



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety



PAROLE BOARD

12 Mercer Road  
Natick, Massachusetts 01760

Telephone # (508) 650-4500  
Facsimile # (508) 650-4599

Deval L. Patrick  
Governor

Timothy P. Murray  
Lieutenant Governor

Mary Elizabeth Heffernan  
Secretary

Josh Wall  
Chairman

DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

STEVEN WOODWORTH

W52204

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 3, 2011

DATE OF DECISION: July 6, 2012

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Cesar Archilla, John Bocon, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Ina Howard-Hogan, Roger Michel, Lucy Soto-Abbe, Josh Wall

DECISION OF THE BOARD: Parole is denied with a review in four years. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Steven Woodworth murdered Julie Harlow in or near Whitman on March 21, 1991 by shooting her seven times. Ms. Harlow had informed Mr. Woodworth that she was ending their relationship. Unwilling to accept the end of the relationship, Mr. Woodworth convinced the victim to drive with him in his truck to discuss matters. Mr. Woodworth could not convince the victim to change her mind, so he shot her in the cab of the truck using a .22 caliber pistol. He drove around southeastern Massachusetts, apparently for hours, after he shot Ms. Harlow with her body still in the truck. He concluded the evening by drinking some paint thinner and shooting himself once in the chest at a shallow angle that caused no serious injury as the bullet exited under the armpit. Julie Harlow was 22 years old and Mr. Woodworth was 26 years old.

He was arrested and charged with murder on March 27, 1991. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder on March 19, 1992. This is Mr. Woodworth's only criminal conviction.

Mr. Woodworth's initial parole hearing was in 2006. Parole was denied as the Board concluded that the inmate presented a continued risk because he had not "addressed the causative factors of his crime." At his 2006 hearing the inmate asserted that he did not

remember shooting the victim and gave no reason for the murder other than his belief that prescription medication caused his violent actions. Mr. Woodworth, in the months before the murder, had received counseling and medication for depression.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON MAY 3, 2011**

In this parole hearing, Mr. Woodworth stated that he was "in denial" at his initial parole hearing in 2006 and unable to admit that he intentionally murdered Julie Harlow. He admitted at this hearing that he planned the murder and that when he armed himself and arranged to meet the victim he intended to kill her. He said that he was motivated by his feeling that "if I couldn't have her nobody will." He could not explain why he drove around for hours after the murder with the victim's body in the seat next to him.

The inmate has only two disciplinary reports during his 20 years of incarceration. He began rehabilitative programming in recent years and has extensive participation since his first parole hearing. He stated several times that had made a mistake by not engaging in rehabilitative work and counseling for the first approximately 15 years of his incarceration. He explained that he "blamed his actions on the medication and was in denial" with respect to his violent actions and the reasons for his conduct and therefore did not enter counseling or programs.

Mr. Woodworth did not describe himself as possessive, abusive, or controlling in his relationship with the victim. Instead he described a "loving relationship" which was damaged only by his depression rather than by his abusive behavior. He ascribed the murder to his "fear of abandonment." Board members questioned him on whether he understood the extent of his abusive conduct leading up to the murder. After questioning, the inmate did admit that he had been controlling in many areas, including isolating the victim from friends and family and manipulating her financially. He also made brief reference to similar issues in prior relationships.

Three family members spoke in support of parole. Two of Ms. Harlow's relatives spoke in opposition and her father submitted a letter of opposition. Julie Harlow was known as an especially kind and caring young woman. The victim's relatives described an unhealthy relationship featuring possessive and controlling conduct by Mr. Woodworth. It was revealed that the victim had been refusing to meet with Mr. Woodworth and that he pleaded with one of her family members to intercede and get him one more meeting. The victim's aunt was also aware of a previous girlfriend of Mr. Woodworth's who experienced similar controlling behavior. Plymouth Assistant District Attorney Steven Nadeau spoke in opposition to parole.

## **III. DECISION**

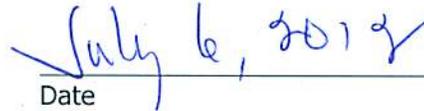
Steven Woodworth committed a domestic violence murder that included planning and extreme cruelty. There was no provocation or mitigation. He used the victim's own selflessness and good nature against her as he convinced her to meet with him one last time. Without knowing Mr. Woodworth's plan, the victim complied presumably to help him deal with the loss of the relationship. Mr. Woodworth took advantage of Ms. Harlow's final act of kindness by shooting her seven times.

Mr. Woodworth does not present a strong parole petition. He failed for many years, including at his first parole hearing, to state candidly the facts and motive associated with his violent conduct. Not only did he make misrepresentations at his 2006 parole hearing, but he also delayed any attempt at rehabilitation during those years. As a consequence, his recent extensive participation in programs and counseling has not yielded results sufficient to support parole. As displayed at this hearing, Mr. Woodworth did not recognize his conduct in the relationship as possessive, abusive, and controlling. He has not come to terms with the conduct that, at this point, he is likely to repeat if paroled. His work in programs and counseling needs more direction towards issues related to domestic violence and battering. Because Mr. Woodworth has these issues remaining for rehabilitation, the Parole Board cannot conclude that he would not re-offend if released on parole and that his release would be compatible with the welfare of society. Accordingly, parole is denied with a review in four years.

*I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.*



Josh Wall, Chairman



Date