

# Man gets life for 2008 homicide

[By David Saez](#) • DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER • March 2, 2010

The sentencing hearing for Calvin Hills, who beat Renwick Nelson's father to death with a stick, had just concluded when Nelson stepped across the gallery aisle and hugged each of Hills' family members.

"I wanted them to know that we feel their grief," Nelson said. "We're not angry with them and don't fault them for it. Their loss is as great as our loss."

On Monday afternoon, Hills, 40, was sentenced to life without parole for the June 2008 murder of 70-year-old Anderson Nelson.

According to court documents, Hills went to Nelson's home to borrow \$30 and instead killed him with a walking staff he carried with him that was 1-1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. Though he'd told investigators someone else had beaten Nelson, Hills also said he'd been caught up in the moment and was focused solely on getting money to buy crack cocaine.

Hills pleaded no contest to the charges in January and agreed to a sentencing hearing where Nelson's family members could learn why Hills committed the crime. "Basically Calvin has a real heavy crack addiction," Assistant Public Defender Ines Suber said. None of this swayed the prosecution or Nelson's family.

"I do think drugs were an influence," Assistant State Attorney Jack Campbell said. "But I do believe that no matter how high or how drunk you are, you're responsible for your behavior."

Nelson's oldest son, Renwick, said the final sentence put his family's hearts at ease.

"I think it was justice," he said. "He'll have to answer to God for what he did. It's still not over yet for him."