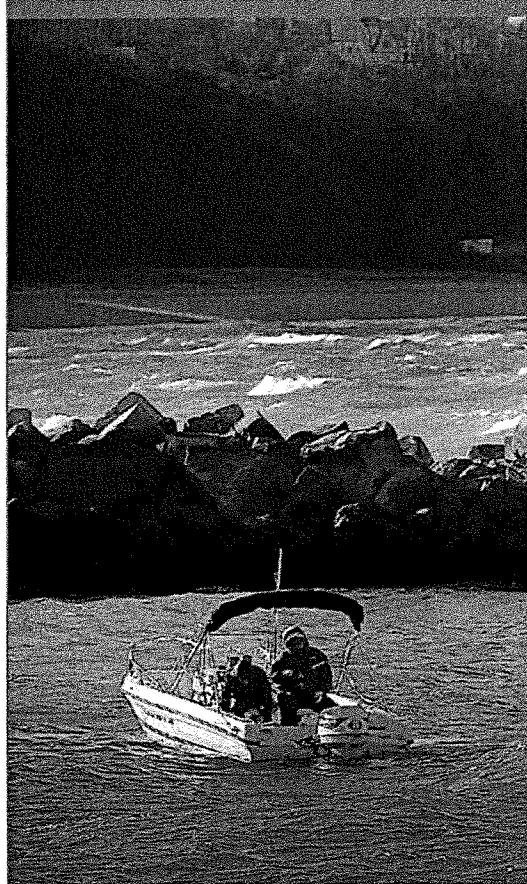


Old Man Winter knockin'



High winds from the North buffet two fishermen in the channel leading to Mount Sinai Harbor yesterday. Highs today remain in the 40s; lows will be near freezing.

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Slaying convict freed from jail

■ Suffered from severe mental, physical disabilities

■ Judge, DA agree on 5-year probation term

BY ANDREW SMITH
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Less than a month after he fatally stabbed his mother's boyfriend in the neck, a Holbrook man with severe physical and mental problems got out of jail yesterday and went home with his mother.

That came after Rakien Hall, 31, pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter in the Oct. 31 death of Oscar Green, 47. The circumstances of the case were so unusual that both the Suffolk district attorney's office and state Supreme Court Justice William Condon agreed that Hall should go home and serve 5 years on probation.

"This is one of those times the system got it right," said Hall's attorney, Joseph Ferrante of Hauppauge. He thanked the district attorney's office for its compassion.

Hall had a hard life even before Green appeared in it. Ferrante said Hall has been sightless in one eye since childhood, when that eye was hit by an acorn and got infected. Then, at age 6, he got Burkitt's lymphoma, a rare cancer that is often fatal. In Hall's case, it led to a variety of medical issues,



Rakien Hall killed his mother's boyfriend, who picked on him.

including heart problems that led to surgery.

In addition, Ferrante said Hall has "an extremely low IQ." As an adult, his development has been assessed as being the equivalent of a 9-year-old's.

Green, who had just got out of prison after serving 24 years for first-degree manslaughter, began dating Hall's mother, Gloria Wilkerson, in May, Assistant District Attorney Peter Timmons said. Green — 6-foot-5 and 290 pounds — picked on the much smaller Hall almost constantly at their home on Portion Road, Timmons said.

About 6 p.m. on Oct. 31, Hall was watching television with headphones on when Green demanded that Hall stand up, told him he knew karate and hit Hall on the side of the head,

Timmons said. Hall grabbed a knife, stuck it in the side of Green's neck and then ran into the woods and hid for 12 hours, Timmons said.

When Hall was brought into the courtroom yesterday, he seemed both cheerful and confused.

"What's going on?" he called out, as he walked over to Ferrante. "Where's my lawyer?"

Hall and Ferrante sat at the defense table, their arms on each other's shoulders. Hall cried as he began to recall the events of that night, and then kept his arm draped affectionately on his lawyer's shoulder throughout the court proceeding.

As other people were speaking, he muttered repeatedly to Ferrante, "I hope my mother has been OK."

Condon and Timmons gingerly questioned Hall about the events of that night and whether he understood his rights, to fulfill the legal basis of the guilty plea.

When it was done, Condon told Hall, "You're going to be going home, to live with your mother."

"Your honor, thank you," Hall replied, "Thank you."

Wilkerson declined to comment afterward.

Condon said the plea agreement "is serving the interests of justice."

Hall promised Condon that during probation, "I'll do everything they tell me to do."

Man defiant at sentencing for fatal shooting

BY ANDREW SMITH
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Just before he was sentenced, a Copiague man said yesterday in a Riverhead courtroom that the man he killed deserved to die and he wasn't sorry that he did it.

"I'm not going to sit here and be remorseful," said John Steele, 30, who pleaded guilty in August to shooting Eric Brooks, 35, in May 2012 in Wyandanch. "He had a gun, too. If

he pulled first, I'd be lying in a casket."

The statement met with disbelief from state Supreme Court Justice Richard Ambro and outrage from Brooks' relatives, several of whom yelled obscenities at Steele. Ambro told the family members to be quiet.

"You can't just bark out in a courtroom," he told them, then turned to Steele.

"I don't believe you, Mr. Steele," Ambro said, adding

that if there were any truth to his story, he could have gone to trial and argued that he shot Brooks in self-defense. Ambro sentenced him to 25 years in prison, the maximum for first-degree manslaughter.

Steele and Boyd Holland, 23, lay in wait for Brooks, who had just gotten out of prison on a drug conviction. They shot him at least seven times when he came out of a friend's house to make a phone call.

Assistant District Attorney

Glenn Kurtzrock said Steele's argument was absurd. No gun was recovered at the scene, he said, and the two men waited to ambush Brooks. Kurtzrock said if Steele was worried about Brooks shooting him, he shouldn't have gone looking for him.

A family member read a letter from Brooks' mother, Bertha White, in which she quoted a verse from Romans 12 from the Bible: "Be at peace with all men. Never take your own re-

venge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.'"

White wrote further, "My prayer is that God has mercy upon your soul."

It was then that Steele said he wasn't sorry.

As Steele was led from the courtroom after Ambro imposed the sentence, a family member of Brooks called out to him, "Your body's going to be shipped back in a bag."