



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

BODHISATTVA SKANDHA

F/K/A RICHARD SEAVER

W28163

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: October 3, 2017

DATE OF DECISION: August 8, 2018

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in four years from the date of the hearing.¹

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On November 30, 1960, in Middlesex Superior Court, Bodhisattva Skandha (formerly known as Richard Seaver) pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the death of his mother, Eleanor Seaver, and was sentenced to serve life in prison. In 1972, he filed a petition for Executive Clemency in the form of a commutation. His petition was granted in 1973, and his sentence was commuted to a term of 30 years to life with the possibility of parole. He filed a

¹ Five Board Members voted to deny parole with a four year review. One Board Member voted to deny parole with a two year review.

motion for new trial, over 40 years after he first entered his guilty plea. That motion was denied, as was the subsequent appeal and petition for Supreme Judicial Court review.²

On January 4, 1960, 18-year-old Bodhisattva Skandha (formerly known as Richard Seaver) murdered his mother, 42-year-old Eleanor Seaver, in Melrose. That day, he had asked his mother for permission to marry a 16-year-old girl from Roxbury, but Ms. Seaver had declined to give her son permission. He responded by stabbing her repeatedly with a pair of scissors, striking her with a hammer, and stabbing her with a knife. Finally, he took a jump rope and an electrical cord and tied them around her neck to stop her from coughing. He then put her body in a closet, covering it with blankets and other linens. He removed the knob from the closet door, took his mother's money, checkbook, and car, and then left. Later that night, Boston police took him into custody on an unrelated matter. He told them he had stabbed his mother and put her body in a closet. The next day, he gave a statement to Melrose police, admitting to the crime, and he was arrested.

II. PAROLE HEARING ON OCTOBER 3, 2017

Bodhisattva Skandha, now 75-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for a review hearing on October 3, 2017. He was not represented by counsel. Mr. Skandha was first paroled in 1974, but, subsequently, received several violation reports. He was returned to custody in 1985 for leaving the state of California (where he was then being supervised) without permission. He was paroled again in April 1986. In September of that year, however, he went whereabouts unknown, which resulted in the revocation of his parole in 1988. He was re-paroled in 1989, but was returned to custody in 1992, for failure to advise his parole officer of a change in address and for alcohol consumption. The Parole Board denied parole after hearings in 1993, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2008, and 2013.

In his opening statement, Mr. Skandha asked the Board to parole him to his family in Maine under the Interstate Compact, stating that he would agree to wear a GPS system. He cited his medical issues, claiming that he is in the process of obtaining medication for manic-depression. He agreed that he may be a "little bit" bipolar, but when questioned by the Board, he admitted that he has not yet seen a psychiatrist, nor has he engaged in any programming since his last hearing. Regarding his childhood, Mr. Skandha explained that he started to leave home at 8-years-old in order to escape the "violence and chaos." He indicated that his mother had emotionally abandoned him, which he had a hard time accepting, and that he would act out to get attention. He acknowledged that he ran away throughout the years, but stated that (now) he doesn't have the "energy" to take off anymore.

Mr. Skandha said that he takes responsibility for violating his parole in the past. While on parole, he stated that he was "whereabouts unknown" from 1986-1988. He indicated that he had a 30 day travel pass, but stretched it out for two years, blaming it on his son's behavior. He claimed to have taken approximately 25 trips, while on parole, to places such as Denver, St. Louis, Mexico, New Hampshire, Texas, Alaska, Montana and Hawaii. He took responsibility for each trip, stating, "I always thought I was in the right, but I wasn't in the right." Mr. Skandha said he was last living in the community from 1989 to 1992. A Board Member noted that a lot has changed since then, and asked Mr. Skandha about his biggest concern if he were to enter the community. Mr. Skandha stated that if he gets paroled, he "will learn." Mr. Skandha told the Board that he has been without drugs or alcohol for 25 years. He claims to have spent all of his

² *Commonwealth v. Seaver*, 65 Mass. App. Ct. 1116 (2006), *Commonwealth v. Seaver*, 446 Mass. 1108 (2006)

time helping people, which he has enjoyed. He stated that he has been respectful to everyone and that he has changed his religion.

When the Board questioned Mr. Skandha about his underlying offense, he said, "When you kill your mother it never goes away, it's always there inside you." He stated that he is very sad when he thinks of his mother. A Board Member asked why he murdered his mother, and he stated, "I was in a state of rage." He said that his mother slapped him and would not let him get married. He stated, "I stabbed my mother 26 times." He blames himself, claiming he was angry to the point that he couldn't stop what he was doing. He also told the Board that relationships have not been good for him because when he trusted women, he was rejected. He was married three times, but stated that he wasn't strong enough to work through problems and so, when pressures arose, he would take off. He indicated that the problem was with himself. He also said that he has two children, but never paid child support. He has one sister in a nursing home and talks to her weekly. He stated that his other sister has passed on. When a Board Member asked Mr. Skandha about his major support, he responded that it was his niece in Maine.

The Board considered oral testimony from Middlesex County Assistant District Attorney Melissa Baima who spoke in opposition to parole.

III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Mr. Skandha has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Skandha has yet to address his causative factors through engagement in relative treatment/programming. His release does not meet the legal standard.

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Skandha's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Skandha's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Skandha's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Bodhisattva Skandha is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Skandha's next appearance before the Board will take place in four years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Skandha to continue working towards his full rehabilitation.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.


Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

8/8/18
Date