

Ohio Judge Sentences 'False Prophet' to Death

An Ohio judge sentenced Richard Beasley to death on Thursday for the murder of three down-on-their-luck men who responded to an ad he placed on the Craigslist website for a nonexistent job.

Prosecutors had called Beasley a **"false prophet,"** and a con man who manipulated his victims to keep himself out of prison, acting as the mastermind and triggerman in the killings he was convicted of committing along with a teenage accomplice.

"Beasley is a master manipulator even up to today, constantly trying to manipulate and lie," Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh told reporters afterward, calling it a well-deserved sentence.

After Summit County Common Pleas Judge Lynne Callahan imposed the sentence, Beasley, 53, told her he believed his convictions would be reversed and he would be found innocent.

"I want to make sure you understand: I have killed nobody," said Beasley, who was wearing prison red and white stripes and sitting in a wheelchair.

Beasley has complained of constant neck and back pain from an auto accident and has asked for special mattresses and shoe inserts while in prison.

Beasley was convicted in March of kidnapping and killing David Pauley, 51, of Norfolk, Virginia; Ralph Geiger, 56, of Akron, and Timothy Kern, 47, of Massillon, Ohio.

He was also convicted of the attempted murder of Scott Davis, 49, a South Carolina man who answered the Craigslist ad and was shot in the arm while escaping after meeting Beasley and

the teen accomplice, Brogan Rafferty.

The ad had promised a \$300-a-week job as a ranch hand in rural Ohio, but the job did not exist.

Beasley and Rafferty were convicted in separate trials. Rafferty was 16 at the time of the crimes and therefore not eligible for the death penalty. He was sentenced to life in prison without parole and plans to appeal his conviction.

Jurors had unanimously recommended that Beasley be sentenced to death. Under Ohio law, the judge had the option of imposing the death penalty or sentencing him to life in prison.

Davis as well as friends and family of the men killed were allowed to speak after the death sentence was imposed.

Davis said he had felt God's presence come over him after he was shot and later when he was walking through the woods looking for help, recalling his painful recovery from the wound. He also told Beasley he planned to attend his execution.

"I will be there as you go, smiling," Davis said.

Afterward, Davis told reporters that Beasley was simply "a liar" when asked about his claim of innocence.

"When he was shooting at me I saw nothing in his eyes," he said.

Debra Bruce, Pauley's twin sister, said her brother had thought the job would provide a fresh start, calling Beasley "an evil and vile person."

Beasley's mother, Carol Beasley, told jurors during the sentencing phase in March to spare her son, who she said was abused physically and sexually as a child—including by a stepfather, who beat him with an extension cord.

The attacks were among a series of incidents in which people advertising goods for sale or responding to ads on Craigslist and other social media have been attacked and killed.

In 2009, a former medical student was accused of killing a masseuse he met through Craigslist. Last year, two men in Tennessee were accused of killing a man and a woman for “unfriending” the daughter of one of the suspects on Facebook.

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