

Woman serving sentence for 1987 murder denied parole

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CHINO – A woman convicted of the 1987 murder of a local woman was denied parole for the sixth time. The Board of Prison Terms denied parole to Jane “Daisy” Benson, 61, on June 24.

Benson currently is serving a 17-years-to-life sentence at the California Institute for Women in Chino, according to a Friday statement from the Lake County District Attorney's Office.

On April 1, 1988, Benson was convicted of the second-degree murder of Elaine Wright and of using a firearm to commit the crime, and sentenced to 17 years to life by Judge Robert L. Crone Jr. Stephen O. Hedstrom, who is currently a Superior Court Judge for Lake County, prosecuted Benson.

The murder occurred on June 16, 1987.

Benson went to Wright's residence on Manchester Street in Clearlake to confront her and her boyfriend, because the boyfriend had stolen some property from Benson, according to the case background.

Benson entered the victim’s bedroom with a handgun, where the victim and her boyfriend were lying in bed, and fired two shots into the floor. Both the boyfriend and Benson exited the bedroom briefly, then Benson re-entered the bedroom to again confront the victim.

Witnesses inside the residence heard another shot, and found the victim in bed shot once in the heart.

Benson claimed that she accidentally shot the victim when she was bumped from behind by someone causing the gun to discharge. However, all witnesses at the scene stated that at the time the victim was shot, the only two people in the room were Benson and the victim.

Deputy District Attorney Edward M. Borg participated in the parole hearing from Lake County by video-conferencing to argue against Benson’s release. The video conferencing was arranged by the District Attorney’s Office to avoid having to send a representative to the prison facility. This saved the county and taxpayers funds that would have had to be spent for motel, air flight, car rental and meals for a deputy district attorney to make an in-person appearance at the hearing in Chino.

During the video conference hearing, Borg argued that the time Benson had spent in custody was not sufficient punishment considering the callousness of the crime and Benson’s consistent unwillingness to accept full responsibility for the murder.

Borg further argued that, based upon prison psychiatric reports, Benson still presented an unreasonable risk of danger to others if released because of her lack of insight into her actions and her lack of strategies to avoid re-offending if she were released.

At the parole hearing, Benson continued to claim that the shooting was accidental.

The Board of Prison Terms ruled Benson was unsuitable for parole.

She first became eligible for parole in 1999. This was Benson’s sixth appearance before the Board of Prison Terms to request parole.

Her last parole hearing was on June 26, 2008. The Board of Prison Terms found Benson to be suitable for parole after that hearing; however, that decision was subsequently overturned by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.