

Crescent City man found guilty of murder

December 30, 2020



A Crescent City man will spend at least the next 15 years in prison after being convicted last month of murdering his wife.

Edward Culver Hughes, 37, was convicted by a Del Norte County jury of second-degree murder and cruelty to a child and was sentenced to 15 years to life in prison.

Assistant District Attorney Todd Zocchi prosecuted the case, which lasted eight days.

Hughes was convicted of killing his wife, Emiley Tesch Hughes, who was last seen alive on Christmas Eve in 2018. Her body was not located until Valentine's Day in 2019.

During a preliminary hearing in July 2019, Dr. James Olson, a forensic pathologist from Oregon, testified Emiley Hughes likely died from strangulation. Investigators say Edward Hughes killed his wife on Christmas Eve in 2018 and hid her body in a closet.

Her body remained in the closet until was discovered by Emiley's 10-year-old son on Valentine's Day 2019.

A sheriff's deputy testified that while being interviewed by police following his arrest in February 2018, Edward Hughes gave three different stories on how his wife died.

In the first story he told, Edward Hughes said he was trying to stop his wife from going out and using drugs when she struck him. He claimed he passed out and woke up to find his wife dead in bed next to him.

In his second story, he told authorities his wife tried to strike him and in self defense he used his right hand and hit her in the throat. He said she was alive but breathing strange when he fell asleep but dead when he woke up.

In a third story, Edward acknowledged grabbing his wife by the throat and strangling her to death.

Zocchi said Edward's lies caught up to him at the trial.

“He tried to give different stories,” he said. “At the trial, he tried to point blame at the victim, but then he got caught up in his lies and admitted he strangled her.”

After she was dead, he admitted wrapping the body in a sheet and putting it in the closet. And there it stayed for more than a month. Sheriff’s deputies began investigating in early February after a missing persons complaint was filed. They went to the home but no one was home, and they were unable to enter without a warrant.

On Valentine’s Day, Emiley’s mother and 10-year-old son went to the home and the child found his mom’s body while looking for something in the closet. Sheriff’s deputies were called and entered the home to find Emiley’s body.

After searching for Edward for several days, he was located and arrested Feb. 18. In July 2019, Judge Robert Cochran ordered Edward to be held over to stand trial.

Zocchi said he was pleased with the verdict and the sentence, noting the 15 years to life range is the maximum allowed for second degree murder.

“He was found guilty as charged,” Zocchi said. “He will not get released unless the parole board determines he’s rehabilitated. If not, he will spend the rest of his life in prison.”