

TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor
Repeat Violent Offenders newsletter
UPDATE, Sept. 26, 2023

Death row inmate Charles Lorraine dies



Convicted double-murderer and death row inmate Charles Lorraine, 56, has died at the Ohio Corrections Medical Center, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections has confirmed today.

No cause of death was given, but reports showed Lorraine had died about 5 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 24, 2023.

Lorraine was scheduled several times following his conviction in 1986 and his last rescheduled date to die was May 13, 2026. He was sentenced to death after being found guilty of the 1986 capital murders of Raymond Montgomery, 77, and his bedridden 80-year-old wife Doris inside their Haymaker Avenue NW, Warren home.

Gov. Mike DeWine had given a reprieve to Lorraine late last year when his then-execution date of March 15, 2023, was nearing. The delay was because of the inability of the state of Ohio to obtain lethal execution drugs.

Evidence showed that Lorraine -- then age 19 with a long criminal history as both juvenile and adult -- that on May 6, 1986, used a butcher's knife to stab Raymond Montgomery five times and to stab Doris Montgomery nine times. Both died of their injuries.

After the murders, Lorraine met some friends at a Warren bar, spending the money he stole from the couple's home. When he ran out of money, Lorraine stole a car from another elderly woman to go back to the Montgomery home to steal more money, evidence showed.

WATKINS REMEMBERS

Trumbull County Prosecutor Dennis Watkins remembers the case against Lorraine and the facts surrounding the murder since he was the lead trial prosecutor in the case which was held in the courtroom of the late Trumbull County Common Pleas Judge Mitchell F. Shaker in late 1986.

“Shortly after Danny Lee Hill was sentenced to death for the September 1985 aggravated murder of Raymond Fife, in the spring of 1986, Charles Lorraine planned a knife attack on an elderly couple who lived on Warren’s West Side.”

Lorraine was a repeat violent offender as a juvenile and adult, Watkins said, who was out on bail for robbery and burglary charges at the time of the murders.

“He obtained a knife from a friend and he also wore gloves because in his words, he ‘didn’t’ want to leave fingerprints or get blood on his hands,’ ” Watkins said.

After brutally stabbing both victims, including the invalid woman who was laying helplessly on a bed in the living room, Watkins said Lorraine obtained valuables from the home including some cash.

“As he was walking from the home, Lorraine came upon a friend – who later became a witness at trial -- and told him that he just killed ‘two old f---s,’ and that he was buying drinks,” Watkins said about Lorraine’s subsequent “celebration” at the Olympic Bar on Parkman Road.

“In the bar he persuaded another friend in joining him by first burglarizing another elderly woman’s home and stealing her car and driving back to the crime scene to steal more items from the dead,” Watkins said.

After the bodies were discovered by a Montgomery niece, that same friend of Lorraine went to Warren police with his father and told them what had happened.

Then detectives Bill Seese and Howard Andrews interviewed Lorraine, who gave a detailed confession claiming that “drugs made me do it,” in spite of outlining to the officers a well-planned and executed crime of murder involving the obtaining of a weapon and gloves to make sure evidence wouldn’t be left behind.

“At trial, the defense team tried to convince jurors that others were to be blamed for Lorraine’s brutal, criminal behavior along with the drugs,” Watkins said. “However, the jury saw it otherwise – and Lorraine was given the death sentence.”

THE APPEALS PROCESS

After being convicted and sentenced to death row, Lorraine subsequently filed several appeals and tried different legal maneuvers to avoid the death penalty, including that he was mentally retarded. Those all failed.

Watkins also remembers the state fighting against Lorraine’s legal team in these appeals.

“Along the road during the long appeal process – like the Hill case – Lorraine tried to avoid (the death penalty) by claiming that he was intellectually disabled, Watkins said noting this delayed his execution date even more, “But he had no evidence. No test ever showed he was mentally retarded. Instead he was found to be a sociopath.”

Watkins said Lorraine even told a news reporter during that time that he only filed the mental retardation motion to avoid being executed. Lorraine gave a direct quote with TV video cameras rolling as he exited the courthouse: “I’ll do whatever I need to stay alive... I am not mentally retarded.”

After he exhausted state and federal appeals, Lorraine’s execution date was set for Jan. 18, 2012. However, on Jan. 11, 2012, a temporary stay was placed by a federal judge on the executions of three death row inmates, including Lorraine, as a result of a challenge of Ohio’s death row protocol.

“Lorraine’s attorneys were able to delay the process by convincing U.S. District Court Judge Gregory Frost to stay the execution dates because of claims of “cruel and unusual punishment by lethal drug execution.”

While he was preparing for an earlier hearing, Lorraine in May 2011 wrote his life story, reducing it to 17 typewritten pages. He titled it “Where I Went Wrong and How I got to Where I Am Today.”

This story was used in a December 2011 hearing before the parole board, and Watkins successfully convinced the board to deny any clemency recommendation to the governor

for Lorraine because his story “was self-serving nonsense given only to avoid the death penalty. The parole board vote was 8-0 against Lorraine. However the federal judge later intervened on his behalf.

In his story, Lorraine described the Montgomery couple whom he had befriended as “the two nicest people you would ever want to meet.” Lorraine also blamed the murders on his drug use.

In November 2023, DeWine issued the latest reprieve to Lorraine due to ongoing problems involving the willingness of pharmaceutical suppliers to provide drugs to the DRC, pursuant to the state agency’s protocol, without endangering other Ohioans, a release from the governor’s office states.

FINAL WORDS

In learning about his death, Watkins had these comments about Lorraine:

“Though Lorraine should have been executed long ago, his death brings to an end a long journey for victims and the community in having justice done,” Watkins said. “The only cruel and unusual punishment involved in this case was the torturous pain and death he inflicted on the two elderly victims.”

Watkins said Lorraine was “always different from his family and friends.”

“Lorraine, in the end, was solely responsible for what he did. Blaming drugs and others should never work when you can plan and execute horrific criminal acts alone and then celebrate afterwards by stealing the victims’ money and having a party at a local tavern.

“Sadly, there is no remorse here,” Watkins said, “but there is some finality and closure with Lorraine’s death.”

For more information, contact newsletter editor Guy Vogrin, at the Prosecutor’s Office, at 330-675-2485.