, and Hamrick hit him at least two more times in the head, fracturing Sprague's skull. Sprague died at Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland on September 22 as a result of the head trauma. Hamrick fled the area and was arrested in Republic on September 27.

According to Chief Criminal Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Michelle Shaffer, several key witnesses in the case later recanted their statements to the detectives and refused to cooperate with either the detectives or the prosecutor's office. "It is an unfortunate reality that some witnesses to violent crimes are sometimes more concerned with protecting their status within their social circle than with getting a just result for the victim, the victim's family and the community as a whole. This sentence doesn't reflect the value of Russell Sprague's life, but instead is a result of the realities we faced with the limited evidence that would have been admissible at trial. This agreement was reached with the assistance of Mr. Sprague's family, who showed an amazing capacity for forgiveness at the defendant's sentencing today."