
Mukilteo man gets 12 years for starving girl

By Sara Bruestle | Dec 11, 2013

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A judge sentenced a Mukilteo man to 12 1/2 years in prison on Dec. 2 for beating and starving his younger sister.

A jury convicted Derron Alexis, 44, of first-degree criminal mistreatment and second-degree unlawful imprisonment of his 10-year-old sister.

Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Thomas Wynne agreed with prosecutors that the man deserved an exceptional sentence for his egregious ways.

His adopted sister weighed just 51 pounds when she was rescued from his home in 2011.

Her body had almost no fat and started to metabolize her muscles for energy. She had an open wound and an untreated kidney infection, as well as scars and bruises from beatings.

Jurors had concluded that the victim was particularly vulnerable, and that Alexis had abused his position of trust. Those special verdicts allowed the state to seek a sentence above the standard range.

Snohomish County Deputy Prosecutor Lisa Paul sought a 15-year sentence, the maximum by law. She said that in many ways Alexis deserved more blame than his former girlfriend, Mary Mazalic.

Mazalic, 36, was convicted last year of first-degree assault and first-degree criminal mistreatment of the girl, and is serving a 30-year sentence.

Wynne said Alexis participated in the same crimes and should be punished for them, according to court papers.

Mukilteo Detective Lance Smith, who was the lead detective on the case, said he is pleased with the judge's order.

"The top end was 15 years, if he would have run them consecutively, but he could have also run them concurrently, which would have been the 10 years, so he split the middle," Smith said.

"Obviously, 15 would have been the best outcome, but I'm not displeased with the 12 1/2. I'm glad it's over."

Smith said the girl, now 13, is happily in the care of a foster family that wants to adopt her. She is thriving in her new home, he said, though she will never forget the year she was neglected, starved and abused.

Alexis' defense attorney, Tom Cox, said at the sentencing that his client plans to appeal the conviction.

"From that standpoint, it's not truly over," Smith said, "depending on what the court rules, as far as his plea."

Prosecutors said Alexis beat the girl with a belt and withheld food, medical

attention and other basic necessities of life, court papers said.

Police took her from the home in 2011 after two store clerks called Child Protective Services over their concerns for the girl. She spent two weeks recovering at Providence hospital in Everett.

In addition to "severe malnutrition," doctors reported the girl had cigarette burns and "whip cord" marks on her body.

The girl said her brother had beaten her with a wire and a belt, court papers said. She said that he was present when Mazalic assaulted her. She also told investigators that they both would taunt her by eating in front of her.

Prosecutors said that Alexis and his mother visited the girl when she was hospitalized. The girl's adoptive mother reportedly told her not to say anything bad about Alexis to authorities, court papers said.

The woman had sent the girl from New York to live with her adoptive brother and Mazalic in 2010.

The girl is developmentally delayed, and it was determined she needed to be placed in special education classes, but the family had not wanted that, court papers said.

Mazalic and Alexis enrolled the girl in the fourth grade in Mukilteo without telling anyone at the school about her special needs.

Alexis reportedly told investigators that he and Mazalic both took care of the girl, although there is evidence that he lied about the time he spent at home and that she was mostly in Mazalic's care, court papers said.

He said he was involved in disciplining the child and was familiar with her eating schedule, Paul wrote. He also told police that she was well fed.

The child told investigators that Alexis sometimes told Mazalic to feed her. She said he also sometimes gave her "bad oatmeal," Paul wrote.

She said Alexis usually beat her with her clothes on, and Mazalic beat her with her clothes off.

Prosecutors also said that Alexis failed to get the girl medical attention. His mother sent medication with the girl when she moved to Washington.

Alexis reportedly told police that when the medication ran out, instead of taking the child to a doctor, they gave her medication for someone else.

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