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Bishop sentenced in California case

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Waco native James Russell Bishop, a suspect in the 1982 stabbing deaths of three teen-agers near Lake Waco, was sentenced to 79 years in a California prison Wednesday in the February assault of two San Diego, Calif., high school girls.

Bishop, 27, who pleaded guilty April 6 in San Diego to nine felony counts, including sexual assault and attempted murder, received the maximum sentence allowed under the terms of his plea-bargained arrangement.

San Diego County District Attorney Hugh McManus said Wednesday that Bishop, 27, will be forced to serve half his sentence before he is eligible for parole.

McManus said that Bishop's attorney, Logan McKechnie, introduced a psychiatric evaluation of Bishop into evidence during the hearing and asked Municipal Judge Frederick Link to sen-

tence his client to 19 to 30 years. McManus presented no witnesses or evidence Wednesday, he said.

Bishop will be placed in a California prison at Chino, the district attorney said.

Waco police twice have flown to San Diego to investigate possible links between Bishop and the deaths of Jill Montgomery, Raylene Rice and Kenneth Franks, whose bodies were found in Speegleville Park near Lake Waco on July 14.

Police and McLennan County district attorney's office authorities have declined to release details of those investigations, except to say that Bishop still is a suspect in the triple homicides.

Police have determined that Bishop, a former groundskeeper at McLennan Community College, was in Waco at the time of the deaths and moved to the San Diego area about two weeks after the bodies were discovered.

Bishop was arrested Feb. 22 at his Coronado Beach, Calif., home after a pickup truck found on the beach where the girls were assaulted was traced to him.

One of the victims, a Japanese exchange student, remains permanently paralyzed from the waist down by a bullet that lodged near her spine. Her friend, who also was shot, raped and left for dead on a Coronado Island beach, has recovered.

Bishop is one of three suspects under investigation by two Waco police detectives and an investigator in the district attorney's office, said John Ben Sutter, administrative assistant to District Attorney Vic Feazell.

Sutter said last week that officials hope to have an indictment against one of the suspects in "three to five weeks." He said Wednesday that an indictment is possible in four to five weeks, "based on whether or not we can tie up all the loose ends" of the investigation.



AP Laserphoto

James Russel Bishop is a suspect in three stabbing deaths near Lake Waco