

DEATH ROW INMATE LOSES LATEST APPEAL

Palm Beach Post, The (FL) - May 9, 2008

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Duane Owen has appealed his murder conviction to the Florida Supreme Court at least six times in the 24 years since he raped and killed a Delray Beach baby sitter named Karen Slattery.

On Thursday, the court reaffirmed his **death** sentence.

In his latest argument to the court, Owen, 47, claimed during an August 2006 appeal that attorneys gave him inadequate counsel by not calling witnesses to testify about his history of drug and alcohol abuse, a move he argued might have led the jury to recommend a life sentence instead of the **death penalty** .

The appeals court rejected that argument, and on Thursday the state Supreme Court agreed.

"Evidence of his substance abuse likely would not change the sentence, given the weighty aggravation and substantial mitigation found by the sentencing judge. We agree that Owen has not demonstrated prejudice," the justices ruled.

In March 1984, Slattery was a 14-year-old girl who had just had her braces removed when Owen sliced through the screen door of a Delray Beach home where she was baby-sitting, to rape her, then stab her 18 times.

Two months later, he beat to **death** a Boca Raton woman, Georgianna Worden, 38, with a hammer while she slept. Worden's children found their mother's body as they got ready for school.

Owen has also been convicted of attacking three other women in 1984. They survived.

During his appeal, a string of witnesses testified that Owen had started sniffing glue and hair spray when he was 9 or 10, before advancing to mushrooms, cocaine and crystal meth in his morning coffee.

Owen was described as the product of a tragic childhood, raised by a mother who died when he was 11, a father who committed suicide when the boy was 13.

"It was the only house I know to have beer delivered by a beer truck," one childhood friend testified.