

Woman convicted of murdering baby denied parole

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LAKE COUNTY – A woman who is serving time in prison for killing her infant 22 years ago has been denied parole for the fourth time.

Leah Ann Jack, 42, will remain in the Central California Women's Facility State Prison in Chowchilla following the denial of her parole at an Aug. 14 hearing held at the prison, Chief Deputy District Attorney Richard Hinchcliff reported Friday.

The commissioners, said Hinchcliff, denied Jack's parole citing her lack of viable parole plans and insufficient participation in substance abuse treatment while in prison, which would cause her to still present an unreasonable risk to public safety.

Hinchcliff said he attended the hearing to argue against the release of Jack, who was convicted of second-degree murder and use of a deadly weapon for killing her 37-day-old baby.

The case's investigation reports indicated that on her 20th birthday – Aug. 5, 1986 – Jack, who was reportedly under the influence of cocaine and methamphetamine, drove the baby and her other two young children up to Hopland Grade west of Lakeport, Hinchcliff said.

On the grade, Jack laid the baby under her car and drove over it three times, then threw it over the side of the road where it was later found by investigators, according to Hinchcliff.

Jack also reportedly threatened her 4-year-old child, saying, "You're next," Hinchcliff said she then drove back to her home in Lakeport, and relatives reported the baby missing.

Investigators later discovered that Jack told an emergency medical technician that she killed the baby because it would not stop crying, Hinchcliff reported. Jack later told an investigator she was not sure why she had done it, but speculated it was because the baby had gotten on her nerves.

Hinchcliff said Jack also had told investigators that she had planned on killing the other two children, but did not do so. Her chronic use of illegal drugs appeared to be a factor that led to her killing the child.

Following her arrest, Jack was sent to Napa State Hospital for five months for an evaluation, said Hinchcliff. She was later returned to face charges after it was discovered that she was fabricating incompetency.

Stephen Hedstrom – who has since become Lake County Superior Judge in Department 4 – prosecuted the case. On March 10, 1987, Lake County Superior Court Judge Robert Crone – who has since retired – sentenced Jack to an indeterminate term of 16 years to life from, said Hinchcliff.

Hinchcliff said Jack first became eligible for parole on Dec. 7, 1996.

The Aug. 14 hearing was the fourth parole hearing at which Jack was denied parole. Hinchcliff also had attended the last hearing, held July 28, 2005.

Hinchcliff said Jack's next parole hearing will be held in two years.

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