

Oregon Department of Corrections Escapee Sentenced to Almost Six Years for Robbing an Elderly Victim

On September 3, 2024, Joe Leroy Smallwood-Sain was found guilty by a Marion County jury of Robbery in the Second Degree and two counts of Unlawful Use of a Weapon. After the jury returned its verdict, Smallwood-Sain also pled guilty to Escape in the Second Degree.

In April 2023, Joe Smallwood-Sain was serving a sentence at the Santiam Correctional Facility. On April 10, 2023, he escaped from custody while serving on a work crew. Smallwood-Sain later told law enforcement that he escaped to go find some drugs at a nearby trailer park.

Smallwood-Sain took a bus to downtown Salem, Marion County, Oregon, and made his way to Macy's parking garage. There, he approached an 84-year-old woman with a hammer in his hand and demanded that she "gimme your keys." The victim started screaming and running toward the entrance of the store. Travis Roop, a new security guard for Macy's, saw the incident and heard the elderly victim screaming. He identified Smallwood-Sain inside the victim's vehicle and drove his vehicle behind Smallwood-Sain, blocking him in a parking space. Mr. Roop caught up to Smallwood-Sain as Smallwood-Sain fled on foot heading toward the exit of the parking garage and saw the hammer in Smallwood-Sain's hand. Smallwood-Sain then swung the hammer at Mr. Roop and then fled.

Smallwood-Sain was arrested shortly later that same day by the Salem Police Department who identified the defendant walking on Lancaster after he took another bus after the robbery to east Salem.

The Honorable Thomas M. Hart presided over the trial. Defense counsel Ronald Hellewell represented Smallwood-Sain, and the state was represented by Deputy District Attorney Sarah Meyer. On October 15, 2024, Marion County Circuit Court Judge Thomas Hart sentenced Smallwood-Sain to a total of 70 months at the Department of Corrections without eligibility for early release.

At the time of his arrest, Mr. Smallwood-Sain was 43 years old and had 65 arrests and multiple previous convictions.

Please contact DDA Meyer with any questions at (503) 588-5222.