



# Laytonville stabbing suspect agrees to plea-deal with 71-year prison term



**Talen Barton and his public defender, Linda Thompson, during Wednesday's hearing in Mendocino County Superior Court.** Chris Pugh-Ukiah Daily Journal

By Adam Randall, [udjar@ukiahdj.com](mailto:udjar@ukiahdj.com), [@theadamrandall](https://twitter.com/theadamrandall) on Twitter

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Talen Clark Barton will likely spend the rest of his life in a California prison, after agreeing to a plea-deal Wednesday in Mendocino County Superior Court in connection with the murders of two members of a Laytonville family in July.

Barton, 19, agreed to plead guilty to the premeditated killings of Teo A. Palmieri, 17, and Teo's father, Coleman A. Palmieri, 52, both Laytonville residents and the son and husband of well-known local physician Dr. Cindy Norvell, who was injured but survived the attack in her Meadow Lane home during the early morning of July 19.

Barton had been living with the Norvell-Palmieri family for at least a year, according to previous reports from the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office. Through his public defender, Linda Thompson, Barton had previously pleaded not guilty to the crimes and denied all special allegations against him during arraignment.

Official sentencing will take place at 9 a.m. Oct. 6 in Superior Court, when Barton is expected to receive a 71-year prison sentence as part of his agreement, and waives all rights to a trial.

District Attorney David Eyster said the time served boils down to be at least 25 years to life on the two murder counts; two counts of seven years to life for the attempted murders of Dr. Norvell and her brother, Theodore Norvell, a Canadian engineering professor who was visiting Laytonville from Newfoundland; three years for false imprisonment of two teenage girls during the attacks; one year for the special allegation of using the knife during the commission of the crimes; and three years for inflicting great bodily injury.

Barton will first be eligible to talk to the parole board at the age of 89, assuming he lives to be that old.



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Judge Ann Moorman said restitution would likely be imposed as an economic consequence that was caused to the surviving victims, a specific amount to be determined at a future hearing.

“It’s conceivable, sir, you will spend the rest of your life in prison,” Moorman told Barton as he stood before her.

Barton replied, “I assumed so.”

Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman was also in attendance to hear the outcome, as was MCSO lead investigator Clint Wyant, who said after Wednesday’s conference that a motive was never established during the investigation.

“I don’t even think he knows why (he did it),” Wyant said.

Thompson said she made the plea agreement very clear to Barton and gave him Tuesday night to sleep on it. At the beginning of Wednesday’s conference, Thompson relayed to Moorman that Barton indicated to her he was ready to move forward.

Eyster said he ultimately presented three options to Barton: death penalty, life without parole or a sentence of 71 years-to-life in state prison.

“Dr. Norvell advised me that it was her belief she didn’t believe in the death penalty,” Eyster said, nor did her husband, Coleman Palmieri, or her brother Theodore Norvell, reportedly because the family practices the Quaker religion.

Eyster said he has been in constant contact with the affected family in their native Canada, and has spoken to Theodore Norvell personally on what was happening in court Wednesday.

Eyster said he ultimately felt that “death wasn’t necessary” in this case.

When Moorman asked Barton his pleas on count one, he said he was “very guilty,” count two, “incredibly guilty,” but just said “guilty” on the remaining counts.

Counts one and two were the premeditated stabbings of both Teo and Coleman Palmieri.

During a press conference in July following the killings, Sheriff Tom Allman said Barton, who was previously in foster care, grabbed a 12-inch knife around 12:15 a.m. July 19 and entered the bedroom of Teo Palmieri, and after a violent struggle, stabbed him to death before injuring Dr. Norvell, and then moving on to Coleman Palmieri, killing him, before stabbing and injuring Theodore Norvell.

The imprisonment of the two teenage girls, one being the daughter of Dr. Norvell, and one a daughter of Theodore Norvell, came at the end of the stabbings when the two awoke during the commotion.

According to the Sheriff’s Office reports, one of the girls talked Barton into waiting for sheriff’s deputies to arrive at the scene, but was told by Barton to tie up one of the victims and herself with a cut phone wire.

The Sheriff’s Office also noted during its investigation that Barton admitted being a frequent marijuana user, and two weeks prior to the incident, he told a friend he was planning to kill somebody but didn’t specify who, and the information was not relayed to law enforcement prior to the killings.

Detective Wyant said this was his first case as a lead investigator after transferring to the position in December 2014 after spending 17 years with the MCSO as a corrections officer and then as a deputy sheriff.

As a detective, Wyant is based out of MCSO’s Willits substation and handles cases for the northern Mendocino County sector from Willits to the Humboldt and Trinity county borders.

“Over my career I’ve seen some disturbing things, but as far as the gruesomeness goes, it was probably the worst I’ve seen,” Wyant said. “Barton was very forthcoming about everything and never denied anything.”

Wyant said during the investigation when he had to interview Barton, the 19- year-old would frequently laugh, or sometimes he would start to cry but then would continue laughing.

Barton’s demeanor from each of his court appearances from arraignment to Wednesday’s series of events varied from serious blank stares to arrogant grinning. He said Wednesday that he understood the agreement that was in place, which would likely keep him incarcerated for the remainder of his life.

Wyant said there were a lot of man hours and sleepless nights that went in to making sure it was a bulletproof case for the district attorney to prosecute.

Wyant, like DA Eyster, said he has been in constant contact with the victims’ family, and that he was happy with the results Wednesday and that the family could begin the healing process.

“I’m proud of my partners and myself,” Wyant said. “I’m glad there is closure for the family.”

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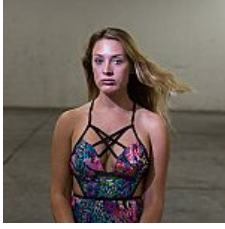
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