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PRESS RELEASE

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Butte/Tehama Serial Killer Sentenced

In the Butte County Superior Court today, a serial killer who operated in Butte and Tehama Counties was sentenced to three life terms without the possibility of parole for murdering three people plus two more life terms for attempting to murder two others.

Ryan Scott Blinston, 38, of Oroville, was previously found guilty on May 17, 2022, after a jury trial. Blinston committed the crimes in both Tehama and Butte Counties over about three weeks in May and June 2021.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said he and Tehama County District Attorney Matt Rogers had agreed to combine the Butte and Tehama charges to be heard by a Butte County jury. The trial verdict came after an almost three-week-long trial.

The evidence at trial established Blinston worked for a local tree-trimming service and was part of a work crew at the Los Molinos home of Loreen Severs, 88, and Homer Severs, 91, on May 18, 2020. After the job was over, later cellphone GPS evidence showed that Blinston returned on an apparent "scouting trip" to Severs' home on the evening of May 22, 2020, before returning to Oroville. The following morning May 23, 2020, Blinston went back to Los Molinos, killed Loreen and attempted to kill Homer after a forced entry into their home. Both had their throats cut. Homer survived the attack but later died of an unrelated illness in December of 2020.

Prosecutors showed Blinston was again part of a tree-trimming work crew that serviced the home of Sandra George, 82, in Oroville on June 4, 2020. The prosecutors proved after the work was completed and the crew left, Blinston returned alone to George's home and killed her. As with the Severs, her throat was slashed while inside her home.

The tree-trimming company that employed Blinston was cooperative in the investigation and prosecution of Blinston.

The jury was further shown that on June 6, 2020, Vicky Cline, 57, an acquaintance of Blinston, was last seen alive with him in downtown Oroville. An arson fire destroyed Cline's car later that night. Blood and DNA evidence on and in Blinston's car was forensically matched back to Cline.

Her body was later discovered by a fisherman and his son in the Feather River near Belden on June 21, 2020. Damage to her throat was consistent with the other murder victims.

In the final counts, Blinston was convicted of attempting to murder a 50-year-old man in the man's remote and isolated Brush Creek motorhome on June 14, 2020, while a Butte County Sheriff's SWAT team was approaching to arrest Blinston for the Cline arson. Blinston fled from the team but was taken into custody after a brief but violent struggle.

Blinston was then held in Butte County Jail as investigators put together the other Butte and Tehama murder cases.

At today's sentencing hearing, Homer and Loreen Severs' nephew, Frank Severs addressed the court through a victim advocate who read his statement to the sentencing Judge Corie Caraway. He described Homer and Loreen Severs' as being the "friendliest people in the world" and he loved them dearly. He stated he will never understand why Blinston killed his aunt and uncle.

Sandra George's niece, Trina Knarr-Basse also addressed the court through a written statement read by the victim advocate. Trina wrote that Sandra George "was a fiercely independent person who loved living in her home. What happened to her, should never happen to anyone. How someone could do this is beyond my comprehension."

Vicky Cline's next of kin addressed the court by thanking all those involved in helping their family seek justice. Cline's children, Samantha Clark and Shandella Clark described Cline as a loving mother with whom they were particularly close. Samantha Clark stated Blinston made her realize "evil and monsters actually do exist." She asked Judge Caraway to assure her and her family that this monster will never have the ability to walk the street as a free man ever again. Shandella said, "While there's a part of me that wants to deny Ryan the satisfaction of knowing all the pain he's inflicted, there's another part of me that needs him to know the magnitude of the suffering he has inflicted on an entire family." Cline's sister, Jeanne Rushing, said, "There are no words to explain the pain this evil person has inflicted on my family."

Robert Smith, the only victim of Blinston to still be alive, addressed the court as well. He described it as a "devastating experience" that has affected him greatly. He asked Judge Caraway to hand the maximum sentence.

In sentencing Blinston, Judge Caraway called him a predator and hoped this sentence would provide some closure to the victims' families. Because of the multiple murders, Blinston was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Ramsey noted Blinston never stated to anyone why he killed and attempted to kill his victims. Ramsey said Blinston is being held without bail in the Butte County jail while he waits to be transported to the California Department of Corrections where "he will spend the remainder of his unnatural life, unable to harm another citizen of Butte or Tehama Counties again."

