



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety

PAROLE BOARD

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DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

KATHERINE DICKSON

F36166

TYPE OF HEARING: **Review Hearing**

DATE OF HEARING: **April 19, 2011**

DATE OF DECISION: **April 17, 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 five years. The decision is unanimous.

I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Katherine Dickson, age 40, robbed and murdered Eero Helin, age 72, and Lillian Helin, age 65, in the couple's home on Hobomock Street in Pembroke in December, 1992. Mr. and Mrs. Helin's bodies were discovered on December 10, and the murders occurred on or about December 3. Dickson had a long history of substance abuse and criminal activity. On the day of the murders, she was smoking crack cocaine at her father's house where she lived. She wanted money to buy more drugs, and decided to rob an elderly couple who she knew lived nearby. Armed with a handgun, she knocked on the Helins' door and was allowed in by Mrs. Helin. Using the gun, Dickson demanded money. Mrs. Helin gathered money from various places in the house and turned it over to Dickson. Dickson forced Mrs. Helin to lie face down on the floor and fatally shot her three times in the back.

After murdering Mrs. Helin, Dickson went upstairs where Mr. Helin was in his bedroom. Mr. Helin suffered from Parkinson's disease, and had limited mobility and

strength. Mr. Helin died from suffocation; Dickson has never provided a credible account of how she killed him.

The murders were initially unsolved, and Katherine Dickson committed another violent crime six weeks later. While hitchhiking she was given a ride by Mark Walther. Dickson shot him multiple times. She stole the victim's car, and was apprehended at a roadblock that day. A .22 caliber gun was recovered from Dickson. Mr. Walther survived.

Firearms examination of the .22 caliber firearm revealed it to be the weapon used to murder Lillian Helin. Police interviewed Dickson. She admitted entering the Helin residence with a gun; she said she had no memory of shooting Mrs. Helin; she said she saw Mr. Helin in his bed but had no memory of harming him. Dickson was arrested for the murders. She pleaded guilty to two second-degree murders on September 1, 1994 and received concurrent life sentences. She also pleaded guilty to armed assault with intent to murder Mark Walther, and received 5 to 10 years to serve from and after her life sentences.

Katherine Dickson has a serious criminal history. In 1987 she was convicted of assault with intent to kill and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon; she received a suspended sentence of 5 to 7 years. She has five convictions for OUI. In summary, Dickson murdered two innocent and defenseless senior citizens, tried to kill two other victims in separate incidents, and persisted in driving drunk or high despite repeatedly getting caught and convicted

II. PAROLE HEARING ON APRIL 19, 2011

This is the second parole hearing for Katherine Dickson. At her first hearing, she said that she committed the murders because she wished to die and she hoped the police would respond and shoot her to death. She also stated that she had no memory of the events in the house that resulted in two deaths. While incarcerated, she has participated in many programs and has seven disciplinary reports.

At this hearing, the inmate continued to maintain that her motive was to cause her own death by provoking the police to shoot her. She abandoned her previous claim of having no memory of her violent actions against the Helins. She described her current memory of the incident, including her claim that she did not suffocate Mr. Helin. She claimed that she tossed a pillow to Mr. Helin for his own comfort, and suggested that he fell due to his own illness and somehow landed on the pillow thereby causing his own suffocation. Board members did not accept as credible the inmate's description of her motive or the suffocation. As proven by her actions on that day, Dickson's motive was robbery to obtain money for more crack. The inmate suffocated Mr. Helin in some manner that she has never described. He had numerous contusions on the eyes, face, neck, arm, shoulder and buttock.

The inmate related that her substance abuse began at age 14, that she abused alcohol and many different drugs for decades, and by the time of the murders she

smoked crack every day. She has had numerous violent and failed relationships and marriages. She has two children but could not care for either of them; she is not in contact with them. She was hospitalized for depression nine times, and made five suicide attempts. While incarcerated she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and antisocial personality disorder; she has been on medication for 18 years.

Several opponents of parole spoke and emphasized that the Helins were generous and kind people. Mr. Helin had been a teacher and athletic director at Oliver Ames High School. Mrs. Helin worked as an accountant in Boston. Because of their love of children, they ran a popular summer camp on their property in Pembroke. Plymouth Assistant District Attorney Matthew Green spoke in opposition to parole. There were no family members or friends in support. Dr. Nilda Clark, a clinical psychologist, prepared a report on the inmate and testified in support of parole.

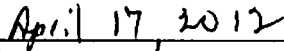
III. DECISION

Parole Board members evaluated the inmate's long history of extraordinary antisocial behavior and whether she has been rehabilitated from the emotional and psychological conditions that resulted in destructive and violent conduct. She behaves well with medication and institutional supervision, but she does not appear to have developed the insights and mechanisms needed for pro-social behavior in the community. She has participated in many programs, but showed little ability to discuss her criminogenic factors and strategies for reducing their impact on her behavior. Of particular concern is her inability to form meaningful or successful relationships. Despite program participation, the inmate apparently lied to the Board in 2008 when she claimed no memory of committing the murders, and she continues with false statements about her motive for the murders and her actions in suffocating Mr. Helin. She continues to be at high risk for substance abuse, re-offense, and violence if released to the community. Parole is denied because the inmate, if released, is likely to commit a new offense and her release is not compatible with the welfare of society.

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



Josh Wall, Chairman



Date