



COURT

Inmate gets 8 years for seriously injuring Auburn prison officer

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AUBURN | Robert Hayes didn't simply attack a corrections officer. He attempted to gouge the man's eyes out.

According to Chief Assistant District Attorney Chris Valdina, the inmate launched himself out of a chair and onto an Auburn Correctional Facility sergeant on Aug. 9, 2012, clawing the man's face as he endeavored to reach his eyes.

Hayes was pulled off the officer before he could deprive the man of his vision. The officer, however, was still seriously injured.

According to The Citizen's archives, the unidentified officer was rushed to a hospital following the assault and treated for a punctured lung, a scratched face in need of stitches, two broken ribs and a swollen knee.

Hayes was transported to Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus and placed in disciplinary housing.

Speaking at Hayes' sentencing appearance Thursday morning in Cayuga County Court, Valdina said the assault occurred after Hayes made allegations against a correctional officer. Although Valdina did give details, he said the allegations required Hayes to get evaluation at the prison's infirmary.

After investigating Hayes' claims and finding inconsistencies in his statement, Valdina said the sergeant visited the infirmary to confront Hayes.

The man's questions, Valdina said, did not sit well with Hayes. When confronted, the felon flew into a rage, "viciously and violently" attacking the officer.

The summer assault was not the 49-year-old man's first serious brush with the criminal justice system.

"Mr. Hayes' criminal history is almost chilling," Valdina said.

In 2004, Hayes closed a 17-year-old mystery when he admitted causing Leslie Dickenson's death while high on crack cocaine, reported a Utica newspaper at the time of the man's plea.

Hayes — who worked with Dickenson at the Vernon Downs racetrack — told an Oneida County Court judge that he visited the woman's track-side living quarters in 1987 to ask

her for money, reported the newspaper. After a confrontation with Dickenson, Hayes said he punched the woman in the face, dealing what he thought was a fatal blow.

In an attempt to cover up his actions, Hayes said he tried to make Dickenson's death look like a suicide.

According to the newspaper, Hayes tied an extension chord around Dickenson's neck and slashed the woman's throat with an electric carving knife. Before fleeing, he used vodka to attempt to set Dickenson's room on fire.

Police reopened the investigation into Dickenson's death, originally deemed a suicide, after Hayes was convicted and subsequently acquitted of a similar death in Florida, reported the newspaper.

In accordance with a plea agreement, Judge Thomas Leone sentenced Hayes to serve eight years in prison and five years of post-release supervision for assaulting a peace officer. The sentence will run consecutively with the 15 to 45 year bid Hayes is currently serving for Dickenson's death.

Although Hayes kept silent throughout most of his appearance, he spoke up after Leone handed down his sentence.

Douglas Bates, Hayes' defense attorney, told the judge that his client did not want to sign an order of protection or paperwork waiving his right to appeal.

When asked if wished to appeal Leone's sentence, Hayes nodded.

"I think so," he said.

Hayes then resumed his stoic demeanor, complying without comment as officers escorted him out of the courtroom.