

Son's plea to slayings delayed for mental tests

BY JUDD SLIVKA
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

1-22-97 AR Dem
LONOKE — With brushed-back hair dampened by a cold, late-morning drizzle, 20-year-old Heath Stocks listened as his attorney asked a judge to delay entering a plea to three charges of capital murder despite Stocks' reported confession.

The attorney, Lonoke County public defender Edgar Thompson, asked Circuit Judge Lance Hanshaw of Lonoke to allow more time so Stocks might undergo a mental evaluation. He is accused of shooting his mother, father and 18-year-old sister.

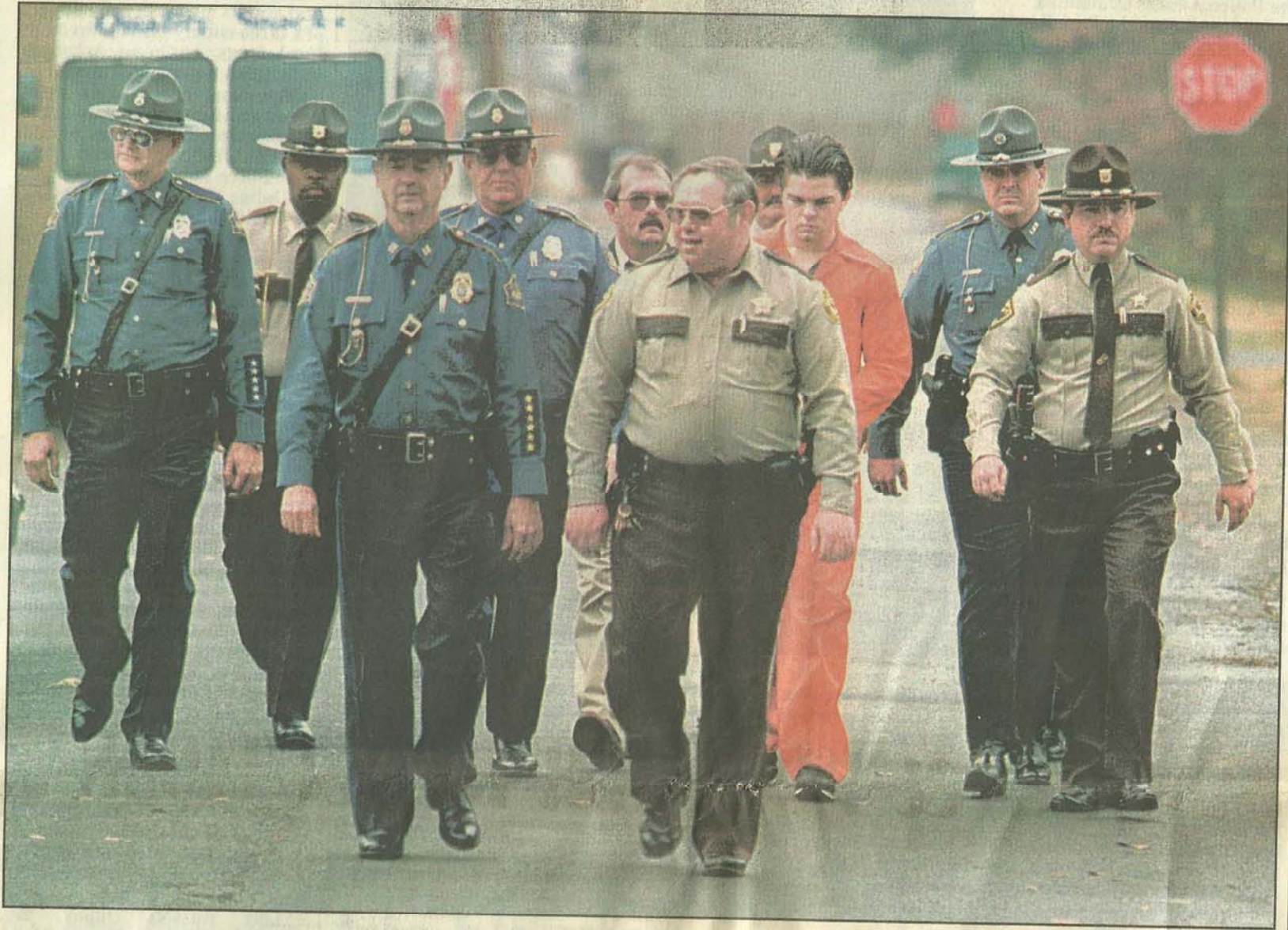
Wearing a newly pressed, orange prison jumpsuit with a bullet-resistant vest beneath it, Stocks stared at the podium for most of the arraignment, only looking up when Prosecuting Attorney Larry Cook of Austin recited one of the options the state has in a capital murder case. Cook said "death penalty," and Stocks' head jumped up.

The former Henderson State University student said little from his spot next to Thompson, only speaking up in response to Hanshaw's questions about whom he was and where he lived.

"Heath Stocks ... 771 Johnson Road," he said in a weak, high-pitched voice. Then Thompson took over, asking Hanshaw to put off entering the plea.

Cook had no objections to the request, nor to Thompson's two other requested motions: full disclosure of evidence and for the court to respect his client's 14th Amendment rights in regard to statements made to the police.

Hanshaw accepted the argument. See PLEA, Page 12B



Heath Stocks (in orange jumpsuit) is escorted to the Lonoke County Courthouse Tuesday morning by a bevy of officers from the Lonoke County sheriff's office

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and Arkansas State Police. Stocks faces three charges of capital murder in the deaths of his parents and sister Friday night in Furlow.

Plea *1-22-97 AR Perm*

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ments and adjourned court until an undetermined date after Stocks undergoes his mental work-up.

In an affidavit filed with the court, Arkansas State Police investigators said that Stocks admitted shooting his father, Joe, 46; his mother, Barbara, 43; and his 18-year-old sister, Heather, on Friday night.

The affidavit supports a scenario where the killings capped a long-running dispute between father and son. It also said the killings were a result of a botched robbery by Heath Stocks.

"Heath Stocks, also stated that his father had kicked him out of the house a few days earlier," the affidavit says. "Stocks stated that on January 17, 1997, he entered his parents' house and ransacked it.

At that time, Heather Stocks returned home finding Heath inside the residence.

"Heath Stocks stated that Heather Stocks called 911 to re-

port a fictitious robbery in an attempt to cover up his actions. Heath Stocks stated that Joe Stocks came into the residence and confronted him.

"Heath Stocks stated that he then shot all three family members with a .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol which he had taken from a gun cabinet located in the residence."

The affidavit also says that on the basis of Stocks' statements to police after being arrested, investigators were able to recover the pistol, a pair of gloves, a knife and the jewelry he stole. The gun was found in the Ouachita River at Arkadelphia, where Henderson State University is.

Stocks was arrested at a friend's apartment on the campus Saturday morning.

Police would not comment on where the other items mentioned in the affidavit were found.

The affidavit also stated that Stocks had told a friend that he had gone into his parents' bedroom with a loaded handgun last summer intending to kill his father. Police wouldn't elaborate about that.