



**Sophan Mao, 22, sentenced to 62 years**

## Man gets 62 to life for killing over dirty look

By **Scott Smith**

Record Staff Writer

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STOCKTON - A San Joaquin County Superior Court judge strongly scolded a 22-year-old Stockton man Tuesday before sentencing him to 62 years to life in state prison for fatally shooting another man last year at a Hammer Lane gas station.

Sophan Mao opened fire on Randy Holloway, 27, on Jan. 6, 2007, after somebody "mad mugged" Mao. Mad mugged is a street term used to describe challenging looks. Ryan Holloway, the victim's younger brother, was shot in the leg but survived his injuries.

San Joaquin County Superior Court Judge Terrence Van Oss sentenced Mao to the maximum possible state prison term after launching into a brief blistering reprimand of Mao and his gangster lifestyle.

"This is a case which demonstrates once again how cowardly these street gangs are," said Van Oss, adding that armed groups like Mao's are "foolish, childish, perverted little gangs ... afraid to confront anybody in a fair fight."

That night, Holloway was about to celebrate a new warehouse job when he, his brother and a friend stopped for gas at the Chevron station at Hammer Lane and Holman Road. That is where the deadly confrontation unfolded with the Southeast Asian gang member.

According to prosecutors, Mao's conviction was based on circumstantial evidence. Mao disguised his face with a blue bandanna while firing a total of six shots, three hitting and killing Holloway, and one wounding the victim's brother in the leg.

A jury in November found Mao guilty of first-degree murder, being a gang member in possession of a loaded firearm and being an active member of a criminal street gang.

During Tuesday's hearing, Mao's attorney, Charles Slote, argued that his client should receive a new trial, trying to establish doubt that Mao was at the gas station at all.

Van Oss denied the request, saying the evidence clearly showed that Mao shot and killed Holloway.

Mao did not comment during the hearing, and relatives - his brother and father - also declined to comment after the sentencing.

Aronie Warren, Holloway's widow, talked in court about having to break the news of her husband's death to his three young sons, ages 8, 10 and 11. There is no grief equal to watching your children endure such sorrow, she said.

"My stepson said he loved the feel of his dad's pancake-sized hands picking him up," the tearful Warren said. "We all miss his hugs, kisses and smiles. I'll miss his blue eyes."



***Jairo Soto, 20, sentenced to 86 years***

***Sureno gang members sentenced to 141 years and 86 years***

By *Scott Smith*

STOCKTON - A 16-year-old Stockton boy received a man-size prison sentence Monday for his part in 2007 drive-by gang shootings that killed another boy and left a second victim in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

Juan Torres' staggering state prison sentence - 141 years and eight months to life plus another life sentence - stems from the March 3, 2007, shooting of 14-year-old Pablo "Edy" Hernandez at Airport Way and Washington Street. Age 14 at the time, Torres was tried as an adult.

He also was sentenced for his part in a Feb. 7, 2007, shooting at Airport Way and Washington Street that paralyzed 17-year-old Matthew Mejia.

Jairo Soto, 20, also was sentenced to spend 86 years to life plus a life sentence without the possibility of parole for his part in the shooting that paralyzed Mejia. Torres, Soto and third defendant, 19-year-old Daniel Hernandez, who awaits trial, told investigators they were in the car together during the fatal shooting, but they blamed each other for pulling the trigger, San Joaquin County Deputy District Attorney Mark Ott said.

Ott said Hernandez is dead today because he walked down the street with a red bandanna hanging from his back pocket, the color of Latino gangs in Northern California. Torres and Soto are associated with Southern California Latino gangs that wear blue.

"This is somebody who is mature beyond his years," Ott said of Torres. "He's violent beyond his years."

San Joaquin County Superior Court Judge George J. Abdallah reprimanded both defendants before handing them the sentences that will leave them in prison for the rest of their natural lives.

Abdallah turned his attention to Torres' family members, who sat in court, for failing to step in when they heard Torres listen to violent music and he decorated his room with gang symbols. Torres brought "poison" into the home, but it went unnoticed, Abdallah said.

"Where were the father, brother, cousins? Where were the good influences in his life," Abdallah said. "It's heartbreaking to see this happen to a 14-year-old boy."

Abdallah then turned to Soto, a father of two who had gang tattoos inked above his left eye since being jailed on the case. Abdallah said this was a sign that Soto showed no remorse but rather embraced the gang culture.

"He branded himself because he believes this would garner respect," Abdallah said, noting that he came from a caring family. "His mother was crying throughout the trial. He chose to ignore her and the pleas of his family."

Shiovan Valdez watched the sentencing and left the courtroom saying he was headed for the cemetery to tell his little brother that he received justice. He was raising Hernandez and said he was doing well in school.

"I've got to go to the grave right now and speak to him," Valdez said. "I'm going to tell him there were repercussions for this death."



**Public defender Miraim Lyell, left, and Dara Khun, 20, sentenced to 12 years**

### ***Gang member sentenced to 12 years for voluntary manslaughter***

By **Scott Smith**  
Record Staff Writer  
March 18, 2008 6:00 AM

STOCKTON - A Stockton gang member was sentenced Monday to 12 years and four months in state prison for gunning down a 17-year-old boy during a birthday party early last year at a Chinese restaurant across the street from the Stockton Police Department.

Dara Khun, 20, said nothing during the hearing before San Joaquin County Superior Court Judge Bernard Garber, who described Khun as unleashing tragedy on Sam Keosomphet during what should have been a joyful event. "There's a birthday party and no reason for any violence to occur," Garber said. "The defendant decides to bring a loaded firearm."

Garber also ordered Khun to register for life as a convicted gang member and pay Keosomphet's family \$13,436 for funeral expenses.

Jurors in February found Khun guilty of voluntary manslaughter and other gang-related charges stemming from the Jan. 27, 2007, killing at King's House Restaurant, at El Dorado and Market streets.

Edison High School teacher Patricia Clark talked about Keosomphet as a student who had a bright future that he will never be able to realize. She called Keosomphet a friend and a student. Keosomphet would often talk about his family, Clark said.

"I knew Sam was going to prosper in life," she said. "He was going to be something in life."

The boy's father and girlfriend talked about their grief over losing Keosomphet. They sat in the courtroom opposite Khun's family.

San Joaquin County Deputy District Attorney Janet Smith urged Garber to give Khun the maximum prison sentence. She sought a murder conviction, yet jurors delivered the lesser sentence of voluntary manslaughter.

Khun's aunt, Victoria Chhim, said outside court that she feels sorry for the loss of Keosomphet's family and friends. But they are blaming Khun, whom they don't know. She blamed the crime on youthful foolishness.

"My heart goes out to them," Chhim said. "It's a tragedy that didn't have to happen."

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