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WAUKESHA CHRISTMAS PARADE ATTACK

Brooks gets life sentence

Judge gives him 6 life terms plus 769 years



Mike De Sisti/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge Jennifer Dorow listens as Darrell Brooks gives his closing remarks during his sentencing in Waukesha County Circuit Court on Wednesday



Mike De Sisti/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Darrell Brooks, appearing via video in an adjacent courtroom after being removed for continual interruptions, is taken away by Waukesha County Sheriff's deputies after he is sentenced to 6 consecutive life sentences in Waukesha County Circuit Court on Wednesday.

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WAUKESHA — Five days short of the one-year anniversary of what she called an “attack” on the Waukesha Christmas Parade, Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge Jennifer Dorow ordered Darrell Brooks Jr. to serve a sentence that all but guarantees he will never see the light of day as a free man again.

Brooks, 40, was convicted of 76 crimes including six counts of homicide by the use of a dangerous weapon, 61 counts of recklessly endangering safety, six counts of hit-and-run causing death, two counts of felony bail jumping and misdemeanor battery. He stood without expression as Dorow sentenced him to six life terms — one for each person killed when Brooks ran his mother's SUV through the Waukesha Christmas Parade on Nov. 21. She read each of the victims' names as she did so — Tamara Durand, William Hospel, Jane Kulich, LeAnna Owen, Virginia Sorenson, and Jackson

“Frankly, Mr. Brooks, no one is safe from you. This community can only be safe if you are behind bars for the rest of your life.”

— Judge Jennifer Dorow

Sparks. After each sentence was announced it was greeted with applause in the courtroom.

Dorow also ordered Brooks to serve another 762.5 years in prison for recklessly endangering the safety of 61 others whose names she also read. She also ordered Brooks to serve six more years on two felony bail jumping counts and nine months for battering his girlfriend Erika Patterson immediately before the parade incident. Dorow also ordered Brooks to serve six more terms of 15 years in custody and 10 years on super-

vision for the hit-and-run causing death charges against him, but ordered those sentences be served concurrently to the life sentences. Brooks also was ordered to serve 305 years of extended supervision if he were to live that long.

“Frankly, Mr. Brooks, no one is safe from you. This community can only be safe if you are behind bars for the rest of your life. The actions of Darrell Brooks demand punishment. The community is not safe from your violent and criminal conduct unless you are in custody,” she said.

“You have left a path of destruction, chaos, death, injury, confusion and panic as you drove seven or so blocks through the Christmas parade, never once stopping or seemingly caring about the wake of carnage that you left. Four of those blocks were turned into a scene that frankly is no different than a war zone.”

Brooks statement

In remarks that spanned two hours, Brooks said he could not and would not blame people for the anger and grief they

expressed Tuesday, when three dozen people read or had statements read on their behalf, recognizing they have the right to feel the way they do and they are somewhere along the healing process.

And in words many said they were waiting to hear, Brooks extended an apology to the families impacted by the tragedy.

“I want each and every victim in this incident, family members, those who lost loved ones, those who are still healing, I want you to know that no matter how you felt during this year, no matter how you felt yesterday, I want every one to know, also the community of Waukesha, I want you to know that not only am I sorry for what happened, I am sorry you could not see what's truly in my heart, that you cannot see the remorse that I have, that you cannot listen to all the phone calls that I've made to my family, that you cannot hear all the prayers I've said in my cell, that you cannot count all the tears that I've dropped in this year,” Brooks said.

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Fun Things To Do This Weekend

OHS Players present “Mamma Mia!”, 4 p.m. today, 7 p.m. Friday and 7 p.m. Saturday, Oconomowoc Arts Center, 641 E. Forest St., Oconomowoc. www.TheOAC.net, 262-560-3172

Widows Winewalk, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, downtown Oconomowoc. https://www.downtownoconomowoc.org/events

Small Business Expo & Craft Show, Friday through Sunday, Brookfield Square

Mall Center Court, 95 N. Moorland Road, Brookfield. www.visitbrookfield.com

Hello Saturday!, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Waukesha Public Library Children's Program Room, 321 Wisconsin Ave.

Old School '70s & '80s Adult Skate, 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Waukesha Skateland, 1931 E. Main St., Waukesha.

Craft Fair, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday,

Waukesha County Expo Center, 1000 Northview Road, Waukesha.

HAWS Holiday Bazaar & Bake Sale, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, 701 Northview Road, Waukesha. Handmade holiday items by area artisans, canned goods, home baked treats. All proceeds support the animals and programs of HAWS.

Chef Pam's Winter Farmers Market, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, 290 W. Main St., Waukesha.

WEATHER



Tomorrow:
Mostly cloudy
High 25
Low 13

See complete forecast on 8A



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Waukesha Downtown Business Association Presents...
Silver Bells
Illustration of children and a reindeer.

DEC. 2 NIGHT OF LIGHTS
5:30 – 7:00 PM
Annual Christmas Tree Lighting at The Rotunda (235 W. Broadway) 5:30 p.m.
Lantern Stroll and Caroling through downtown to Riverfront St. 6:00 p.m.
Walk of Lights Ceremony (Riverfront St. – old bus depot) 6:30 p.m.
For more info: www.Waukesha-wi.gov/nightoflights

Night of Lights
Presented by Waukesha and City of Waukesha

DEC. 4 CHRISTMAS PARADE
4:00 PM DOWNTOWN WAUKESHA
Holiday Seasonal
HORSE DRAWN CARRIAGE RIDES
SANTA RUN / CAROLING
ART CRAWL / UGIY SWEATER SATURDAY
PICTURES W/ SANTA
LIVE REINDEER
PHOTOS WITH CUTOUTS
LETTERS TO SANTA
COOKIE TRAY FOR SANTA WORKSHOP

WAUKESHA
DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION INC.
Illustration of downtown buildings.

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Sentence

From Page 1A

“One of the victims made a comment about trying to understand why this happened. That’s a question I struggle with myself. The why, the how, how could life ever get this far away from what it should be?”

Brooks and his mother and grandmother discussed mental illness, with Brooks saying he had been medicated in the past and has struggled to find answers about why his mind works the way it does.

His mother, Dawn Woods, said in a letter to Dorow, “I see a person who is broken, unmedicated, and one doesn’t have the ability to control his actions or his emotions he’s become emotional unattached to what’s happening his illness is prohibiting to completely understand and contact as he should in his mind he’s not doing anything wrong,” she wrote. “So what is seen in court is not a person who has no remorse it’s a mentally ill unmedicated person who has become detached from reality so please do not fault him for his action is his illness.”

She urged lawmakers and society to recognize that mental illness needs to be better addressed.

“Treatment needs to be done early and right away and stayed up on and not let people fall thru crack holes and not be shunned out the door,” she said. “Jail is not the only answer. Health, treatment, hospitalization and medication it plays a big role in preventing where we are today if it would have been offered sooner,” she said.

She said to the families who lost loved ones and those who were injured that she prayed for God to comfort and heal them.

Brooks’ grandmother Dr. Mary Edwards “offer(ed) her sincere apologies to those who have been hurt so badly by what has happened here, this tragedy that has been caused by my grandson.” The ordained minister said her grandson has dealt with a bipolar condition since age 12 “and it was that disorder that caused him to drive through that crowd.

“Please know that it is my prayer that my grandson will sincerely and humbly apologize and ask all of you and God for forgiveness for this horrible, terrible deed. Some of you have said that you will never forgive him. Please do not be like the man who drank the poison and hoped his enemy would die. Unforgiveness is a terrible disease just like mental illness is,” she said.

Brooks fought back tears as his relatives spoke on his behalf.

When Dorow asked Brooks what specific recommendations he had for his sentence, he said he didn’t know how to answer that question, reasserting as he had during the trial that he did not understand the cause and nature of the charges. He also said he felt he should be sent to a place where he can be properly medicated and people can help him recognize what’s wrong in his mind and combat it.

“I just want to be helped,” he said. “When you’ve dealt with certain things as long as I have, there are so many questions about where to start. You got so many questions about what can give you the help you need, who can point you in a direction to give you the help you need. There are so many things you just don’t know where to start at.”

Dorow hands down sentence

In handing down the sentence, Dorow rejected claims about Brooks’ mental health being behind his actions. She said four doctors appointed to evaluate him for purposes of the not-guilty-by-reason-of-mental-defect plea he entered earlier in the case found no reason to support that position; Brooks later withdrew it. She added steps he took to evade detection — from ditching his car, removing clothing items and putting his hair up, to approaching strangers to use their phones to call for a ride — all indicated his consciousness of his guilt. Telling a police officer “I didn’t mean to kill anybody” indicates an awareness of his actions and runs counter to a conclusion of a mental disease or defect, she said.

Dorow continued that the examiners noted an anti-social personality disorder affected by marijuana use, but said actions born of jealousy or rage do not necessarily mean a mental disease or defect was present, and whatever issues Brooks faced in his life did not cause him to drive the car into the parade that day.

“There are many times, many times good people do bad things but there are times evil people do bad things. There is no medication or treatment for a heart that is bent on evil,” she said. “It is very clear to this court he understands the difference between right and wrong and that he simply chooses to ignore his conscience. He is fueled by anger and rage. Some people unfortunately choose a path of evil. And I think, Mr. Brooks, you are one of those such persons.

“As a mom, my heart breaks for your family, for your mom and your grandmother. The son she raised, the grandson your grandmother knew, the hopes and dreams they had for your life, they’re gone. I think it is perhaps far easier for them to blame a mental illness then to perhaps come to grips with their son did very, very bad things due to very bad motivations.”

She said the great unanswered question



Mike De Sisti/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Waukesha County Circuit Court Judge Jennifer Dorow wipes away tears while talking about victims’ statements during her closing remarks before sentencing Darrell Brooks to 6 consecutive life sentences on Wednesday.

“You have left a path of destruction, chaos, death, injury, confusion and panic as you drove seven or so blocks through the Christmas parade, never once stopping or seemingly caring about the wake of carnage that you left. Four of those blocks were turned into a scene that frankly is no different than a war zone.”

— Judge Jennifer Dorow

in the case was why Brooks drove his car into the parade after the confrontation with his girlfriend Erika Patterson on White Rock Avenue, why he ignored signs and the parade staging area and the police trying to stop him, why he didn’t turn off the parade route or simply stop or turn around.

“There is no reasonable explanation other than he was angry. He was full of rage and he didn’t care who he came in contact with,” she said.

Dorow also spoke at length about what the victims said in their statements Tuesday — their healing journeys, some spoke of forgiveness, and the strength they showed in trying to resume their lives after serious injuries, living with post-traumatic stress disorder night terrors, panic attacks, and working through it all day by day.

“I think all of you here were warriors,” she said to the victims.

Brooks, as he had during the trial, spent much of the proceeding appearing virtually from an adjacent courtroom after he argued with Dorow when she brought up a charge involving Patterson that ultimately was dropped. At around 4:45 p.m. he asked to be brought back but immediately resumed arguing with Dorow, who again ruled he forfeited his right to be present in the main courtroom to hear his sentence and had him removed only about 10 minutes later. He spent the rest of the hearing watching from the adjacent courtroom.

Restitution

The state also is requesting Brooks pay restitution to two sources: \$47,193 to a Waukesha School District insurer and another \$124,220 to the state’s crime victim compensation fund.

District Attorney Sue Opper said that amount is “ridiculously low” for all the injuries charged in the case, but that was due to people all over the world who helped pay into the Waukesha Community Fund. Opper said, “I think he deserves to pay every penny of it.”

She also requested an order that the state Department of Corrections will keep half of any wages Brooks may earn in prison and any moneys on canteen accounts, and in addition asked that if Brooks attempts to benefit financially from the crimes, those funds also go to an account run by the state Department of Justice to make restitution.

There was also discussion in court of Brooks making a motion to stay his sentence pending appeal, but Dorow ruled that matter will be scheduled later. Brooks is due in court on three pending cases in Milwaukee County — for allegedly firing a gun at a car containing his nephew, for reportedly driving the same SUV at Erika Patterson in Milwaukee and running her over last year, and for allegedly pressuring



Mike De Sisti/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Darrell Brooks makes comments regarding Waukesha County District Attorney Susan Opper as he gives his closing remarks during his sentencing in Waukesha County Circuit Court in Waukesha on Wednesday.

her to recant her allegations against Brooks — today.

City reaction

Following the sentencing hearing, the city released a statement saying “Justice prevailed.” In it, Mayor Shawn Reilly said he is “thankful that the (trial) is behind us so we as a community can continue to focus on taking steps forward.”

Waukesha Police Chief Dan Thompson said the sentencing “starts a new chapter in healing for our community” and “demonstrates our continued resiliency and strong sense of community.”

Fire Chief Steve Howard said,

“Although healing will continue, we are confident that the strength of this great community will endure and be the foundation for moving forward showing kindness and compassion.”

The release also urged people who need support to consult a newly created Waukesha Resiliency Center or another local organization. It also encouraged people to stand together either in person or at home with a One-Year Remembrance ceremony taking place at 4:39 p.m. Monday at the Les Paul Performance Center in Cutler Park. It asked people to continue displaying blue lights outside their homes or businesses as a show of support.

Johnson/Baldwin resolution recognizes parade attack anniversary

WASHINGTON — On Wednesday, Wisconsin U.S. Sens. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, and Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, introduced a resolution recognizing the one-year anniversary of the Waukesha Christmas Parade massacre.

The resolution recognizes the resiliency and strength of the Waukesha community and honors

the six Wisconsinites who were murdered and the 62 others who were injured during the attack on Nov. 21, 2021.

“The Waukesha Christmas Parade massacre was a horrific attack that never should have happened. Today, we remember those killed, injured and forever impacted by this senseless act of vio-

lence,” said Johnson. “Families who came to see Santa Claus, high school bands and the Dancing Grannies instead witnessed a horror that will leave lifelong psychological scars. My thoughts and prayers are with the community of Waukesha as they continue to recover from this tragedy.”

“One year ago, the Waukesha

community was devastated by senseless violence during what should have been a joyous celebration,” said Senator Baldwin. “I am proud to co-lead this resolution to honor the victims, our first responders and the impacted community members as we come together to heal from this tragedy and remember those we have lost too soon.”

“Whereas the Waukesha community continues to contend with the aftermath of the tragic attack and will do so for years to come; Whereas members of the Waukesha community will be stronger for having supported one another during and in the aftermath of the attack...” the resolution reads in part.