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PRESS RELEASE

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Butte/Tehama Serial Killer Found Guilty by Jury

A Butte County jury this morning returned guilty verdicts on an Oroville man accused of a series of murders and attempt murders in Butte and Tehama Counties.

Ryan Scott Blinston, 38, of Oroville was convicted by the seven-man five-woman jury after deliberations that began late yesterday afternoon and continued this morning. He was found guilty of three counts of first-degree murder, two counts of attempted first-degree murder, arson and resisting arrest.

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 began in Butte County Superior Court before Judge Corie Caraway on May 2, 2022.

Butte County Deputy District Attorneys Niels Bringsjord and Mark Emmons called 35 witnesses to testify against Blinston including experts in DNA and cellphone GPS technology, as well as forensic pathologists and an anthropologist. Hundreds of pieces of evidence, including photos, diagrams, surveillance videos, phone data, and business records were given to the jury.

Blinston did not testify.

The evidence established that Blinston worked for a 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, Blinston returned on an apparent "scouting trip" to Severs' home on the evening of May 22, 2020 before returning to Oroville. The following morning of 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 that 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 inside her home.

The tree-trimming company that had 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 in the Feather River near Belden on June 21, 2020. Damage to her throat was consistent with the other victim murders.

In the final counts, Blinston was convicted of attempting to murder a 50-year-old man in the man's 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.

Because of the multiple murders, Blinston faces a mandatory term of life in prison without the possibility of parole. His sentencing hearing will be set by Judge Caraway tomorrow afternoon. Blinston continues to be held without bail in the Butte County Jail.

