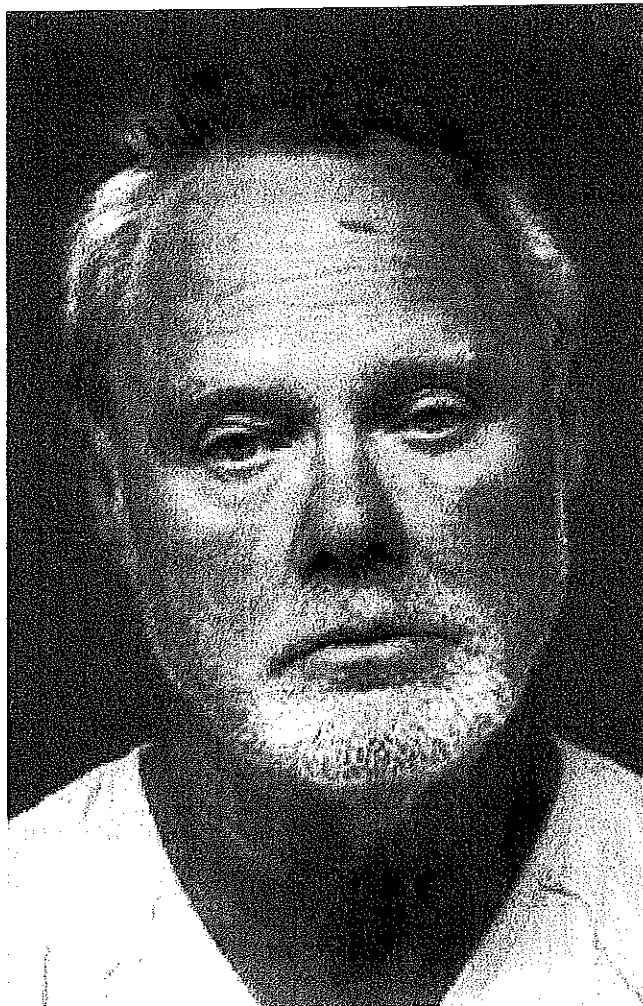


http://www.mohavedailynews.com/news/killer-sentenced-to-prison-for-2016-meadview-slaying/article_0ce7dbe8-b384-11ea-8555-eb5dcdc72dea.html

Killer sentenced to prison for 2016 Meadview slaying

JIM SECKLER, Special to the Daily News
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Victor Empie

KINGMAN — A Meadview man who shot and killed his neighbor four years ago was sentenced to prison Friday.

Victor Steven Empie, 66, pleaded guilty in April to second-degree murder and attempted arson of an occupied structure. Charges of first-degree murder and attempted first-degree murder were dropped.

Empie's attorney, Randall Craig, of Scottsdale, said his client suffered from serious mental health issues. Empie also was remorseful for his actions, Craig said.

Deputy Mohave County Attorney Bob Moon said Empie was allowed to plead guilty to second-degree murder even though, he said, the murder clearly was premeditated. Moon said he doubted Empie had showed any remorse in the four years of the case.

Craig argued that Empie was a different person since being restored to competency and that his client has shown remorse.

Superior Court Judge Billy Sipe Jr. said the sentences for the two crimes should be served consecutively since there are two victims. Sipe also didn't find Empie's age at the time of the murder to be a mitigating factor.

The judge did find as mitigating factors Empie's serious mental health issues and that he had no prior felony convictions. Aggravated factors include using a dangerous weapon and the emotional harm to the victims. Sipe sentenced Empie to 20 1/2 years in prison.

Empie was arrested April 8, 2016, and charged with murdering his neighbor, John Hewett Payne, 66, after a fight in Meadview. Empie crashed his truck into Payne's recreational vehicle, knocking the trailer off its jacks, according to the sheriff's office.

The noise of Empie's truck crashing into the victim's Gladiola Drive home woke Payne and his wife. As Payne opened his front door, Empie shot Payne in the chest with a 12-gauge shotgun, killing him. Empie also threw a flare at the trailer's propane line trying to burn the home down.

In March 2017, Empie was ruled competent to stand trial after two psychologists gave conflicting testimony about his competency. One psychologist testified that Empie was paranoid, delusional and distrusted police, the prosecutor, his own attorney and the judicial system.

Empie was ruled incompetent to stand trial last July. Empie returned to Mohave County in January from the Pima County Restore to Competency program with the determination that he was competent to stand trial.