

Cheyenne Jessie sentenced to life in prison for murder of father and daughter

By: **Kimberly C. Moore - The Ledger**

BARTOW — Convicted double-murderer Cheyanne Nicole Jesse will spend the rest of her life in prison for the brutal murders of her 50-year-old father, Mark Ivan Weekly, and 6-year-old daughter, Meredith Leeann Jessie.

“It is this court’s conclusion that Cheyanne Nicole Jesse should lose her liberty, not her life,” said Circuit Judge Jalal Harb. “Accordingly, as to count one, you are sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. As to count two, you are sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.”

Jessie, who is now 31, confessed in August 2015 to killing her father and daughter, who investigators believe died on July 18, 2015 — the day they were last seen by a friend of Weekly’s. Weekly was stabbed at least 12 times and shot in the head three times, while Meredith was repeatedly stabbed and shot in the back of the head. It happened in Weekly’s rented west Drane Field Road home.

Following the murders, Jessie placed the bodies in two plastic storage bins and put them in a shed in their landlord’s backyard next door to their home, where they decomposed throughout the last two weeks of July. Prosecutors said her boyfriend wanted to break up with her because Meredith had extreme behavior issues for which she was placed in in-patient psychiatric care at one point.

“The defendant, the court concludes, was unable to cope with the severe stress that was created upon her due to her daughter’s emotional and behavioral conditions,” Harb said. “The defendant was diagnosed with major depressive disorder and suffered from numerous psychological deficits.”

Harb cited Jessie’s own mental capacity when he handed down the life sentence on Friday afternoon.

“The first-degree murder was committed while Cheyanne Nicole Jessie was under the influence of extreme mental or emotional disturbance,” Harb said. “The circumstances of the capacity of Cheyanne Nicole Jessie to appreciate the criminality of her conduct or to conform her conduct to the requirements of the law was substantially impaired.”

He went on to say that Jessie had been physically and sexually abused as a child while she was living with her mother and, when she was 4 years old, she was removed from her mother’s custody and given to her father to raise.



Cheyenne Jessie is fingerprinted in court after her sentencing Friday.

“When she came to live with her father, she had difficulties walking, talking and had other developmental difficulties,” Harb said. “Around the time of the homicides, the defendant was described as mentally and emotionally unstable and extremely depressed and that she was controlled by her boyfriend.”

As Harb was sentencing her, Jessie, sitting in the jury box, could be heard mumbling something as she kept her face hidden. A court bailiff, who was standing close to her, later said Jessie was trying to tell the judge she did not commit the murders. During the trial, her attorneys said her boyfriend, Matthew “Cody” Munroe, had committed the crimes and Jessie had confessed because she was afraid of him.

No woman from Polk County has ever received the death penalty.

On Friday, the only people in the courtroom were the judge and his assistant, Jessie’s two attorneys, two attorneys for the state, several court bailiffs, a court reporter and two journalists from The Ledger. No one from Jessie’s family, Weekly’s family or Meredith’s father’s family attended the brief hearing.



In issuing the life sentence, Judge Jalal Harb said, “The defendant, the court concludes, was unable to cope with the severe stress that was created upon her due to her daughter’s emotional and behavioral conditions. The defendant was diagnosed with major depressive disorder and suffered from numerous

Prosecutor Paul Wallace said Meredith’s father lives in Georgia and had very little to do with the girl when she was alive.

Following the hearing, one of her two attorneys, Jervis Wise, said they were satisfied with the sentence.

“We think the court made a fair and just decision under difficult circumstances,” Wise said.

Chief Assistant State Attorney Jacob Orr said they were disappointed.

“We clearly thought it was a death penalty case — our opinion hasn’t changed,” Orr said. “We thought it deserved the death penalty and so did the jury.”

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In July 2019, a jury recommended the death sentence for the murder of Meredith, while they voted 10-2 for a life sentence for Weekly's murder.

When Harb was finished, Jessie was fingerprinted and taken to a holding cell. She will spend the remainder of her life in a Florida prison for women.



The judge noted in his sentence that Cheyanne Jessie suffered severe abuse when she lived with her mother as a child. "When she came to live with her father, she had difficulties walking, talking and had other developmental difficulties," Harb said. "Around the time of the homicides, the defendant was described as mentally and emotionally unstable and extremely depressed and that she was controlled by her boyfriend.

Source:

<https://www.theledger.com/story/news/crime/2021/02/05/cheyanne-jessie-sentenced-life-prison-murder-father-and-daughter/4407777001/?fbclid=IwAR2WkNqTTweYx44m7atMgcAvpNgnYPTONEYr2Oc7GoJ4NJXr2CX012w4FEw>