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**Northwest**



John K. Peel, in ski mask, talks with his lawyer

**Family reels over friend's arrest in relatives' deaths**

BELLINGHAM (AP) — Relatives of Mark and Irene Coulthart got a double shock when they heard of John Kenneth Peel's arrest. Not only was a good family friend, but he was charged with eight counts of murder — including four counts named as John Mark, Irene and their two children.

"I started crying and shaking," said Laurie Coulthart, one of Mark's sisters. "I know John Peel — he used to go out with my sister a long time ago."

Mark and Irene Coulthart owned the fishing boat Invader. They and their children, plus four crew members, were killed on board near Craig, Alaska, in September 1982. The boat was last set on fire, burning the bodies so badly that some were never positively identified.

Peel, 34, who used to work for Coulthart on another boat, was arrested Monday and charged with the crimes.

Laurie Coulthart, 37, raged through family photo albums, looking at pictures dating back to 1964. Peel on her brother's boat.

She said Peel used to play with her niece and nephew, John and Kimberly, the two children who died aboard the Invader.

Laurie Coulthart said she had heard Peel was a prime suspect months ago when she did an interview. "John Peel" had been one of the go-to's — a friendly outcast fellow with a sense of humor.

"I really wanted to get John in the months of death," she said. "But I really was someone to be arrested and not away."

She remembered seeing her mother. "It's someone we know, I hope he's not sentenced to death."

"I wouldn't want death for the person," she said. "There have been too many deaths."

Laurie Coulthart said the searching of the Invader and the deaths of family members still haunt her — even after two years, and months of counseling.

She suffers from headaches and a nervous stomach. Three weeks ago she woke up crying, dreaming that her brother was back.

Her sister, Lisa, "fell apart" Monday when she heard the news.

"This is coming at an even worse time," she said. "I want to flounder — Laurie Coulthart said she would like to go to the trial in Alaska, but she said she would be unable to ask if Peel.

"I wish it would have been some crazy off the boat," she said. "I've been wanting to hate someone for the past two years."

**A third PUD pulls out of WPPSS group**

SHELTON (AP) — Arguing that ratepayers take on all the risks and avoid "little control" over the Washington Public Power Supply system, Mason County Public Utility District No. 3 commissioners have voted to become the third PUD in two weeks to withdraw from WPPSS.

PUD Commissioner Robert Olson said the 21 vote Tuesday night was because the utility was unable to get liability insurance and because utility officials felt they lacked control over the financially troubled WPPSS.

Meanwhile, two utilities that serve the area around the heart of Washington's nuclear-power industry — the Tri-Cities — voted Tuesday to remain membership in WPPSS. Commissioners of Benton and Franklin county PUDs met separately, but both decided they could do more by remaining within WPPSS than by dropping out.

The Colville County and Clallam County PUDs withdrew from WPPSS two weeks ago, largely because their membership in the consortium had been cited as a reason for denial of liability insurance.

Kid Bakken, the PUD's director of administration, said the utility had been denied liability insurance covering lawsuits stemming from WPPSS' default on \$1.2 billion worth of nuclear power plant construction bonds.

WPPSS officials have developed the withdrawal, saying the utilities would still be obligated to pay their share of past, present and future costs of three surviving nuclear projects. Member utilities remain bound by contracts they agreed, along with more than 40 other utilities, in sponsoring the projects.

Olson said the supply system is terminated with people addressed to a belief in nuclear power, "while he feels it should look at all forms of energy in a balanced fashion."

"The board was as a mission finishing plants 1, 2 and 3," he said. "They look at anything, see that as a failure. They're in danger of falling in the trap of earlier directors who didn't determine if the plants were needed and what they would cost, what they would do with the power and whether the region and ratepayers could afford the cost."

**Young ghostbusters start fire**

WALLA WALLA, Wash. (AP) — A house was damaged by the Tuesday after two impressionable 12-year-olds tried a ghost-catching trick they'd seen recently in the movie Ghostbusters, a Walla Walla Fire Department official said.

The boys thought they'd seen a ghost in the basement of a house, so they poured all the gas they were playing near and tried to "blow" it by pouring all the gas down the basement steps, said Carl Bob Wheeler. The boys apparently figured that would make the steps too slippery for the ghost to escape.

Wheeler said that after talking with the boys, firefighters contained a gas explosion when they came into contact with a water heater pilot light. He estimated the fire caused \$600 in bill damage, mostly from smoke. There were no injuries. The ghost was never found.

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**Federal official defends agency's count of homeless**

SEATTLE (AP) — Figures compiled by the Department of Housing and Urban Development showing only 20,000 to 30,000 Americans are homeless have been defended by HUD Secretary Samuel H. Pierce Jr.

Pierce, at a news conference Tuesday, said he would not retract the figures, which have generated a storm of controversy, and accused a federal judge's decision to dismiss a suit challenging the agency's numbers as "a slap in the face" to some social welfare organizations.

He estimated a more accurate number of homeless is 500,000 to 600,000.

"HUD is the only organization that has ever made a national study on this and we believe we are right," Pierce said.

"No one else has made a scientific study, until they do 17 states with us."

The Community for Creative Non-Violence and other groups representing the homeless filed suit in federal court on June 22, saying the HUD survey government study released last May will hamper efforts to get help for street people.

**RAY LEVEE**

**EXPERIENCED**

11 years as a Cowlitz County Supervisor  
County Commissioner Dist. 2 Bemo.

Pat. Adv. 228 (2000) Longview, WA, 98626